

# Moving the Mountain

Navigating Challenges in Childhood Vaccination

“These are historic challenges. And it just seems to me that they are mountains that nobody could move for whatever reason.”

– Vaccine Delivery Partner<sup>1</sup>

## Rates of childhood vaccination in Wandsworth MMR vaccination

The MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps, and rubella diseases.

The WHO recommends that 95% of children are fully vaccinated against MMR<sup>2</sup>. In 2022/23, only 74.1% of children aged five years in Wandsworth were fully vaccinated against MMR<sup>3</sup>.

The proportion of children that are fully vaccinated against MMR by age five years has fallen over the past decade.

It is estimated that approximately one in four children in Wandsworth born between April 2008 and March 2018 are unprotected or insufficiently protected against MMR<sup>4</sup>.

In 1967 there were **460,407\*** notified cases of measles<sup>5</sup>

\*in England and Wales

In 2014 **130\*** confirmed cases of measles

“There’s a lot of misinformation about when you got a baby. It’s quite emotional and you feel like you don’t want to do any harm to them.”

– Parent<sup>6</sup>

## HPV vaccination The HPV vaccine protects against human papillomavirus, which can increase the risk of developing some cancers, including cervical cancer, later in life.



The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that 90% of children are fully vaccinated against HPV<sup>12</sup>. In 2022/23, 84% of girls and 81% of boys completed their full course of HPV vaccination<sup>13</sup>.

78.7%

70.6%



It is estimated that in Wandsworth approximately one in eight girls born between September 2003 and August 2009, and one in three boys born between September 2006 and August 2009, may not have received HPV vaccination<sup>14</sup>.

## ‘How can vaccination rates be improved?’

Within our engagement, we asked residents and partners how they felt childhood vaccination rates could be improved. Their suggestions were categorised into four themes:



1 Encouraging and empowering parents to make informed decisions about vaccination



2 Enhancing the vaccine delivery system



3 Improving local vaccination data



4 Collaboration across the vaccination system

The report concludes with ten local recommendations to be prioritised and advanced by the local vaccine delivery system. The report calls for a collaborative approach with partners working at regional and national levels.

Together, we will move the mountain.

## Why are target vaccination rates not achieved in Wandsworth?

Public Health engagement with residents and partners highlighted many reasons why target vaccination rates are not achieved in Wandsworth. Many of these challenges are not unique to Wandsworth and are experienced similarly across London and the UK.

- **Inequalities in childhood vaccinations** – some groups of children are less likely than others to receive vaccination.
- **Vaccine hesitancy and refusal** – some parents decide not to vaccinate their children because they do not feel confident in the safety of vaccines, have concerns about side effects, and/or are complacent about the potential risks of not providing vaccination.
- **Practical barriers** – some parents do not vaccinate their children because vaccination appointments are not available, or have not been provided in a way that is accessible or convenient to them.
- **System limitations** – partners working within the vaccine delivery system may not have the capacity, resources, and incentives to carry out work to improve vaccination rates.
- **Engagement of schools** – poor relations between schools and the school-aged immunisation provider teams can limit the success of school-aged vaccination programmes, such as HPV.
- **The COVID-19 pandemic** – as well as disrupting the delivery of some vaccination programmes such as HPV, the pandemic also impacted public attitudes to vaccines.
- **Accuracy of data records** – local investigations have shown that there are inaccuracies within NHS vaccination records, which prevents an accurate understanding of vaccination rates in Wandsworth.



Moving the Mountain is the 2024 Annual Director of Public Health Report for Wandsworth. Insights for the report were generated through comprehensive engagement with people closest to the childhood vaccination programme in Wandsworth.

🔗 To read the full report [click here](#)

## Childhood vaccinations

After clean water, vaccination is the most effective public health intervention for saving lives and promoting good health. It is the safest and most cost-effective way to protect individuals and communities from preventable diseases that could cause significant illness or death.

However, a global decline in childhood vaccinations is leaving our population increasingly susceptible to diseases that are preventable<sup>7</sup>. In 2019 the World Health Organisation (WHO) named “Vaccine Hesitancy” as one of the top ten threats to global health<sup>8</sup>.

## Measles

Measles is a very infectious viral illness that can lead to serious, and sometimes fatal, complications, particularly in immunosuppressed individuals and young infants<sup>9</sup>. Public Health England (PHE) estimate that since the measles vaccine was introduced in 1967, 20 million cases of measles and 4,500 deaths have been averted in the UK<sup>10</sup>. Although the UK briefly achieved endemic measles elimination in 2016 and 2017, falling vaccination rates have led to outbreaks in recent years<sup>11</sup>.

We heard from...



322 parents



24 young people



28 GP staff



12 vaccine delivery partners