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Our Ref:
Measles 2024

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FAO Manager

Important: Measles cases are rising in the UK

Measles cases in the UK have been rising since November 2023. While Rotherham has no outbreaks at the moment, London and the West Midlands has seen a large rise in cases, and cases are now being identified in other areas, including South Yorkshire.

The UK Health Security Agency has declared the increase in cases of measles a national incident (19 January 2024). There is the potential for cases and outbreaks in Rotherham as uptake of the Measles Vaccination (MMR) in the parts of Rotherham is lower than recommended.

Measles is a highly infectious viral disease that can have serious and sometimes fatal consequences. Measles spreads quickly from person to person, especially in schools. Spending more than 15 minutes in direct contact with someone infected with measles is sufficient to transmit the virus. A child with measles will infect almost all unprotected children they have contact with. Measles is spread through coughing and sneezing, close personal contact or direct contact with infected nasal or throat secretions.

For more information about measles and the symptoms, see Measles - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

Important for staff and pupils

If someone thinks they have measles they should not come into your setting or work for at least 4 days from when the rash first appears. Your setting could be impacted if unvaccinated staff or children contract measles. Unvaccinated individuals are at risk of contracting measles and, if identified as a close contact of someone with measles they may be asked to self-isolate for up to 21 days. If a member of staff has not been vaccinated or had measles previously, they will need to be excluded for 21 days following contact with a case. Your business continuity plans need to account for the

possible isolation of staff in the event of an outbreak, in your area. Staff members may have to isolate more than once, if exposed on more than one occasion.

Call to action

We are urgently asking that you advise your staff and parents to be alert to signs and symptoms of measles and ask parents to check that their children are fully vaccinated. If anyone has missed one or both doses of the MMR vaccine, it is not too late to catch up. Please can you advise parents to contact their GP practice to book an appointment as soon as possible if they have missed either dose. The MMR vaccine is free on the NHS, whatever your age. Our best protection against measles is MMR vaccination and this will help stop outbreaks occurring in the community.

Contents of this letter and the attached information may be distributed to staff and parents. This information has been produced with the assistance of UKHSA, we would appreciate your assistance in helping your staff and families to access this incredibly important information, and assisting with breaking down barriers that may prevent the information being accessible.

In addition, further advice and guidance can be found here:

[MEASLES - Protect yourself, protect others \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/01/22/what-to-do-if-you-think-your-child-hasmeasles-and-when-to-keep-them-off-school/>

Yours sincerely



Ben Anderson
Director of Public Health

Think Measles

About Measles

The United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has declared a national incident following Measles outbreaks in London and West Midlands. The best protection against measles for children and adults is to get both doses of the MMR vaccine.

Measles is a highly infectious, serious illness that can be very unpleasant. Those most at risk are under 1's, the unvaccinated, immuno-compromised or pregnant woman. There is no specific treatment available, so it is important to get vaccinated to avoid serious illness.

In the UK, children are routinely offered the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccination when they reach 1 year old, and a follow-up dose at 3 years and 4 months.

In recent years, the number of children vaccinated against measles has fallen. In Rotherham, just over 90% have had the two doses required for maximum protection. This is just below the 95% target set by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is necessary to achieve and maintain elimination.

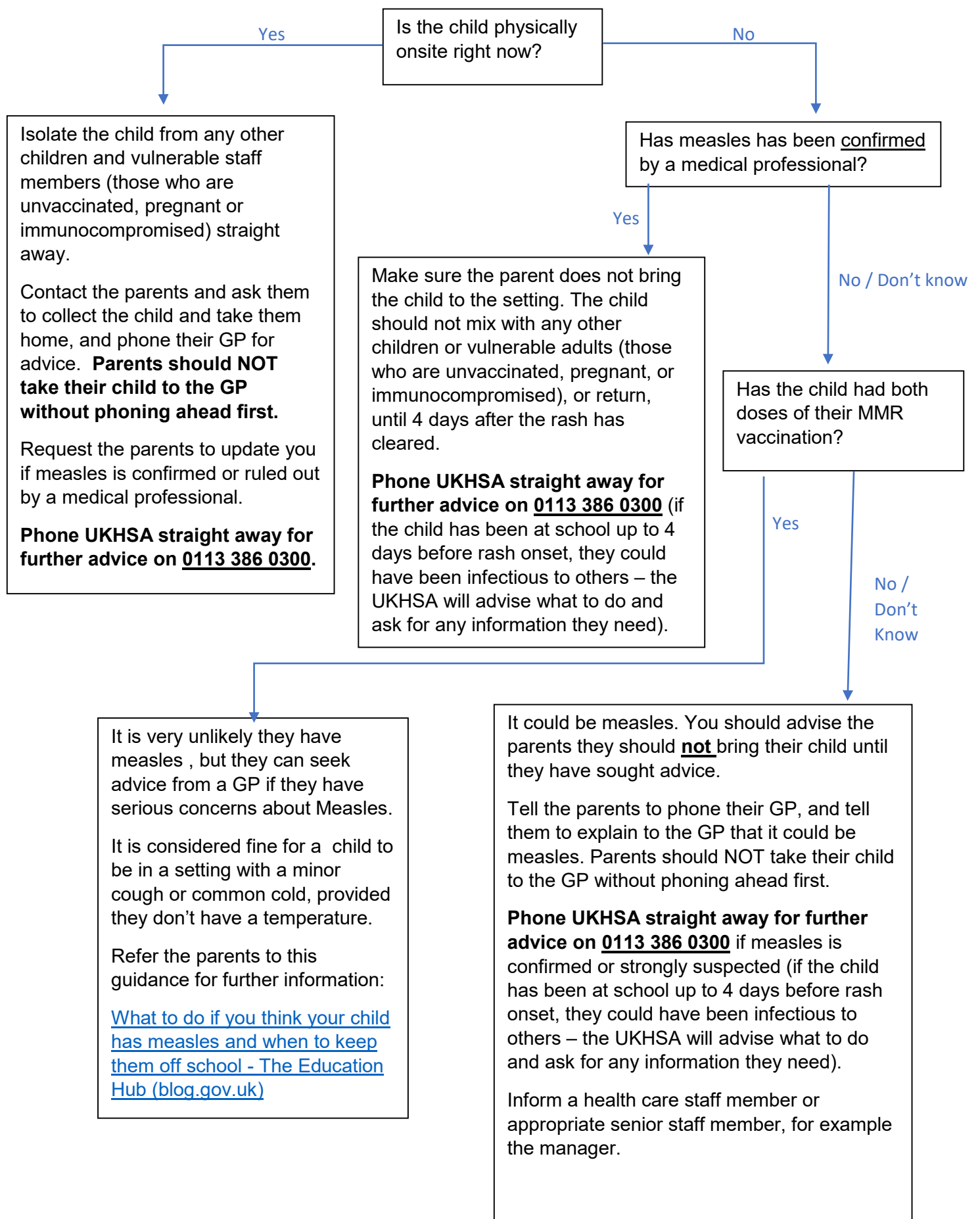
The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is calling on all parents and guardians to make sure their children are up to date with their 2 MMR doses. It's never too late to catch up, and you can get the MMR vaccine for free on the NHS whatever your age.

What are the symptoms of measles?

- Usually starts with cold-like symptoms
- High fever
- Sore red watery eyes
- Cough and/or runny nose
- Small red spots with bluish-white centres inside the mouth
- A red/brown blotchy rash which appears several days later, rough to the touch, and harder to see on darker skin tones



What to do if a child at your setting has measles or suspected measles



Advice to staff and other children if there is a positive case in the setting

The UKHSA will be able to advise based on the specific situation. Children in the same area as a suspected or confirmed measles case should **not** automatically be sent home to isolate. Many of them will already be fully vaccinated, and not at risk of contracting measles. Senior Staff may, however, wish to consider excluding unvaccinated pupils who have been exposed, because of the risk to other children.

Parents should be informed that, if their child has had both MMR doses, they will be protected against measles and there is no need to keep their child away just because someone else in the setting has measles.

Contacts of cases at higher risk of developing measles (such as unvaccinated siblings, or unvaccinated staff members who have had contact of more than 15 minutes in the same room with the case), may be asked to self-exclude from school/nursery for the incubation period (21 days after contact with a case of measles). Vulnerable children and staff members (such as those who are pregnant), may also wish to self-isolate for 21 days. Those who've had two doses of the MMR vaccine do **not** need to isolate.

If you require further advice or support with communications, following an outbreak in your setting, please contact Public Health at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council: health.protection@rotherham.gov.uk.

How you can prepare

You may wish to consider the following in the short-term:

- Send out one of the letters in the appendix to all parents/guardians, explaining the symptoms of measles, encouraging them to check if their child is vaccinated, and what to do if their child gets measles. One is a simplified version if you think it would work better.
- Print and display copies of [Measles: don't let your child catch it flyer \(for schools\) - Health Publications](#) (available in multiple languages [here](#)).
- Let staff know about the risks of measles, and encourage them to check their vaccination status and [get vaccinated with MMR](#) if they haven't had two doses already.
 - There is a section regarding staff immunisations available as part of this guidance: [Supporting immunisation programmes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

- Ensure your Business Continuity plans are up-to-date. You may wish to think about:
 - Where a child with measles could be isolated whilst they are waiting to be collected
 - Provisions for if unvaccinated or vulnerable staff members have to take time off to isolate. The guidance indicates that unvaccinated staff members who have been in contact with a confirmed measles case for 15 minutes or more will need to isolate for 21 days. Other staff members, such as those who are pregnant or immunocompromised, may also wish to isolate as a precaution. This could potentially mean a number of staff off from work at the same time.

Contact RMBC Public Health if you require further advice or support at: health.protection@rotherham.gov.uk.

Guidance and further support

If in doubt, report any suspected case to the Yorkshire and the Humber Health protection team by phoning: **0113 386 0300**.

For general information and support, email RMBCs Public Health team on: health.protection@rotherham.gov.uk (not for clinical enquiries, and do not use for sending sensitive or personal information).

- [National measles guidelines January 2024 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [Managing specific infectious diseases: A to Z - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)
- NHS 111 / [Check your symptoms - NHS 111](https://www.nhs.uk)
- [Measles: information for schools and healthcare centres - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
- [What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](https://blog.gov.uk)

Thank you.

Denise Littlewood

Health Protection Principal

Tel: 01709 255054

Email: health.protection@rotherham.gov.uk

Appendix – Suggested letters for sending to parents

National Measles Incident

The United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) has declared a national incident following Measles outbreaks in London and West Midlands. The best protection against measles for children and adults is to get both doses of the MMR vaccine.

In response to this we would like to share with you the advice from UKHSA currently:

Measles is a highly infectious, serious illness that can be very unpleasant. Those most at risk are under 1's, the unvaccinated, immuno-compromised or pregnant woman. There is no specific treatment available, so it is important to get vaccinated to avoid serious illness.

If you and your child have been vaccinated, it's very unlikely you will catch Measles.

Symptoms of Measles

- **Usually starts with cold-like symptoms**
- **High fever**
- **Sore red watery eyes**
- **Cough and/or runny nose**
- **Small red spots with bluish-white centres inside the mouth**
- **A red/brown blotchy rash which appears several days later, rough to the touch.**

You should keep your child away from the setting for at least 4 days from when the rash first appeared and until they are completely recovered. [This guidance](#) explains when you should and should not send your child to an education setting.

Keep your child away from babies, anyone who is pregnant and those with a weakened immune system. If you have any of these vulnerable groups within your household, please seek advice from your GP.

'THINK' Measles

If you think your child has measles or has been in contact in the last 3 weeks with someone with a confirmed case of measles, then please stay at home and call your GP surgery.

- **DO NOT** bring your child to school or nursery.
- **DO NOT** visit the GP surgery/ out of hours, or Hospital.
- **CALL** ahead to the GP surgery so measures can be put in place for your arrival.

Children in school who are suspected of having measles will be isolated and parents will be asked to collect promptly.

Vaccination

If you are unsure about whether your child is due a vaccine or has missed a vaccination you can check your vaccination status by calling your GP surgery or checking your 'red book'. If your child has missed one of their MMR's call your GP surgery and book an appointment.

The MMR schedule is usually 1 vaccine at 12 months old and a 2nd vaccine at pre-school, around 3 years and 4 months. For adults it's never too late to get vaccinated. Adults require 2 vaccines at 4 weeks apart.

You can request a version of the MMR vaccine that **does not contain pork products** from your GP surgery, making it suitable for all faiths. Please note that the GP practice may need

to order this product in specially, so it will be helpful to tell the GP surgery before the appointment.

MMR vaccine is not advised during pregnancy, those women of childbearing age should avoid getting pregnant for at least 4 weeks following vaccination.

Pregnant women are advised to contact their midwife/GP surgery if they believe they have come into contact with Measles. Pregnant women who suspect they might have Measles should **not** go to antenatal clinic or any other maternity setting until they have been assessed.

The information provided by UKHSA, should provide clarity and reassurance. We ask that you remain vigilant over the half term holiday and if you are in any doubt about sending your child into school unwell, we would appreciate you considering keeping them at home.

Please follow the links below for further information and guidance:

- [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- [Think Measles! \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- [Pregnant? Immunisation helps to protect you and your baby from infectious diseases \(publishing.Services.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.Services.gov.uk)
- [What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)

Simplified letter.

Measles

The number of Measles cases in England is increasing. The best protection against measles for children and adults is to get both doses of a vaccine (MMR).

Measles is a highly infectious, serious illness that can be very unpleasant. It is important to get vaccinated to avoid serious illness.

If you and your child have been vaccinated, it's very unlikely you will catch Measles.

Symptoms of Measles

- **Cold-like symptoms**
- **High Temperature**
- **Sore red watery eyes**
- **Cough and/or runny nose**
- **Spots inside the mouth**
- **A red/brown blotchy rash which appears several days later, rough to the touch.**

You should keep your child away from playgroup/nursery until they are completely recovered.

Keep your child away from babies, anyone who is pregnant and those with a weakened immune system. If you have any of these within your household, please seek advice from your Doctor.

'THINK' Measles

If you think your child has measles or has been in contact in the last 3 weeks with someone with a confirmed case of measles, stay at home and call your GP surgery.

- **DO NOT** take your child to school or nursery.
- **DO NOT** visit the Doctors, or Hospital.
- **CALL** ahead to the Doctors surgery so measures can be put in place for your arrival.

Children who are suspected of having measles will be isolated and parents will be asked to collect promptly.

Vaccination

If you are unsure about whether your child is due a vaccine or has missed a vaccination you need to check with your Doctor. If your child has missed one of their MMR's please book an appointment at your Doctors.

Children usually have 1 vaccine at 12 months old and a 2nd vaccine at pre-school. For adults it's never too late to get vaccinated. Adults require 2 vaccines.

You can request a vaccine that **does not contain pork** from your surgery, making it suitable for everyone.

Further Help

Please look out for the symptoms of Measles and if you are not sure whether to send your child into school unwell, please consider keeping them at home.

Please follow the links below for further information and guidance:

- [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- [Think Measles! \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)
- [Pregnant? Immunisation helps to protect you and your baby from infectious diseases \(publishing.Services.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.Services.gov.uk)
- [What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)