



News Release

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Latest measles cases published as part of national catch-up programme

-6 more cases across Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire in April-

The first monthly confirmed case data for South Midlands and Hertfordshire Public Health England Centre area is published today, as part of the national MMR catch-up programme. The figures show a further 6 cases of the preventable, infectious disease, on top of 5 cases from January to March this year.

In England there were 288 cases in April, bringing the total number so far in 2013 to 962. This continues the trend seen since early 2012 with monthly totals around the highest recorded levels seen since 1994. The regions most affected continue to be the North West and North East where there have been outbreaks of the infection.

In line with trends across the country, the number of cases of measles has continued to rise in South Midlands and Hertfordshire. Up to the end of April, 11 cases were confirmed, following a total of 14 cases in 2012. (See notes in editors for breakdown by local authority).

The national catch-up programme to increase MMR vaccination uptake in children and teenagers has so far resulted in more than 95 per cent of GP practices across England ordering extra doses of the vaccine – over 200,000 extra in total.

The catch-up programme, run by Public Health England, NHS England, the Department of Health, and local authorities, aims to prevent measles outbreaks by giving MMR to as many unvaccinated and partially vaccinated 10-16 year olds as possible in time for the next school year.

This age group are most at risk of measles due to the fall in coverage of MMR that occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s when concern around the discredited link between autism and the vaccine was widespread.

During this period, vaccination uptake fell to as low as 80 per cent in 2005, with lower rates in some parts of the country. Today MMR coverage among five year olds in England is at its highest recorded levels, with 94 per cent receiving one dose and 90 per cent receiving two doses.

Cath Fenton, Screening and Immunisation Lead, Hertfordshire & South Midlands said:

“Our ambition is to vaccinate 95 per cent of 10-16 year olds in time for the next school year. Local public health teams have been working hard to encourage uptake in children and teenagers across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes. The message to parents who think their child may not be fully immunised is to check today and book an appointment with your GP. The vaccine is there ready to be used and could save your child’s life. Measles is a serious illness which can lead to serious complications.

“We are getting regular feedback from the local NHS teams about what is happening on the ground and are encouraged by the very high levels of involvement by GP practices across the area. We will shortly be getting results from a new monitoring system that will tell us the number of vaccines given to children.

“We are continuing to work closely with NHS partners to ensure we have accurate records of children who have missed vaccination, to help guide effective local decision making about possible additional targeted activity.”

In addition to the more imminent risk of measles, unvaccinated or partially vaccinated young people will remain susceptible to infection with mumps and rubella. During the first quarter of 2013 (January – March), in England there were 948 cases of mumps. So far, we have seen very few cases of rubella (four) but if it were to come back, then it is a particularly serious risk to young women and their unborn babies.

ENDS

Notes to editors

Table: Confirmed cases of measles by month and year with a comparison to the previous years by Local Authority for South Midlands and Hertfordshire Public Health England Centre area

No – Number of Confirmed cases Rate – Cases per 100,000 person years	Month				Year					
	Apr 2013	Mar 2013	Feb 2013	Jan 2013	Year to date (up to 30 April 2013)		Previous year (2012 up to 30 April 2013)		Previous year (Total 2012)	
					No	Rate	No	Rate	No	Rate
South Midlands and Hertfordshire PHE Centre	6	3	1	1	11	1.25	6	0.68	14	0.52
Bedford	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central Bedfordshire	1	1	1	0	3	3.57	0	0	2	0.78
Luton	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Milton Keynes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hertfordshire	5	1	0	1	7	1.90	6	1.62	10	0.89
Northamptonshire	0	1	0	0	1	0.44	0	0	2	0.29

1. The number of vaccinations ordered cannot be broken down to a regional / local level.
2. The catch-up programme sets out a national framework within which local teams – led by NHS England Area Teams, working alongside Directors of Public Health in Local Government, and supported by PHE Centres – are producing tailored plans to identify and give MMR to unvaccinated and partially vaccinated 10-16 year olds through GPs and/or school programmes. Local intelligence may reveal the need to expand the focus of the catch-up activity beyond the 10-16 year old age groups and where this is recognised, further local action will be taken.
3. Key resources for healthcare professionals involved in the MMR catch up programme are available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england/series/MMR-catch-up-programme-2013>.
4. A table of confirmed cases of Measles, Mumps and Rubella 1996-2012 is available from: http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&HPAwebStandard/HPAweb_C/1195733833790
The PHE Health Protection Report articles on measles cases in April 2013 (including cases by region and age group) and measles, mumps and rubella cases for quarter 1 (January-March 2013) are available from the press office under embargo.
5. For more information on measles and MMR, visit: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/Measles/measles/MMR> or <http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

6. A Facebook page, www.facebook.com/getvaccinatedEngland has also been set up for parents with any questions about the MMR vaccine we are using #getthemmr with partners on Twitter.
7. Public Health England is a new executive agency of the Department of Health that took up its full responsibilities on 1 April, 2013. PHE works with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation's health and support healthier choices and will be addressing inequalities by focusing on removing barriers to good health. To find out more visit our website www.gov.uk/phe, follow us on Twitter @PHE_uk.

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