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**To: Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)**

**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013.**

**Subject: Measles briefing**

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**1 Purpose of the Note**

- To inform the Scrutiny Board of the background and current arrangements for the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) immunisation catch-up campaign

**2 Recommendations**

- To note the details of the MMR catch-up programme in Coventry

**3 National context**

In April 2013, a national catch-up programme to increase MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccination uptake in children and teenagers was announced by Public Health England, NHS England and the Department of Health. This was in response to a sustained national rise in the number of measles cases.

The aim of the programme was for GP practices to identify and write to the parents of children aged 10 to 16 who were inadequately immunised and offer them the MMR vaccine. In addition, there would be a local communication strategy to raise awareness. The target was to ensure 95% of children received at least one dose of MMR before they returned to school in September 2013.

The rise in measles cases can be mostly attributed to the proportion of unprotected 10-16 year-olds who missed out on vaccination in the late 1990s and early 2000s when concern around the now thoroughly discredited link between autism and the vaccine was widespread. At this time measles had been eliminated in the UK, but coverage fell nationally to less than 80% in 2005, with even lower uptake in some parts of the country. After many years of low vaccination uptake, measles became re-established in 2007. In 2012, there was a record high of almost 2000 cases.

Measles is an unpleasant illness with cold-like symptoms followed by a rash accompanied by high fever, red eyes and a cough. It can be particularly severe in babies under the age of one year, teenagers and older people, especially those who have a weakened immune system. It can cause complications including pneumonia, ear infections, diarrhoea and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). Around one in every 10 children who get measles is admitted to hospital. In rare cases, people can die from measles. Measles is one of the most infectious diseases known and is spread by aerosols from the respiratory tract.

**4. Local context**

Coventry has a relatively high MMR uptake compared to the rest of the region. 97.1% of 2 year olds are immunised with MMR compared to only 93.1% for the region as a whole. Similarly,

96.4% of 5 year olds are fully immunised compared to 88.3% for the region a whole. However, modelling suggests that there are around 5000 children aged 10 to 16 who are inadequately immunised and at risk of measles. There were 3 confirmed cases of measles in Coventry between January and April 2013. This compares to 5 confirmed cases in the whole of 2012. A local Measles plan has been developed through a MMR Catch-up Steering group which includes Local Authority representation and is chaired by Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England. The LA role includes raising awareness of the campaign in schools and in some vulnerable groups. The first set of results from the programme is due to be available in July 2013.

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