**July 2015**

**Dear Head Teacher**

**Changes to meningococcal vaccination in schools**

**This information is for head teachers and school staff regarding the new meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccination being offered to young people in secondary schools from September 2015. It is not intended for pupils or parents/guardians as they will receive specific information at the appropriate time.**

**Background to the programme**

From September 2015, young people will be offered MenACWY vaccine in place of the current routine MenC vaccine given in school years 9 or 10. In addition, there will be a one-off catch-up exercise to vaccinate school year 11 pupils from January 2016.

This schools programme is part of a wider MenACWY programme to vaccinate all young people aged 13-18 years of age (schools years 9-13), and to offer vaccination to older first time university entrants (‘freshers’).

This programme is being introduced to respond to a rapid and accelerating increase in cases of invasive meningococcal group W (MenW) disease. The vaccination of this age group will not just protect these young people but also help to protect children and adults across the population. It is based on advice from an independent expert committee, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which advises the Government on vaccination.

For most young people MenACWY vaccine will be offered through schools, although in a few areas it may be through alternative schemes. The reason that the programme is mostly being offered in schools is because experience shows that this form of delivery is very effective at reaching the target population, ensuring good vaccine uptake. Year 13 students in the 2014/15 academic year will be offered vaccination through their GP practice starting in August. Arrangements to cover those pupils who will be in school years 12 and 13 in the 2015/16 academic year will be confirmed before the end of 2015.

Further information about the programme is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/meningococcal-acwy-menacwy-vaccination-programme>

Further information about MenW disease and the vaccine is available here:

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/pages/men-acwy-vaccine.aspx>

This programme is being managed by NHS England’s local teams. To start the programme a letter, information leaflet and consent form will be sent to schools to issue to the pupils in the target group. In the letter parents are asked to complete the enclosed consent form and return it to the school. Because of the urgency of this matter we would ask for your help in providing facilities for vaccinations to take place and encouraging parents to complete the consent form and return them to your school.

Your support and co-operation is greatly appreciated in helping us to protect young people against this potentially devastating disease. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact [insert name] on [insert number] in the NHS England local team.

Yours sincerely,



Joanne Yarwood

# National Immunisation Programme Manager