

News story: New strategy for a measles and rubella free future

The new [measles and rubella elimination strategy](#) maps out how the UK can achieve a future that is free of measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome (CRS).

The strategy, developed by Public Health England (PHE) and supported by partners across the NHS and the devolved administrations, builds on the experience and success of 50 years of measles vaccination and 30 years of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) immunisation programme.

Since the introduction of the measles vaccine, an estimated 20 million cases and 4,500 deaths have been prevented in the UK. In addition, it is estimated that rubella vaccination has prevented an estimated 1.4 million cases of rubella, 1,300 CRS births, and averted 25,000 terminations. CRS is caused when rubella disrupts the development of an unborn baby, leading to serious birth defects.

However, new analysis conducted by PHE also shows that immunity levels within some age groups across the UK – especially young people aged 15 to 20 years – are well below the levels needed to prevent measles from spreading. Measles is one of the most infectious known diseases, so it can take only one infected person in an area with lower vaccination rates to cause an outbreak. Anyone who has not received 2 doses of MMR vaccine is at risk.

The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed that the UK eliminated rubella in 2015 and measles in 2016. Elimination means that measles and rubella are no longer native to the UK. It does not mean that these diseases have been completely wiped out. Measles and rubella remain endemic in many countries around the world and with recent large measles outbreaks across Europe, imported infections pose a very real threat to the UK's achievements.

In 2016 and 2017, uptake of the first dose of the MMR vaccine in 5 year olds in the UK exceeded 95% for the first time. However, 2 doses of MMR vaccine are required, to ensure full protection from measles. Uptake of the second dose of MMR in 5 year old children is currently 88% and well below the 95% WHO target required to sustain elimination going forward.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at PHE, said:

Our achievements to date are a testament to the hard work of health professionals in the NHS. But, if we wish to build on our successes, and sustain measles and rubella elimination for future generations action needs to be taken now.

A future free of measles and rubella is within reach if we continue to focus our efforts on reaching 95% uptake with 2 doses of MMR for all children and catch up teenagers and young adults who missed

out.

The new strategy is clear that partners in the local health economy need to work together to continue to increase uptake of the MMR vaccine in all children, and address immunity gaps across the population by catching up teenagers and young adults who missed out on the vaccine when they were younger.

It includes a number of recommendations to maintain measles and rubella elimination going forward which cover 4 main areas:

1. Achieve and sustain over 95% coverage with 2 doses of MMR vaccine in the routine childhood immunisation programme.
2. Achieve over 95% coverage with 2 doses of MMR vaccine in older age groups.
3. Strengthen measles and rubella monitoring.
4. Ensure easy access to high-quality, evidence-based information for health professionals and the public.

The UK National Verification Committee (NVC) and all of the UK nations have independently assessed and endorsed the strategy, and have committed to implementing the recommendations.

News story: Visits from Japan to the UK expected to grow in 2019

- National tourism agency VisitBritain expects visit numbers from Japan to reach 270,000 in 2019, a 9% increase on 2017.
- Spending by Japanese visitors in the UK is expected to reach £285 million this year, up from £250 million in 2017.

Nationals from Japan will be able to use ePassport gates to enter the UK from summer 2019 as part of the government's commitment to develop a new global immigration system as we leave the EU. ePassport gates, which are currently available for British and EU nationals, provide a faster route through the border as they allow eligible passengers to be processed quickly and securely.

Growing airline connectivity with a new direct, non-stop route from Osaka to London scheduled for April 2019 by British Airways is also expected to boost visitor numbers.

The news comes as the PM is set to welcome the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Downing Street tomorrow (Thursday 10).

Michael Ellis, UK Tourism Minister, said:

The UK and Japan have strong cultural, artistic and sporting ties and this is translating into increased visitor numbers to our shores.

Tourism is good for our understanding of each other's cultures and can help strengthen our economies. With thousands of Brits expected to travel to Japan for the Rugby World Cup this year and the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, our continued close relationship will benefit both nations.

VisitBritain Director Patricia Yates said:

Japan is an important market for VisitBritain and we want the UK to be the number one destination in Europe for Japanese visitors, so it is encouraging to see the expected growth this year. A passion for rugby is a strong connection between our countries and the Rugby World Cup in Japan this year also provides us with a valuable opportunity to promote Britain internationally as the 'home of rugby' and our associated destinations and tourism experiences.

Tourism is a fiercely competitive global industry and we continue promote the message of welcome and value, working with partners to make it easier to travel here and promote the amazing experiences that Japanese travellers can only have in Britain.

VisitBritain's global campaign "[I Travel For...](#)" that launched in Japan last year is also shining the spotlight on unexpected experiences and less explored destinations across the UK alongside its globally renowned and iconic landmarks and attractions to drive tourism from Japan. [VisitBritain](#) is working with travel trade and content partners to amplify its marketing reach in Japan and convert the inspiration to visit Britain into bookings.

Visitors from Japan spent, on average, £1,011 per visit in the UK in 2017, compared to the all market average of £625.

Last year, the Prime Minister and Prime Minister Abe announced an arts and culture programme of UK in Japan in 2019-20, bringing together British and Japanese artists, technology experts and businesses to continue to build creative links between the two countries.

The programme, run by the British Council, will provide UK artists and their Japanese partners with opportunities to share state-of-the-art digital technology and showcase the best of UK and Japanese creativity in the run-up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics.

To coincide with this, Japan will also stage a parallel cultural programme in the UK.

Japanese perceptions of the UK as a visitor destination are strong. Japan ranked the UK fourth out of 50 nations for its overall brand in the 2018

Anholt Nation Brands Index, and up one place on 2017. Japan also rated the UK highly for its vibrant cities and urban attractions and historic buildings and monuments.

Culture is one of the key attractions for tourists from Japan who enjoy visiting the UK's museums and art galleries, sightseeing at famous monuments and buildings and visiting castles or historic houses.

ENDS

- In the first six months of 2018, there were 119,000 visits from Japan to the UK, up 10% on the same period in 2017.
- The UK was Japan's fifth most popular destination in Europe in 2017.

News story: Making sense of business regulations: apply for contracts

A real challenge for the government is to understand how evolving regulations interact with each other and their impact on businesses, while maintaining important protections for citizens and the environment.

Innovate UK – working with the [Better Regulation Executive](#) and the [Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy](#) – has up to £1.25 million for ideas to better understand the complexity of regulations and where they place disproportionate burdens on businesses.

This is a Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI) competition. Funding is through the GovTech Catalyst, which helps the public sector to identify and work with innovative businesses.

A 2-phase competition

The competition will potentially run in 2 phases.

Phase 1 will award up to 5 organisations with contracts to demonstrate the technical feasibility of an idea for identifying regulatory obligations placed on businesses. These contracts will be worth up to £50,000 each.

Organisations that are successful could then get the chance to apply in a second phase. This would award contracts of up to £500,000 each for 2 applicants to develop a prototype of their technical solution and undertake testing.

Rationalising a complex regulatory system

Projects need to focus on at least 1 of 3 themes initially. They should address all themes if they go through to phase 2. These are:

- analysing existing regulations and identifying the requirements that apply to different businesses and sectors
- assessing how challenging individual regulatory requirements are for businesses and their ability to comply
- assessing how challenging multiple, cumulative regulations are for businesses and their ability to comply

Proposals must be accessible and easy to use for UK government policymakers. They could also have the potential to be used by public and private sector organisations worldwide.

Competition information

- the competition opens on 14 January 2019 and the deadline for registration is midday on 20 February 2019
- organisations of all sizes are eligible to apply, working alone or with other businesses, researchers, charities or public sector organisations
- up to £250,000 including VAT is available in phase 1
- phase 1 projects must start by 17 May 2019 and can last up to 3 months
- there will be a briefing event on [16 January 2019 in London](#) where organisations can find out more about the competition and applying

[Press release: James Brokenshire prioritises social houses for former servicemen and women with PTSD](#)

- New measures could help councils ensure that members of the Armed Forces and veterans suffering from mental ill health are given the right priority for social housing.
- Divorced partners of Armed Forces personnel will also benefit for the first time.

Former service personnel suffering from PTSD or other mental illnesses will be prioritised for social housing under proposals published for consultation by Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP.

Today's measures (9 January 2019) will also help people who divorce or separate from their partners in the Armed Forces by exempting them from rules requiring them to be a local resident before being given a property.

While the majority of military personnel transition successfully into civilian life, an overhaul of the system will also mean all applicants for social housing will be asked if they have served in the Forces at the outset of the process to ensure veterans get the help they are entitled to.

Council staff will also get extra training so they can give current and former Armed Forces personnel the housing support they need.

Since 2012, current and former service personnel have not had to be 'resident' in an area to get access to a social home for their families, as part of our commitment to the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Communities Secretary Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

We have a duty to ensure our heroic military personnel get the support they need when applying for a social home.

We want to see that applying for social property should not be a challenge in the transition from military service to civilian life.

These new measures are part of our continuing commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

An 8-week [consultation](#) on the new rules starts today.

Under the proposals, those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental illnesses could be treated in the same way as those with physical injuries, and get the priority they deserve.

People who split from their partner in the Forces are made to move out of military accommodation and can be denied social housing because they have "not been resident in the area for long enough".

They may not be willing or able to settle in the district where their military spouse or partner is stationed, particularly if they have been the victim of domestic abuse.

Some councils already support people in this situation but government is consulting on publishing new guidance which will encourage councils to waive the residency rules.

The government introduced protections in 2012 to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community are not disadvantaged in accessing social housing because of the requirements of military life.

The law was changed so that seriously injured and disabled service personnel, and former members of the Armed Forces, with urgent housing needs are always given high priority for social housing.

At the same time we introduced regulations to ensure that serving personnel and those who are recently discharged do not lose their qualification rights

because of the necessity to move from base to base.

The government's ambitious and targeted £9 billion affordable homes programme will deliver 250,000 homes by March 2022, including homes for social rent.

[Press release: Hull's £42m tidal flood scheme gets the green light](#)

The £42 million flood alleviation scheme, approved by Hull's planning committee earlier this month on the fifth anniversary of the tidal surge that caused devastation to the city, has now had final sign off from the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Led by the Environment Agency, the Humber Hull Frontage Improvement Scheme will upgrade tidal flood defences at eight locations along the estuary foreshore, including at St Andrew's Quay and Victoria Dock Village.

The defences will provide a 1 in 200 year standard of protection and will reduce tidal risk for 113,000 homes and businesses.

It will see more than 7 kilometres of tidal flood defences along the Humber estuary improved.

The design of the flood defences will include some areas of glass panels to maintain a view of the waterfront and recessed sections to display artistic works.

Opportunities for public art and community involvement will also be integrated into the scheme, at areas including Victoria Dock Village and St Andrew's Quay Retail park.

Computer model of flood defence scheme proposed for Victoria Dock Village East

Now that the planning application has been approved, preliminary work is due to start at St Andrew's Quay Retail Park early this year.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

I am delighted that the owners of 113,000 homes and businesses in and around Hull will benefit from a fully government funded flood defence improvements which will help for many decades to come.

This new flood defence scheme costing £42 million from taxpayers'

money has been well supported by the City Council and a number of other key partners, showing what can be achieved when we work together towards a common goal.

Helen Tattersdale, Project Manager at the Environment Agency said:

We are delighted that the Humber Hull Frontages scheme has been given final approval and look forward to making progress on the ground early in the New Year.

This £42 million investment is great news for the city as it will allow us to better protect thousands of homes and businesses. We will continue to keep residents and businesses affected by our work informed about the scheme at every stage of its development.

This £42m investment links to a further £16m investment in tidal flood defences either side of Hull at Paull and Hessle, which is being delivered by East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

Councillor Daren Hale, portfolio holder for flood prevention at Hull City Council, said:

We welcome the final decision made by the Secretary of State, and I am pleased he was able to see the value in how important these flood defences are for our city.

We look forward to seeing the work start on site, and the additional benefits it will deliver for residents and businesses in the area, including brand new public art and a fantastic outdoor green space.

The scheme will be delivered by contractor BMM JV – a joint venture between BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald – and is expected to be completed by March 2021.

Allan Rogers, framework director for BMMJV said:

Having a role in this significant flood alleviation scheme is inspiring for our teams. We are delighted to be at the heart of the design and efficient delivery of schemes through water engineering and management (WEM), and contributing to the Environment Agency's target of protecting homes and business' across England.

Both the Humber Hull Frontage and work by East Riding of Yorkshire Council at Hessle and Paull are part of a number of tidal flood alleviation projects that form part of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy.

The Environment Agency and local partners are now in the process of developing an advanced approach to managing flooding in tidal areas by the River Humber for the next 100 years.

This long-term investment will contribute to securing the viability of Hull and the wider Humber region, ensuring it retains its place as a major contributor to the UK economy.

In addition to the work on the Humber frontage, more than £100m is being invested in river and surface water flooding in Hull and the surrounding area.

If anyone has any questions about the scheme they can email:
humberhullfrontage@environment-agency.gov.uk

More information about the scheme is available at
<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/humber-hull-frontages/>

Notes to editors

In the past 65 years, there have been three major tidal events in Hull, the last was in December 2013 when 264 properties were flooded due to the overtopping of the existing defences. During high tides, water levels have the potential to rise to around 1 – 3m above some parts of the city.

The new defences will extend from St Andrew's Quay in the west to the eastern end of Victoria Dock Village. The site includes three sections:- St Andrew's Quay Retail Park and William Wright and Albert Docks; Humber Quays and Victoria Pier and on the opposite side of the River Hull, the frontage of Victoria Dock Village extending from Camilla Close to Corinthian Way. There are also two 'satellite' sites at Lord's Clough to the east of Queen Elizabeth Dock and the main compound will be at 26 Lime Street which was set up for the River Hull project