



# Department of Health

*From the Chief Medical Officer,  
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25<sup>th</sup> April 2013

To: General Practitioners  
Local Authority Directors of Public Health

Copy: Local Authority Chief Executives  
Directors of NHS England Area Teams  
Directors of NHS England Regional Teams  
Directors of Public Health England Regions  
Directors of Public Health England Centres

Dear Colleague

## **Rising levels of Measles**

We are all aware of the rise in cases of measles. You will need to be watchful in your work for the symptoms. The purpose of this letter, however, is to seek your help, in light of the current situation in Wales, in reducing further cases of measles occurring in England. I would like to emphasise the importance of ensuring that as many children as possible have received the MMR vaccine.

On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013, Public Health England published information which indicates a rise in measles cases in the first three months of 2013. Although the rate of cases of measles in England is lower than currently seen in South Wales, some local outbreaks are occurring, especially in communities where immunisation coverage had been low.

Ten years ago, we had eliminated measles from the UK but transmission became re-established in 2006 as a result of the decline in immunisation uptake that followed the now discredited theories about measles vaccine being linked to bowel disease and autism. Whilst cases are occurring currently in all age groups, they are primarily affecting individuals who have not had any doses of MMR vaccine, especially those young people aged between 10 and 16 years.

It is vitally important that as many children as possible are protected against measles by receiving both doses of MMR. I therefore urge you to consider who in your practice may not have had the MMR vaccine and take up any opportunities to offer this. This, combined with the media coverage of the current measles epidemic in Wales and a communication campaign in England, is likely to result in an increase of children coming forward for vaccination. You will therefore want to ensure that your orders of MMR vaccine reflect this. At this time, we have significant stocks of MMR vaccine but I would also ask you to

be responsible in your ordering of additional supplies (through the usual ImmForm process).

Meanwhile, plans are afoot for a catch-up campaign, which Local Area teams will develop to enable tailored, targeted catch-up for individuals not adequately protected against measles, mumps and rubella. The aim is to make rapid progress to ensure all children/young people aged between 10-16 years who have never been vaccinated, or have had only one dose, will be fully immunised by September 2013. Detailed local plans are still in development and will be communicated locally and I urge you to work with Area Teams collaboratively across the health system to achieve the goal of preventing any escalation of the present situation, with the goal of returning to a time when measles is no longer a risk. At this time, it is vitally important that the current measles situation is used to highlight the importance of the MMR vaccine.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally C Davies'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Sally' written in a larger, more prominent script than the initials 'C Davies'.

**PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER**