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HSS(MD)41/2003

28th October 2003

To:

All General Practitioners (for onward dissemination to practice staff)
All Locum General Practitioners
Chief Executives of Health and Social Services Board
Chief Executives of Health and Social Services Trusts
Chief Executive, Health Promotion Agency
Directors of Public Health (for onward dissemination to CPHM)
Medical Directors Health and Social Services Trusts
Directors of Nursing Health and Social Services Boards
Directors of Nursing Health and Social Services Trusts (for onward dissemination to community nurses)
Directors of Primary Care, Health and Social Services Boards
Directors of Pharmacy, Health and Social Services Boards
Directors of Pharmacy, Health and Social Services Trusts
Consultants in Communicable Disease Control, Health and Social Services Boards
Consultant Paediatricians
Child Health System Managers
Regional Procurement Pharmacist
Regional Epidemiologist

Dear Colleague

1. **EXTENSION OF TIMESCALES FOR HIB CATCH-UP IMMUNISATION CAMPAIGN**
2. **MMR FOR OLDER CHILDREN**

1. **Extension of Timescales for Hib Immunisation Campaign**

- a. The purpose of this letter is to inform you that the timescales allowed for the completion of the Hib catch-up campaign have been extended. Earlier communications from the Department indicated that the catch-up immunisation programme should be completed by Friday 12th September 2003. We appreciate the additional burden this placed on primary care and a number of general practitioners have alerted us to the fact that they have been unable to immunise all eligible children in their practice by 12th September. Immunisation uptake

rates are currently varying between 67% and 85% across practices in the province.

- b. The Department has agreed that children due to be immunised under the Hib catch-up campaign may be immunised up to and including Monday 19th January 2004. Claims for payments submitted which are dated up to and including 19th January 2004 will be met. Hib catch-up claim with a vaccination-administered date after 19th January 2004 may not be submitted.
- c. I should clarify that this does not mean an extension of the number of children to be immunised in the Hib catch-up, but rather allowing extra time to immunise those children identified ie. children born between 2nd April 1999 and 1st October 2002 and babies becoming 6months of age between 1st April 2003 and 12th September 2003 ie those born between 1st October 2002 to 12th March 2003.
- d. I know primary care practices will be in the middle of their influenza immunisation campaign I hope the extension of the Hib campaign timescales in this way allows for additional catch-up to protect those children who have not already received the additional Hib vaccine.
- e. Full guidance on the Hib catch-up programme is contained in circular HSS(MD)17/2003.

2. **MMR for Older Children**

- a. Consultants in Communicable Disease Control in the province have alerted us to the fact that there has been an increase in the number of confirmed cases of mumps here since the beginning of the summer this year. Most of these cases have occurred in children who are (i) unimmunised (ii) have received only one dose of MMR vaccine or (iii) received single antigen measles vaccine and then MR vaccine in 1994. Since October 1996 all children, except those with valid contra-indications, have been recommended to receive two doses of MMR vaccine. Therefore children born before this time may not be adequately protected against mumps infection. The Department has previously recommended (Circular HSS(MD)36/2001) that these children should be offered MMR vaccine before they leave school.
- b. In light of the recent upsurge in mumps cases and the previous experience of the large outbreak of mumps in Northern Ireland during 2001/2002 (involving over 1000 cases of mumps) the Department is recommending that any school going children who have not received a full schedule of MMR immunisation should be offered MMR immunisation as soon as possible. The current JCVI and DHSSPS policy is that all children should be offered two doses of MMR.

For further information on this issue please contact:

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Yours Sincerely



DR LORRAINE DOHERTY
SENIOR MEDICAL OFFICER

cc: Dr H Campbell
Dr N Morrow
Miss J Hill
Mr J Livingstone
Dr E Mitchell
Mr G Dorrian
Mrs S Barfoot
Mr J Hamilton
Ms N Magee, CSA

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