



Measles and MMR briefing for frontline staff

Who this briefing is for?

This briefing is for staff and/or volunteers working directly with Waltham Forest residents.

What is the purpose of this briefing?

The purpose of this briefing is to provide staff and/or volunteers with key information in relation to measles and the MMR vaccine and to equip staff/volunteers with the knowledge needed to talk about this with residents that they work with.

Key information

Measles is a serious disease.

- Measles can lead to serious complications and even death. One in five children who get measles requires a hospital visit and one in fifteen are affected by life-limiting conditions such as blindness, meningitis and sepsis.
- Measles usually starts with cold-like symptoms followed by a rash a few days later. Some people also may get small spots in their mouth. The measles rash may look different on black and brown skin compared to white skin.
- Measles spreads very quickly and easily between unvaccinated people – 90% unvaccinated people can become infected if in a close environment (e.g. in the same room) with an infected person
- Getting vaccinated is the only way to protect yourself and others.



Cases of measles are rising in London.

- The number of measles cases in England and Wales has increased dramatically over the last three years and continues to rise.
- In the six months between October 2023 and March 2024 there were 868 confirmed cases of measles in England compared to 368 confirmed cases in the 12 months between January and December 2023.
- Already seen large outbreaks in some areas of the UK including London and the West Midlands.

Low MMR vaccination rates mean that there are many people in the UK who are not protected against measles – this means outbreaks of measles are likely.

- MMR vaccination rates have been declining in the UK for a number of years and are currently much lower than the target of 95% set by the World Health Organisation (WHO).
- Rates of MMR vaccination are lower in London than the rest of the UK. Only around 75% of children in London who turn 5 years old have received both of their required MMR vaccinations.
- Only 70% of children in Waltham Forest who turn 5 years old have received both of their required MMR vaccinations.
- These low vaccination rates are the reason why we are now seeing cases of measles again.

MMR vaccination is crucial to protect individuals and communities from the serious and potentially life-threatening consequences of measles, mumps, and rubella infections.

- Getting the MMR vaccine is the only safe way to protect yourself against measles.
- The immunity you obtain from getting the vaccine is much safer than the immunity you obtain from getting measles as catching the virus can have very serious side effects.
- High vaccination rates in the UK were responsible for the eradication of measles in 2017 in the UK.

- Getting vaccinated not only protects you but also those around you. When enough people get vaccinated, diseases find it hard to spread – even among those who are not vaccinated.

Two doses of the MMR vaccine are required to be fully protected against measles

- The MMR vaccine is a combination vaccine which protects against three diseases – measles, mumps and rubella.
- One dose of the vaccine provides 95% protection against measles and two doses provide 99% protection.
- In the UK, children should receive their first dose of the MMR vaccine when they turn 12 months old, the second dose is given when children turn 3 years and 4 months.
- It is never too late to get vaccinated. People of any age who have missed MMR vaccinations can have them at their GP practice.



The MMR vaccine is very safe. While some mild side effects are common, getting vaccinated is much safer than staying unvaccinated.

- The measles vaccine has been used safely here in the UK and across the world for many years.
- Mild side effects such as a sore arm, a high temperature etc. are common but do not last long. More serious side effects are very rare.
- There is no link between the MMR vaccine and autism – a large amount of scientific research has dispelled this harmful myth.
- All vaccines, including the MMR vaccine are subject to rigorous testing before they can be licensed and approved for use with people.

Residents can check their vaccination status and arrange a vaccination appointment by calling their GP



- Residents of all ages are advised to check their and their children's MMR vaccination status by contacting their GP.
- Residents can also check their children's vaccination status can by looking in their child's **red book**.
- Residents should make an appointment with their GP if they or their children aren't up to date with their MMR vaccinations.
- Residents who aren't registered with a GP should be encouraged to do so

Links to useful resources

- London Borough of Waltham Forest MMR resources (printable assets, digital media, WhatsApp banners etc.) - https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/13E57sMbT3XqGuh8jPOICCq_nmt5IH2IT?usp=drive_link
- NHS webpage on measles - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>
- NHS webpage on the MMR vaccine - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/>
- NHS leaflet on measles (English) - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63c68222d3bf7f5805924a2c/English-measles-don_t-let-your-child-catch-it-flyer-school-Jan23.pdf
- NHS leaflet on measles (translations) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-dont-let-your-child-catch-it-flyer-for-schools>
- NHS poster on measles (English) - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a997edeed915d57d1335ca4/Measles_A3_poster_Feb2018.pdf
- How to register with a GP - <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery/>