

## Health Officials Sound Alarm Over Low MMR Vaccination Rates in Nottingham

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A growing concern is emerging in Nottingham as the uptake of the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine continues to fall below safe levels, prompting public health officials to issue an urgent warning to parents. With only 74% of five-year-olds fully vaccinated in the city, far below the 95% threshold needed for herd immunity, experts fear the risk of outbreaks is increasing.

Nottingham now ranks among the lowest areas in the United Kingdom for MMR vaccination rates, just behind Liverpool, excluding London boroughs. Recent figures highlight a worrying trend, as national coverage for both MMR doses has dropped to 83.9% the lowest since 2009–2010. Health officials have linked this decline to a combination of post-pandemic disruption, misinformation, and vaccine hesitancy.

A tragic recent case involving the death of a child from measles at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool has intensified calls for immediate action. Dr. Suzi McFall, a public health consultant for the East Midlands, emphasised the importance of ensuring children receive both doses of the MMR vaccine, which protects against three highly contagious and potentially severe diseases: measles, mumps, and rubella.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 95% of children must be vaccinated to establish effective herd immunity. Only a few regions, such as Cumbria, have approached that target, with 94.8% of children fully vaccinated. In contrast, areas like Hackney in London have seen coverage drop to just over 60%, raising alarms across public health circles.

Dr. McFall warned that complacency and misinformation are among the biggest barriers to higher uptake. "Despite overwhelming scientific evidence proving the safety and effectiveness of the MMR vaccine, myths and disinformation continue to circulate online," she told Nottinghamshire Live. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted routine childhood immunisation schedules, causing many families to miss or delay appointments.

Some parents may also struggle with language barriers or limited access to general practitioner (GP) services and clinics. Dr. McFall noted that misinformation, especially the disproven claim linking the MMR vaccine to autism, remains a harmful narrative that discourages some families from vaccinating their children.

Not all parents share in the scepticism. Donna Henry, a Nottingham mother of two, expressed frustration over ongoing doubts about vaccines. "We have so much evidence proving the vaccine is safe and effective," she said. "I don't understand how people can still believe rumours on strange websites." Other parents echoed similar sentiments, emphasising trust in long-standing vaccine programs and the need to protect children from avoidable illness.

In response to the low coverage, local authorities have expanded access to clinics and are working to educate families. Health professionals are being trained to better communicate

the importance of vaccination, and materials are being made available in multiple languages to reach all communities. Catch-up clinics will also operate during school holidays, offering missed MMR vaccinations alongside other critical childhood immunisations.

With measles cases on the rise, over 500 confirmed in England since January 2025, the message from health professionals remains clear: the MMR vaccine is safe, effective, and vital in preventing dangerous outbreaks. Families are strongly urged to ensure their children are protected without delay.