

22 July 2010

To: Immunisation Co-ordinators,
Local Directors of Public Health

Gateway Reference Number: 14614

Dear Colleague

Subject: Measles outbreaks in Gypsy and Traveller communities

The Health Protection Agency has alerted us to several outbreaks of measles within Gypsy and Traveller communities across the UK this summer. It is difficult to monitor uptake of the MMR vaccine within the Gypsy and Traveller community but it is our understanding that levels of immunisation are low. If this is correct it means that Gypsies and Travellers in your area could be at increased risk of catching measles, especially if they are travelling to large Gypsy and Traveller events during the summer.

GPs should be reminded that they should notify all suspected cases of measles. Guidance relating to notification can be found at:

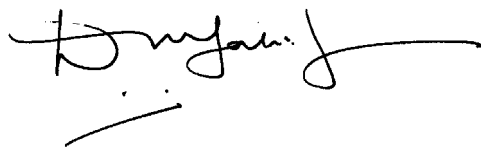
www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/NotificationsOfInfectiousDiseases/ReportingProcedures/

I would urge all PCTs to contact any Gypsy and Traveller communities in their area and offer outreach to provide immunisations to anyone within the community who has not received two doses of the MMR vaccine, or anyone who is unsure whether they have received two doses of the MMR vaccine. This is especially important for those less than 25 years old, but also unvaccinated older individuals who request vaccination.

PCTs should also ask their GPs to take the opportunity to offer impromptu MMR vaccination to any Gypsies and Travellers using their practice. If a PCT is aware of a Gypsy or Traveller event or gathering in their area they may wish to consider engaging with the community and offering MMR vaccination at the event. Where PCTs do not have links with this community, local authority or other partners may be able to offer assistance.

I am grateful for your continued efforts to increase immunisation uptake and protect the Gypsy and Traveller community,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D M Salisbury', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor D M SALISBURY CB
FRCP FRCPCH FFPH
Director of Immunisation