

## Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Hackney Council  
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Town Hall  
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Sir Simon Stevens  
Chief Executive Officer  
NHS England  
by email to [england.ce@nhs.net](mailto:england.ce@nhs.net)

Dear Sir Simon

### **Co-commissioning of 0-5 childhood immunisation programmes and reducing the risk of further measles outbreaks**

Hackney Council's Health Scrutiny Committee has taken a keen interest in childhood immunisation programmes. Last year there was another measles outbreak in the borough and as you know London and Hackney have some of the lowest rates of vaccination uptake in the country.

NHSE is responsible for commissioning 0-5 childhood immunisations.

Following that outbreak, our CGG funded a quick response by commissioning the local GP Confederation to deliver additional clinics and appointments where over 3,000 MMR vaccines were delivered in key hotspots.

Thankfully, the outbreak, which saw 464 confirmed cases across north east and north central London, has again been contained, but for now. However, as we have returned to this issue a number of times over the past few years we are increasingly of the view that the current centralised commissioning arrangements are not working and that the lack of clarity centrally on outbreak funding arrangements has exacerbated the problem.

We are writing to you therefore to encourage you to give serious consideration to moving to co-commissioning of childhood immunisation programmes by putting CCG's or "local systems" at the heart of delivery in tackling this problem.

Since national screening and immunisation programmes moved to NHSE and PHE in 2012 the performance in London has deteriorated significantly, as

evidenced in a recent NAO report [Investigation into pre-school vaccinations \(Oct 2019\)](#)

As you know, this report found that NHS England has missed the Department of Health & Social Care's performance standard for uptake of nearly all routine pre-school vaccinations in England since 2012-13.

The NAO reported that:

*Before 2013, responsibility for call/recall was mixed between primary care trusts and service providers (Child Health Information Services or CHIS), who manage children's clinical care records. When primary care trusts were abolished in 2013, NHS England took responsibility for commissioning call/recall. NHS England has not set out requirements of GPs for call/recall under the changed arrangements. As a result, call/recall is done inconsistently and there is no coherent system. In some cases, call/recall is done to a varying extent by GP practices. In other areas it is done by CHIS.*

And these issues have been echoed locally each time we re-visit this subject at our meetings

One of the key issues here is delays in mobilising vaccination programmes because of poor quality and flow of (real time) data, especially with GP's and local clinicians being able to obtain accurate and up to date data from the centre, namely NHSE and PHE. This is exacerbated by the sheer complexity of the commissioning arrangements involving Public Health England, NHSE, the Local Authority, the local CCG and GP practices. In addition, inner city areas such as Hackney, which have very diverse communities as well as significant population churn, are also more impacted by the problem.

From a local perspective, it is frustrating that the local CCG and GP's are not at fault for the structural problems in the current commissioning arrangements but yet they have to pick up the pieces when an outbreak occurs.

In City and Hackney, our Integrated Commissioning Board has put in place a new targeted local action plan and a public health campaign. We were also pleased that NHSEL has commissioned a 'Call and recall' pilot for NW Hackney however, a more root and branch reform is clearly required.

We would suggest, therefore, that the best way to improve performance here is to take a more localised system approach to commissioning, including effective access to real-time data and empowering clinicians, who are in touch with their communities, to remind patients to vaccinate their children. The development of Primary Care Networks surely provides an ideal opportunity to think again about how 0-5 childhood immunisation programmes are funded and delivered.

We also noted a recent NHSE-NHSI report *Interim findings of the Vaccinations and Immunisations Review – Sept 2019* which again concluded that General Practice was where the focus needs to be in order to drive up immunisations, indeed it makes specific reference to the need to improve the

flow and timeliness of data to GPs, which remains the main impediment to progress. We have heard evidence of how GP practices are running to keep up. Certainly in Hackney, GP's are committed to delivering this service but they are telling us they need more resource to do so.

We are also aware that NHSE is exploring how more can be done at the antenatal stage to educate mothers about the importance of vaccination as well as a greater role for schools in this. We would be interested in your thinking on these and other system wide approaches.

To this end we would like to know:

- a) **What are NHSE's plans for improving performance on immunisations in the light of the decline since 2013?**
- b) **Given that the decline in immunisation rates took place at the same time as commissioning became more centralised and out of touch with local communities, is there not a strong argument for greater devolution?**
- c) **What consideration is being given to a larger more structural reform, namely moving to co-commissioning these services with CCGs or "local systems"?**
- d) **What considerations are being given to streamlining and simplifying the commissioning landscape so it is clear where responsibility lies?**
- e) **How does NHSE intend to meaningfully change approach in order to address the problems identified by the NAO and the NHSE-NHSI reports?**
- f) **What is being developed in terms of system wide approaches to the issue e.g. greater focus on antenatal care and on use of schools and on the issue of tackling disinformation on-line by anti-vaccination advocates etc**
- g) **What is being done about reforming the payments systems for immunisation work in primary care which some argue creates perverse incentives which in turn impede progress?**

Yours sincerely



**Councillor Ben Hayhurst**  
**Chair of Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission**

cc Members of Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission  
Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Jonathan Ashworth MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Health  
Diane Abbott MP  
Meg Hillier MP  
Mayor Philip Glanville, Mayor of Hackney  
Dr Sandra Husbands, Director of Public Health, City & Hackney  
Dr Mark Ricketts, Chair, City & Hackney CCG  
David Maher, Managing Director, City & Hackney CCG  
Laura Sharpe, CEO, City & Hackney GP Confederation

