



Date: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024

Dear Secondary School Headteacher,

## **RE: Vaccination Update**

Thank you for your continued support to protect children in Wigan through vaccination. As schools settle into the autumn term, we would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of ensuring that children are up to date with their routine vaccinations.

Vaccinating school-aged children not only provides vital protection for them, but also reduces the number of school absences, minimises disruptions to learning and wider impacts on educational settings.

This update provides information on routine vaccination programmes relevant to your school, useful resources to support you and your school community as well as details about things you can do to continue to protect our children and young people.

## **Winter Vaccination Programme (Flu/Covid)**

Vaccination continues to be the best protection against flu and COVID-19. Intrahealth will continue to deliver the seasonal influenza immunisation programme across Wigan in winter this year for all children in Year 7 to Year 11. The national ambition is to achieve a 100% offer to pupils, with a national requirement that all schools are visited by 13<sup>th</sup> December 2024. Intrahealth has already contacted schools via an initial letter that was recently circulated. In this letter, Intrahealth has asked schools to identify a vaccination lead for Intrahealth to liaise with. This will enable Intrahealth to agree with you the best approach for gaining the consent of your pupils and to develop operational plans for your school.

Both Flu vaccination and COVID-19 vaccinations are also recommended for staff who are at higher risk of getting seriously ill from these diseases, including those aged 65 or over, pregnant staff, or immunosuppressed individuals. [Flu vaccination](#) for the majority of eligible groups will be available on the NHS from 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024, and can be obtained from GP surgeries or pharmacies that offer NHS flu vaccination. The COVID-19 vaccine is also offered on the NHS and can be booked online, or through a GP surgery. It is recommended for those who are eligible for the COVID-19 and flu vaccine to top up their protection, even if they received doses last year, as viruses change, and protection fades over time. The NHS will contact those who are recorded as eligible for flu and COVID-19 vaccines, however, please also remind staff to take up the offer if they are eligible.

## **Adolescent vaccine programme**

Throughout the school year, Wigan's School-Aged Immunisation Service (SAIS) team will continue to deliver [routine adolescent immunisations](#) to pupils in order to protect them from serious preventable diseases:

- the HPV vaccine, which helps protect against cancers caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV) virus
- the MenACWY vaccine, which helps protect against meningococcal groups A, C, W and Y, which can cause meningitis and septicaemia
- the 3 in 1 teenage booster (Td/IPV), which protects against tetanus, diphtheria and polio

These vaccines prevent against a range of potentially serious and life-threatening diseases. Wigan SAIS will be sending consent forms to parents and will also allow young people to self-consent if they are deemed competent to do so. Please continue to work in collaboration with SAIS to ensure the highest possible uptake for these programmes.

## Measles

There continues to be a heightened risk of measles in the UK, with [2,387 laboratory-confirmed cases](#) in England since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024. Measles is highly infectious – 9 out of 10 unvaccinated children can catch measles if someone in their class has it. Measles infection can result in serious complications and long-term disability, particularly in those who are immunosuppressed, infants and pregnant women. Two doses of MMR vaccine remain the best way to protect children from measles, mumps and rubella infection. Further information can be found on the [NHS website](#).

Wigan Council has been working with local partners to raise awareness of measles and its symptoms, how to prevent transmission, and increase the take up of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

The [latest published data](#) on MMR uptake shows that this work is having a positive impact on levels of coverage in the Borough. In the last year, we have seen increases in the level of coverage in our children aged 5 and under, with those receiving one dose at 24 months increasing from 92.8% to 93.5% and those having received two doses at 5 years increasing from 88.9% to 89.1%. However, we continue to focus our efforts on further increasing coverage in our communities particularly with children, young people and adults who may be less likely to take up the offer of vaccination and would be grateful for your continued support in doing so.

## What you can do to help

We ask you to ensure that your school community continues to be made aware of the importance and benefits of vaccination, including through:

- Circulating the enclosed letter to all parents, which also includes information on [how to obtain MMR vaccination in Wigan](#).
- Ensuring that vaccinations are promoted on school premises and in general communications to the school community. Resources to do so can be found below.
- Advise parents and carers to check their child's Personal Child Health Record (PCHR), known as the red book, or contact their GP practice if they are unsure of their child's vaccination status or have missed vaccinations.
- Identify a vaccination lead for your school/setting to liaise with vaccination providers, and to raise awareness of vaccination opportunities within the school community.
- Raise awareness of vaccination opportunities with staff, particularly those that are pregnant or immunocompromised.
- Review business contingency plans for your setting in the event of significant cases of communicable diseases in your setting.

The key guidance on Infection Prevention and Control for educational settings continues to be [Health protection in children and young people settings, including education](#), which provides settings with guidance and resources on preventing and controlling infection, including advice on what to do in response to [specific infectious diseases](#). If you have any concerns about communicable diseases in your setting, please follow the above guidance. The Health Protection and Civil Contingencies Team also provides support to settings, and can be reached via telephone: 01942 404240 or via email: [healthprotectionandcivilcontingencies@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:healthprotectionandcivilcontingencies@wigan.gov.uk).

Thank you in anticipation of your continued support to protect the health of our school communities in Wigan Borough.

Yours sincerely,



Rachel Musgrave FFPH  
Director of Public Health






Cath Pealing  
Assistant Director of Education

Enc: Appendix A: Vaccination Resources for Secondary Schools  
Letter to Parents (*separate document*)

## Appendix A: Vaccination Resources for Secondary Schools

Resource	Information	Link
Adolescent vaccination briefing leaflet (adolescent)	This leaflet can be shared with all members of the school staff team to help prepare for the adolescent vaccination sessions in high schools.	<a href="#">Briefing for Adolescent Vaccination in Schools (Flu, MenACWY, HPV, Td/IPV) - Health Publications</a>
Winter vaccination stakeholder comms toolkit	Comms toolkit with information on the flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme for 2024/25, with key messages and social media assets	<a href="#">Winter vaccines 2024/25 - Google Drive</a>
Teenagers and young people immunisation guide	This guide is for young people in school years 7 to 13 and their parents or guardians. It outlines and explains the vaccines that are given to young people usually when they are still at school, why these vaccines are needed, what side effects they might have	<a href="#">A guide to immunisation for teenagers and young people (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a>
MenACWY vaccine information guide for young people	A guide for young people that explains the MenACWY vaccination programme	<a href="#">Protect yourself against meningitis and septicaemia with the MenACWY vaccine (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a>
HPV universal vaccination leaflet	A guide for young people that explains the HPV vaccination programme	<a href="#">The universal HPV immunisation programme (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a>
Td/IPV teenage 3 in 1 booster leaflet	A guide for young people that explains the Teenage 3 in 1 booster (Td/IPV) vaccination programme	<a href="#">Teenage 3 in 1 booster - Td/IPV (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a>
Save a Life MenACWY campaign	Resources for the 'Save a Life' MenACWY campaign available to order and download	<p>Guide - <a href="#">Meningitis – Signs &amp; symptoms of septicaemia (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a></p> <p>Social media stickers - <a href="#">MenACWY and MMR university social media cards - Health Publications</a></p> <p>Animation video - <a href="#">MenACWY Save a life animation video and banners - Health Publications</a></p> <p>Posters - <a href="#">MenACWY Save a life - landscape and portrait posters - University version - Health Publications</a></p>
Back to school postcards	Postcards aimed at parents and carers to remind them to check that their child is up to date with their vaccinations. These can be ordered for FREE from UKHSA Health Publications.	Secondary school - <a href="#">Back to secondary school postcard - Health Publications</a>

<p>YouTube video – Consultant Epidemiologist (Dr Colin Campbell)</p>	<p>Explains who can have the MMR vaccine and why the World Health Organization (WHO) has set an MMR vaccination target of 95% of the population.</p>	<p><a href="#">Video of Consultant Epidemiologist at UKHSA, Dr Colin Campbell,</a></p>
<p>Measles – Don't let your child catch it</p>	<p>This flyer answers common questions about measles and the vaccine that protects against it.</p> <p>The flyer is also available in a range of other languages via: <a href="#">Measles Don't let your child catch it   Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership (gmintegratedcare.org.uk)</a></p>	<p><a href="#">MEASLES - Don't let your child catch it (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a></p>
<p>Easy Read information regarding Measles / MMR</p>	<p>Easy read leaflet in English.</p>	<p> Amended Measles GTR MCR PRINT eas</p>
<p>Measles GIFs</p>	<p>GIFs for use in social media posts to spread awareness of measles and MMR vaccination</p>	<p> Measles GIFs.docx</p>
<p>Measles newsletter insert</p>	<p>Landscape insert that can be placed within newsletters to spread awareness of measles and MMR vaccination</p>	<p> A6 Landscape Newsletter insert.pd</p>