

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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**Title:** COVID-19 RESPONSE – CONTINUATION OF IMMUNISATION PROGRAMMES

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**For Action by:**

General Practitioners  
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards/Trusts  
Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts  
Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Primary, Community and Mental Health, Health Boards  
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts  
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards  
Chief Executive, Public Health Wales  
Executive Director of Public Health Services, Public Health Wales  
Nurse Director, Public Health Wales  
Head Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme, Public Health Wales  
NHS Wales Informatics Service

**For information to:**

Directors of Workforce and Organisational Development, Health Boards/Trusts  
Chief Pharmacists, Health Boards/Trusts  
Midwifery leads  
Health visitor leads  
School nursing leads

**Sender:**

Dr Frank Atherton, Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales

**DHSS Welsh Government Contact(s) :**

Health Protection Services, Department for Public Health, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff. CF10 3NQ Email: [healthprotection@gov.wales](mailto:healthprotection@gov.wales)

**Enclosure(s):**

Dear Colleague

**COVID-19 RESPONSE – CONTINUATION OF IMMUNISATION PROGRAMMES**

As you will be fully aware, NHS health boards and trusts are currently postponing various elective and non-urgent work to prioritise work related to the COVID-19 outbreak. Maintaining immunisation programmes is a key priority to protect public health from other preventable infections at this time and in the future. I am asking, therefore, that **immunisations should continue in line with clinical advice and scheduled timings during this period as far as possible.**

**Primary Care**

Advice on [temporary changes](#) to the primary care contract was issued on 17 March which included reference to immunisations:

- Routine childhood immunisations should continue as a high priority.
- Immunisations for pregnant women and post-natal women should continue (pertussis and MMR).
- Children and adults in at risk clinical groups should continue receive immunisations in line with advice in the Green Book.
- The routine shingles programme has been suspended temporarily.
- The routine adult pneumococcal (PPV) programme has been suspended in light of vaccine shortages. In the meantime, pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) from the central supply may be accessed for at risk adults, who should be vaccinated where possible.

**School Programmes**

School programmes are temporarily suspended. Sessions will need to be re-scheduled when schools re-open. Health boards may offer alternative arrangements sooner if possible.

### Neonatal programmes

Neonatal immunisation for hepatitis B and BCG should continue.

### Travel vaccines

Travel vaccination is a low priority and should only be offered if essential.

### Influenza programme 2020-21

The influenza programme 2020-21 will be strategically important in the context of COVID-19 and planning for it should continue. My annual influenza programme letter will be issued as soon as possible.

We must ensure that we maximise protection for our population from preventable diseases, particularly at this time. I recognise that this would not be possible without the ongoing support of those staff involved in the delivery of these programmes. I acknowledge the extraordinary work to date of all NHS staff in responding to this global outbreak of COVID-19, and to thank all health staff for their continued hard work and dedication in responding to the increased pressure during this rapidly evolving situation.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Frank Atherton**  
**Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director NHS Wales**