

IMMUNISATION UPDATE 2022/23

Public Health Briefing for the Health & Social Care Scrutiny
Commission

To inform the NHS immunisation programme

Southwark Public Health and SEL ICB

March 2023

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted coverage of most immunisation programmes

INTRODUCTION

The routine UK immunisation schedule¹ aims to provide protection against a range of vaccine-preventable infections, for both children and adults.

COVID-19 has had a negative impact on many immunisation programmes, despite the national advice that routine childhood immunisations should continue throughout lockdown. School closures, physical distancing measures, limitations on gatherings, non-essential use of public transport and working from home have all impacted coverage.

Immunisation programmes are commissioned and delivered by the NHS, and this briefing aims to inform these programmes, by considering coverage and outlining some of the actions that have been taken to improve uptake and address inequalities during 2022/23.

It will focus on the following immunisation programmes:

- **Pre-school**
 - Hexavalent (given at 8, 12 and 16 weeks old)
 - MMR (given at 1 year and 18 months)
 - Pre-school booster (given at 3 years 4 months)
- **Polio**
 - Booster dose in response to the regional incident
- **School-age**
 - HPV (given in years 8 and 9)
 - Meningococcal groups A, C, W, Y (given in year 9)
- **COVID and flu**
 - Mainly seasonal (given to at risk groups)

1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1055877/UKHSA-12155-routine-complete-immunisation-schedule_Feb2022.pdf

In Southwark, coverage of some pre-school immunisations is higher than seen across London as a whole

PRE-SCHOOL IMMUNISATIONS

In Southwark, pre-school immunisation coverage is higher than London across most of the immunisation programmes.

- In 2021/22, coverage was 80% or above in Southwark for the pre-school immunisations of MMR, and 6-in-1 (hexavalent).
- Southwark had significantly higher coverage of MMR1 at 2 years, MMR2 at 5 years, 6-in-1 at 1 year, and pre-school booster when compared to London as a whole.
- When compared to London, Southwark also had slightly higher coverage of MMR1 at 5 years, though not significantly.
- Coverage of 6-in-1 (hexavalent) at 2 years is slightly worse than London, though not significantly.
- Coverage of all pre-school immunisations in Southwark remains lower than England.
- Since 2018/19, there has been a decrease in coverage of MMR1 at 2 years, and 6-in-1 at 2 years, with all other pre-school immunisations coverage remaining steady.

Figure 1: Coverage of pre-school immunisations across Southwark, London, and England, 2021/22

	Southwark	London	England	
MMR one dose at 2 years	83.4%	79.9%	89.2%	Significantly better than London
MMR one dose at 5 years	88.7%	87.8%	93.4%	Better than London, but not significantly
MMR two doses at 5 years	82.0%	74.2%	85.7%	Significantly better than London
6-in-1 at 1 year	88.2%	86.5%	91.8%	Significantly better than London
6-in-1 at 2 years	86.7%	87.2%	93.0%	Worse than London, but not significantly
Pre-school booster	77.5%	71.8%	84.2%	Significantly better than London

There is a programme of work to improve coverage of pre-school immunisations in lower uptake groups

PRE-SCHOOL IMMUNISATIONS

ACTIONS TAKEN

- Improved services and pathways in **asylum seeker and refugee settings** and developed plans to engage with and provide accessible information.
- Focussed on improving uptake in **areas of high deprivation**, by supporting practices, engaging with early years and nurseries and working closely with VCS organisations.
- Co-produced a research and **intervention project with the Latin American community** to understand and address barriers to childhood immunisations.
- Supported **ethnographic research**, for example with Nigerian mothers in Southwark.
- Agreed a local policy for giving the **second dose of MMR at 18 months** in Southwark.
- Created **contractual amendments for GPs** to encourage early delivery of MMR and high uptake.
- Developed and disseminated **best practice guidance and practice level reports**, following visits to practices with low and high uptake.
- Developed greater understanding and **assurance of high risk immunisation programmes**, such as Hepatitis B for high risk babies and BCG following screening for severe combined immunodeficiency.
- Developed a **programme of communications**, including targeting specific age groups (eg nurseries and primary schools), general (eg Council webpages, Southwark Life, E-Newsletter), and specific communities (eg asylum seekers).
- Initiated a **health equity audit on pre-school immunisations** to identify key inequities in access and uptake in Southwark.

All 1 to 9 years olds were invited for a polio vaccine during this campaign and further data will become available

POLIO RESPONSE

In 2022, the discovery of poliovirus in sewage samples in London resulted in a regional response that included offering a polio vaccine to all children aged 1 to 9 years old in London.

For some this would be an additional dose, for others it would bring them up to date with their vaccinations. The campaign ran from late August 2022 to December 2022.

Uptake:

- There were approximately 29,500 children aged between 1 and 9 years old in Southwark during the campaign.
- All 1 to 9 years olds were invited for a polio vaccine by the end of Sept 2022.
- As of September 2022 (near the start of the polio campaign)
 - 88.9% of those aged 5 years old in Southwark had had at least 1 course of polio containing vaccine
 - 73.7% had had the recommended two courses for their age group.
- NHS England will publish data on the uptake of the polio booster in due course. No other data on uptake since the start of the campaign has been published.

Response to the polio incident included actions targeting lower uptake groups and increasing clinic capacity

POLIO RESPONSE

ACTIONS TAKEN

- Increased **capacity in primary care** to deliver the vaccine, with additional clinics and mass vaccination sites.
- Engaged with **under-served communities** to raise awareness including:
 - translated messaging and promoted through community ambassadors
 - worked with asylum seekers and refugees and the Southwark Traveller Action Group
 - promoted through schools, looked after children leads, SEND organisations, early years settings, Homes for Ukraine caseworkers, parents of home-schooled children, holiday food and fun programme and children and family centres
- Delivered a **polio vaccination pop-up in Peckham** during October 2022 half-term.
- Worked with the Health Inclusion Team at GSTT to organise special **polio clinics for those living in initial accommodation centres**, including providing transport to vaccine hubs.
- Ensured all our GPs in Southwark are part of the **Safer Surgeries schemes**, ensuring lack of ID or proof of address, immigration status or language are not barriers to patient registration
- **Southwark Refugees Communities Forum commissioned** to set out programme of action to help local refugee communities engage with the Polio booster campaign in Southwark and increase vaccination uptake.
- **Latin American Women's Rights Service commissioned** to undertake a survey at a mum and baby group for Spanish-speaking women, to understand awareness about campaign and barriers to accessing immunisations.

Coverage of school-age HPV immunisations in Southwark is higher than across London as a whole

SCHOOL-AGE IMMUNISATIONS

In Southwark, there is significantly higher coverage of school-age HPV immunisations than compared to London as a whole.

- In 2020/21, both male and female HPV dose one vaccine coverage was significantly higher in Southwark compared to London as a whole, with coverage across Southwark standing at around 78% across both immunisation programmes.
- Southwark also had slightly higher coverage of HPV dose one in females than was seen across England as a whole, and significantly higher coverage of HPV dose one in males.
- Coverage of the Meningococcal ACWY vaccine in Southwark in 2020/21 stood at 77%. This is slightly worse than London, but not significantly. It is significantly lower than the 81% seen across England.
- The only published data available is from 2020/21. Anecdotal and unpublished reports suggest COVID-19 has had a negative impact on uptake during 2021/22, thought to be due to lockdown, sickness absence on vaccination days and school closures due to outbreaks.

Figure 2: Coverage of school-age immunisations across Southwark, London, and England, 2020/21

	Southwark	London	England	
HPV one dose (Female)	77.9%	71.0%	76.7%	Significantly better than London
HPV one dose (Male)	78.4%	67.0%	71.0%	Significantly better than London
MenACWY	77.4%	78.6%	80.9%	Worse than London, but not significantly

Work has recently started to provide support to the school immunisation programme

SCHOOL-AGE IMMUNISATIONS

ACTIONS TAKEN

- Worked with providers to **identify schools with lower uptake**, with the aim to support them to address barriers, practical issues and improve uptake.
- Held regular meetings with with the school immunisation provider to **understand and resolve issues** they experience when delivering the programme.
- Regularly **shared information with schools** about the importance of vaccinations and how they can best support the programmes.
- **HPV lesson plans shared with schools**, that had been co-produced with Southwark children and young people.
- Continued to work with the **Young Advisors to co-produce communications** for young people around vaccinations, including HPV and Meningococcal ACWY.
- Organised and delivered **training sessions for community health ambassadors** and faith groups on HPV.
- Attended **primary school coffee mornings** to talk about flu vaccination to parents and school staff.
- Worked with the school immunisation provider to **source community settings for catch up clinics** in the school holidays.

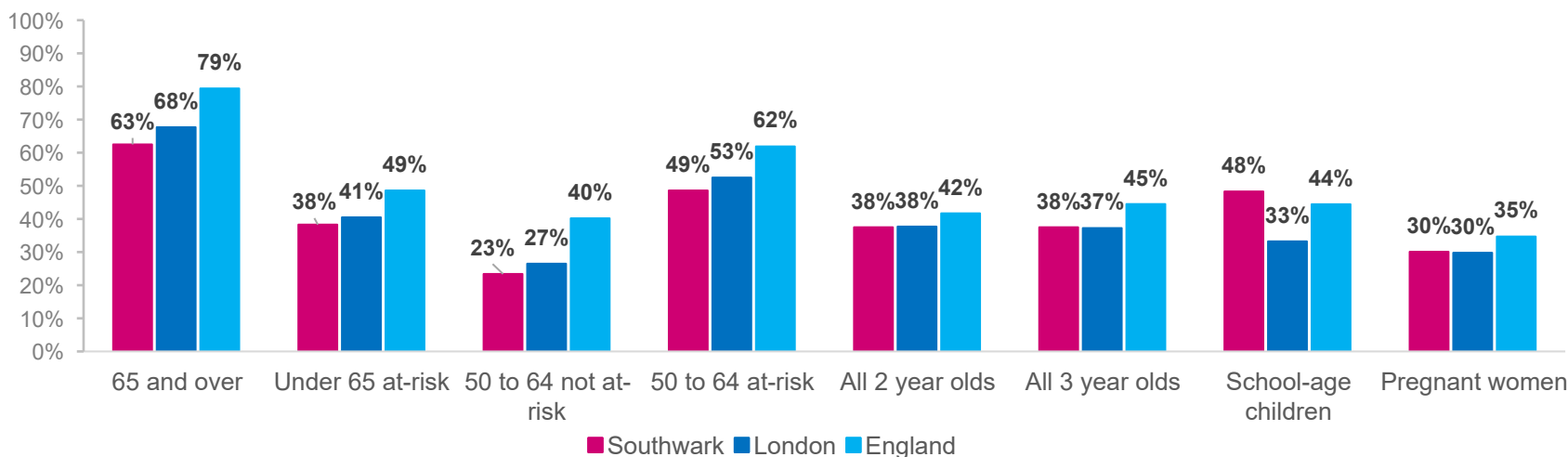
Flu vaccination coverage remains higher in older age groups, and clinically at-risk groups

SEASONAL FLU

Higher flu vaccination coverage is seen in older age groups, and in clinically at-risk groups. Coverage up to the end of January 2023 is broadly comparable to that seen end of January 2022.

- Across the cohorts, flu vaccination levels are slightly below that for London, and remain substantially lower than is seen across England as a whole.
- Coverage in Southwark up to the end of January 2023 is broadly comparable to that seen at the same point in the 2021/22 flu vaccine season, but decreases have been seen in the 50 to 64 *not* at-risk cohort, and the 65 years and over cohort.
- There has also been a notable decrease in coverage across school-age children, standing at 48% in 2022/23 compared to 65% in 2021/22.

Figure 3: Coverage of the flu vaccination across cohorts in Southwark, London, and England, 2022/23



1. Seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in GP patients: 2022 to 2023. UK Health Security Agency. Data to 31 Jan 2023.

2. Seasonal influenza vaccine uptake in children of a school age: 2022 to 2023. UK Health Security Agency. Data to 31 Jan 2022.

COVID-19 vaccination rates in Southwark are low when compared to England, but comparable to London

COVID-19

- Uptake of the primary course of COVID-19 vaccination among those aged 12+ in Southwark is significantly below England but comparable with the London average.
- An autumn booster was offered during Autumn/Winter 2022-3 to those most at risk from COVID-19. Published data for Southwark is only available for over 50s.
- Uptake of the Autumn booster among over 50s in Southwark is below the London average, and significantly below the England average.
- Data is not regularly published on local uptake by ethnicity, but unpublished local primary care data suggests that uptake for both the primary course and autumn booster in Southwark is lowest for those in Black or Black British ethnic groups, and highest in White ethnic groups.²

Figure 4: Coverage of COVID-19 vaccinations in Southwark by ethnicity, as of March 2023

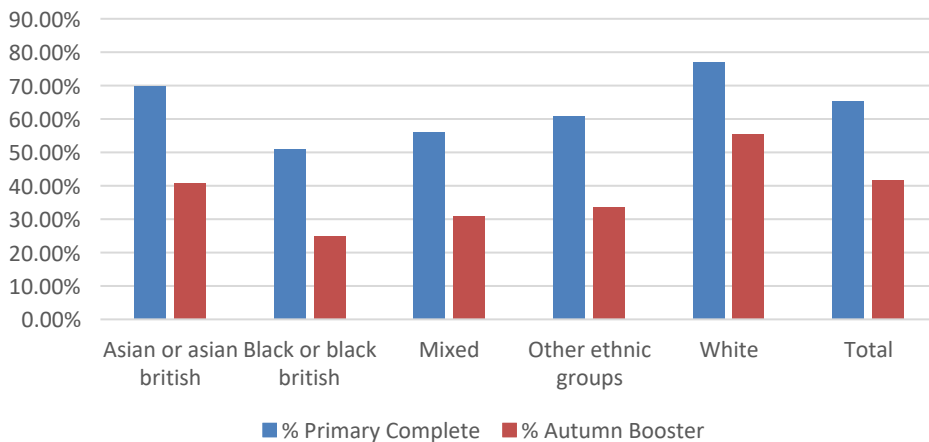


Figure 5: Coverage of COVID-19 vaccinations across Southwark, London, and England, 2022-23

	Southwark	London	England
Primary course 12+	62.2%	64.2%	74.7%
Autumn booster 50+	41.7%	46.5%	64.8%

A programme of engagement and outreach events were undertaken to target those with higher vulnerability

COVID & FLU

ACTIONS TAKEN

- Numerous vaccination **pop ups and outreach events** across the borough, targeting those areas of high deprivation, low uptake and higher vulnerability, including:
 - Health & wellbeing plus vaccination events held at two homeless hostels.
 - Vaccine pop up at Citizen's Advice Cost of Living Roadshow.
 - Health and wellbeing event at InSpire Walworth.
 - Vaccination and health checks offer at Healthwatch Southwark AGM.
- Campaign to **increase flu uptake in 2 & 3 year olds and pregnant women**, including additional invites to parents and targeted messaging for these cohorts.
- Partnered with **local VCS organisations** including Latin American Women's Rights group (LAWRS), Indoamerican Refugee & Migrant Organisation (IRMO), and local faith groups to discuss the importance of covid/flu vaccination, address barriers and support access for marginalised groups.
- Commissioned **Christian and Muslim community organisations**, including Redeemed Assemblies and the Muslim Association of Nigeria, to support with work to engage with faith communities around vaccination.
- Messaging around COVID-19 and flu vaccination shared via the **Southwark Faith Forum**.
- Developed an offer for **free flu vaccination for all council staff**.
- Engagement with **care home and social care staff** to identify and address barriers, including visits to talk about vaccinations with staff.
- General **communications disseminated**, including E-Newsletter articles, Southwark Life, council and ICB webpages and mobile BikeAds.
- Vaccine **training for Community Health Ambassadors**.
- Visits to **warm spaces, TRAs and the Ladies of Virtue Organisation** for Q&As on COVID-19 vaccination.

Programmes of work are planned for 2023/24 to increase coverage, improve access and tackle inequalities

FUTURE WORK

Programmes of work are now in place in the following areas, with a task and finish group associated with each:

1. School aged immunisations - future actions include:

- Visits to schools alongside the school immunisations team to promote recovery of school aged vaccination uptake through engagement with parents and children.
- Strengthening capacity of schools to support the immunisations team by providing training and resources, and ensuring that each school has a dedicated vaccine lead.
- Tailored communications and engagement with faith communities around the HPV vaccine and the nasal spray flu vaccine (which contains gelatine).

2. Pre-school immunisations - future actions include:

- Targeted work with early years settings, schools and parents of young children to encourage complete vaccination prior to starting school through the provision of information and tackling access barriers.
- Review and improve the training for practice staff, and awareness for wider professional groups to encourage vaccination conversations and MECC, for example health visitors.

3. COVID/flu, outreach and the health promotion van - future actions include:

- Reviewing COVID/flu/polio outreach work for winter 2022/3 to understand what worked well and using it to inform future plans.
- Promotion of the spring COVID-19 booster to our most vulnerable groups.

4. Engagement and promoting vaccine confidence - future actions include:

- Building on successes during COVID-19 to develop a co-production forum with the community health ambassadors for creating broader vaccination messaging.
- Launching targeted projects with communities with low uptake to address barriers, for example working with asylum seekers, refugees and those with irregular immigration status to increase trust in healthcare services.

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