



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health



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Chief Executive

Friday message

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Dear everyone

It has been a busy week for our immunisation team with key announcements on programmes which will protect both our younger and older generations. The start of the week saw the launch of the new [MenACWY vaccination programme](#) which will offer teenagers protection against four of the meningococcal strains which cause meningitis and septicaemia. The vaccine is being introduced in response to a rapid increase in cases of a highly aggressive strain of meningococcal disease, called group W, in recent years. Older teenagers and young adults are most at risk and so GPs will now begin to invite teenagers aged 17 and 18 for the vaccine and from January 2016 a catch-up campaign for younger student groups will begin through schools. Meningitis and septicaemia, caused by meningococcal group B (MenB) disease, can also have a devastating impact, often on very young children, leading to long-term health effects and sadly sometimes to deaths. So the good news is that a vaccine that protects against MenB will be added to the routine childhood immunisation programme in England from 1 September this year. The provision of clear advice to healthcare professionals and parents about the new programme, and in particular the recommended prophylactic use of paracetamol, is crucial for successful implementation. This week PHE and NHS England published a [letter](#) to remind local commissioners and providers of their responsibility for directing parents to information on MenB vaccination and signpost the resources which have been made available. Last but not least, the latest eligible groups for the shingles vaccine were also announced this week, through a [letter](#) to healthcare professionals. Currently more than half of those eligible have been vaccinated and we are keen to see this success continue, to reduce the number of cases of shingles in later years, with symptoms which can be debilitating and painful for older people.

The ability to read is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children. It is the key to the door of life, which is why I am delighted to have joined the strategy board for the [Read On. Get On.](#) campaign. This national initiative brings together a coalition of charities, businesses and individuals with the aim of ensuring that, by 2025, every child in the UK is able to read well by the time they leave primary school. Currently two in five poorer children leave primary school without being able to read well, often hampered by a poor start in their pre-school years. We know that those who have reached Key Stage 4 reading as they move into secondary school are almost certain to go on to achieve at least five grades A-C GCSEs, while those who have not have a less than one in ten chance of attaining these. Next week the *Read On. Get On.* campaign launches a series of 'story starter' activities for parents of under 5s, based on popular children's characters, to inspire them to create stories with their children and help boost their language and reading skills. PHE will be working closely with the campaign secretariat at Save the Children over the coming months to support this important national programme.

The voluntary and community sector is a vital asset to the country and offers relevant and often very cost effective care and support for the most vulnerable. Together with the Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Advisory Board, NHS England and the Department of Health we are today launching two consultations, one looking at current [partnership working](#) and the other at the role and effectiveness of the Government's current ['voluntary sector investment partnership' grants](#). We know we can do better and more by working even closer together and we look forward to receiving feedback on how to achieve this.

And finally, I am away with my family from mid next week for two weeks and my next Friday message will be on 4 September.

With best wishes