

Public Health Wales Briefing: Recent increases in Measles cases in England (including in regions bordering Wales), and other European countries

Date of briefing: 23rd July 2025

Intended audience:

Welsh Government

- CMO
- CNO
- Health Protection inbox

Health Boards:

- Directors of Public Health (DPH)
- Health Protection Leads
- Medical Directors to cascade to relevant clinicians including acute medicine, emergency medicine, respiratory medicine, paediatrics, occupational health, primary care, and IP&C

PHW:

- All Wales Microbiology & Virology
- Health Protection Team (including all OOHs clinicians)
- Consultant Epidemiologists
- EPRR for information
- Specialist Registrars

Local Authorities:

- Lead Officers

Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST)

The above recipients are requested to cascade this briefing to their wider teams (where applicable), for information and awareness.

1 Background and Main information

Measles cases have increased in England over the past three months. Case numbers are highest in London, but other affected Regions include the North-West (including Manchester, Salford, Merseyside and Cheshire), the South-West (including Bristol), Yorkshire and Humber (including Leeds), the West Midlands and the East of England.

Cases have also increased in many countries across Europe, including popular holiday destinations. Highest case numbers as of May 2025 were in Romania, France, Belgium, Italy, Germany and the Netherlands.

Although case numbers in Wales are currently low, there is a high risk of imported cases. This includes visitors from affected areas of England or other countries experiencing outbreaks, or in residents returning to Wales from affected areas of England or other countries. There is an additional risk of transmission from imported cases when children return to school in September.

Epidemiological update

As at 16 July 2025, 529 cases had been confirmed in England this year. This total is expected to increase throughout the summer. This compared to 2,911 for 2024. Although case numbers for 2025 are lower than 2024, by July all English regions have seen confirmed cases, clusters or outbreaks.

As of 22 July 2025, there has been one confirmed case in Wales in a Wales resident. There have been additional reported cases in English residents attending health care in Wales and Welsh residents may work in, or seek healthcare, in England which may result in additional exposures.

Case numbers in England are highest in children aged 10 years or younger (68%) and include infants younger than 12 months. Cases have been confirmed in areas from all quintiles of deprivation and from a range of ethnic groups, although case numbers are highest in the most deprived two quintiles of deprivation. The majority of confirmed cases have been in unvaccinated children.

Case numbers during 2025 increased most rapidly during April, and although current trends suggest a slight decrease in the most recent month, it is unknown whether this will be sustained throughout the summer. In the 4 weeks, 66% of cases were in London, with 24% of cases in the North-West.

In a [recent open letter](#), Alder Hey Children's NHS Trust in England highlighted an increase in the number of children being treated for the effects and complications of measles. The specialist NHS Trust further highlighted additional risks for vulnerable children, which includes babies <1 year of age and those already in hospital for other reasons, including children with cancer.

Previous outbreaks in Wales have included exposures to symptomatic measles cases in health care settings. Measles is one of the most infectious viruses that exists. Early identification of symptoms and prompt action to limit exposure to infectious patients in health care settings is essential in preventing outbreaks and transmission to vulnerable patients. In 2025, there have been 2 confirmed cases of measles in Wales.

2. Recommendations and actions

All stakeholders

Should be aware of the risks of measles in Wales residents visiting and returning from affected regions of England and other European countries. Opportunities to promote and facilitate catch-up MMR vaccination in children and young adults, especially prior to travel should be maximised.

Health Boards and Clinicians

In addition to offering or facilitating opportunistic MMR catch-up, clinicians should be aware of the increased risk of seeing patients with measles, from both a diagnosis and infection prevention and control perspective.

Suspected cases of measles should be notified urgently to [Public Health Wales](#) on 0300 00 300 32 by a registered medical practitioner. Clinicians should consider obtaining samples for confirmatory testing where there is a high index of suspicion. If clinicians are taking samples, please liaise with the local microbiology team.

Health boards should ensure that they have clear pathways in place to ensure administration of HNIG where indicated following health protection risk assessment of contacts.

Prompt recognition and actions to reduce exposure from suspected cases in health care settings are vital in preventing onwards transmission. Suspected cases (especially patients with a febrile rash illness, regardless of vaccination status) are directly isolated and assessed in single rooms to avoid potential waiting room and shared clinical area exposures, following the necessary IPC precautions as set out in the [National Infection Control Manual for Wales](#).

Clinicians should also be aware of their own MMR vaccination status and take action to ensure they have received the full two-dose course advised in the routine UK schedule. NHS Occupational Health services are recommended to routinely check staff MMR-status as appropriate and ensure that the actions outlined

in the [Welsh Health Circular \(2023/43\)](#) regarding vaccination of healthcare staff against measles have been implemented.

Diagnostic laboratories

Diagnostic laboratories should be aware of a potential increase in the demand for measles PCR testing.

PHW Health Protection Team and OOH staff

The Public Health Wales Health Protection Team and out of hours staff should be aware of potential increases in measles cases being notified and potential for onward transmission, clusters and outbreaks from imported cases.

In addition to any diagnostic testing all suspected cases that are notified should also receive an oral fluid test kit for UK surveillance purposes.

4. Further information

Public Health Wales Health Protection Team and AWARE service can be contacted by telephone (0300 00 300 32) or email: AWARE@wales.nhs.uk . Further information is available here: <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/aware-health-protection-team/>

Welsh Health Circular (2023/043) – Vaccination of healthcare staff to protect against measles: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-12/vaccination-of-healthcare-staff-to-protect-against-measles.pdf>

National Infection Prevention & Control Manual for Wales: <https://phw.nhs.wales/services-and-teams/antibiotics-and-infections/nipcm/>

National guidelines on managing suspected case of measles are available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-measles-guidelines>

A staff MMR vaccination pack is available from the VPDP Sharepoint site: https://nhswales365.sharepoint.com/sites/PHW_VPDPComms/SitePages/MMR-Staff-Information-Pack.aspx?source

Guidance on MMR vaccinations and the UK schedule are included in the Green Book, Chapter 21: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-the-green-book-chapter-21>

Monthly update on confirmed cases of measles in England are available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/measles-epidemiology-2023>

Update on cases confirmed in other European countries are available ECDC: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/measles/surveillance-and-disease-data> and WHO: <https://immunizationdata.who.int/global?topic=Provisional-measles-and-rubella-data&location=>

Other resources on measles and MMR available from VPDP include:

- MMR public webpage: [Measles, Mumps and Rubella \(MMR\) - Public Health Wales](#)
- MMR healthcare professional webpage: [Measles, Mumps and Rubella \(MMR\) - Information for health professionals - Public Health Wales](#)
- You and your patients can order MMR leaflets for free here: [Babies and pre-school - Public Health Wales](#)
- [MMR immunisation toolkit for primary care](#): This document summarises measles and MMR information to support health professionals and their patients.
- [MMR A3 poster](#). Key messages for the public about the MMR vaccine
- [Is it measles?](#) Poster: Key messages for healthcare professionals in primary care

- We have MMR resources for prisons, which can be found here: [Measles, Mumps and Rubella \(MMR\) - Information for health professionals - Public Health Wales](#) (see sub-heading "MMR prison resources").
- MMR information, consent form and a briefing document for schools are available here: [Measles, Mumps and Rubella \(MMR\) - Information for health professionals - Public Health Wales](#) (see sub-heading "School vaccination programme").