



Social media

For pharmacies using social media channels, there is an opportunity to let followers know the pharmacy is involved in the campaign and to promote the campaign messages.

Please tag the Public Health Agency, Health and Social Care NI, Community Pharmacy NI and NICPLD in your posts and follow our social media accounts.

Please include the hashtags #LivingWell, #ImmuniseProtectThrive and #CheckTheirRedBook on social media posts for this campaign.

 **X:**
@publichealthni
@HSC_NI
@compharmacyni
@NICPLD1

 **Facebook:**
@publichealthagency
@healthandsocialcareni
@communitypharmacyni
@NICPLD

 **Instagram:**
@publichealthni
@health_and_social_care
@compharmacyni
@NICPLD1

All Living Well materials to support this campaign are here: <https://bso.hscni.net/living-well>

Questions and answers

Q: Can I have my child vaccinated with the MMR vaccine rather than the new MMRV?

A: The MMR vaccine is no longer available for the routine childhood immunisation programme (as of 1 January 2026). It is still available, however, for those 'catching up' such as individuals who have not received two doses of MMR and are not eligible for the MMRV vaccine (those born on or before 31 December 2019).

Q: I don't want to make my child unwell, are there side effects?

A: Most side effects of vaccination are mild and go away within a few days. It is common to experience some mild to moderate side effects when receiving vaccinations. This is because your immune system is instructing your body to react in certain ways. The disease prevention benefits of vaccination are much greater than the risks of possible side effects. It is rare for people to have serious adverse reactions to a vaccine.

Q: I have been told herd immunity will protect my child, so why do I need to get them vaccinated?

A: When a high percentage of the population is vaccinated, it is difficult for infectious diseases to spread, because there are not many people who can be infected. This is called 'herd immunity' and it gives protection to vulnerable people such as newborn babies, elderly people and those who are too sick to be vaccinated.

Herd immunity does not protect against all diseases. For herd immunity to work, most people in the population need to be vaccinated. The exact rate who need to be vaccinated depends on the disease. When vaccination levels drop below the rate for the specific disease, outbreaks and epidemics become more common. Deciding not to vaccinate your child because you think herd immunity will protect them leaves them vulnerable to serious infectious diseases.

Q: I can't find my child's Red Book to check what vaccines they've had. How can I get this information?

A: Speak to your health visitor or GP. If your child has missed a vaccination, please contact your GP practice to book an appointment as soon as you can to make sure they have maximum protection against disease.

Community Pharmacy Living Well Campaign

 Public Health Agency

 Health and Social Care

February 2026

'Immunise, protect, thrive' campaign briefing

The 'Immunise, protect, thrive' childhood immunisation campaign aims to raise awareness of the importance of vaccination and highlight that it is the most important thing you can do to protect your child from ill health.

The campaign will run during February and March 2026 and supports the new vaccination schedule changes, which commenced on 1 January 2026.

Campaign overview

After clean water, vaccination is the most effective public health intervention in the world for saving lives, promoting good health and preventing serious illness.

Due to the high number of children receiving vaccinations in Northern Ireland over the past number of decades, many serious childhood infectious diseases are rarely heard of.

Recently, however, vaccination rates have seen a slight decrease. It is really important vaccine uptake remains high in Northern Ireland to prevent many of these serious diseases returning from parts of the world where they still occur. If this happens, children who are not vaccinated will be at risk of these infections and potentially life-changing complications - even death.

The PHA strongly recommends babies and children receive all their vaccinations according to the routine childhood immunisation programme, which has recently been updated to reflect better timing of vaccines for the best protection. In particular, the schedule has been enhanced with the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, now available in the form of the combined vaccine for measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (MMRV).

Campaign aim

To raise awareness of the importance of vaccination and the protection provided by the routine childhood immunisation programme, which has recently been updated.

Campaign target audience


The target audience for this campaign is parents and/or guardians of babies and children, who are all eligible for the routine childhood immunisation programme.

Immunise, protect, thrive



Because every child deserves the strongest start

 Public Health Agency

 Health and Social Care

 Public Health Agency

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www.publichealth.hscni.net

Find us on:

 Health and Social Care

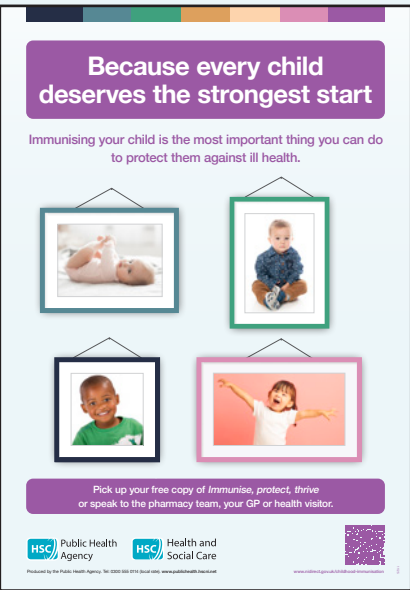
Key messages

- After clean water, vaccination is the most effective public health intervention in the world - immunisation saves lives and promotes good health.
- Vaccination is safe and effective.
- Vaccines prepare the body to fight serious infectious diseases which could be encountered in the future.
- Vaccines have not led to increases in autism, asthma, or other auto-immune disorders.
- Check your child’s Personal Child Health Record, also known as the Red Book, to ensure all their immunisations are up to date.
- All vaccinations are important. It’s essential your child has all vaccinations as noted in the routine childhood immunisation schedule.
- More information on the revised childhood immunisation schedule can be found at www.nidirect.gov.uk/childhood-immunisation

Campaign materials

Copies of the following materials are enclosed:

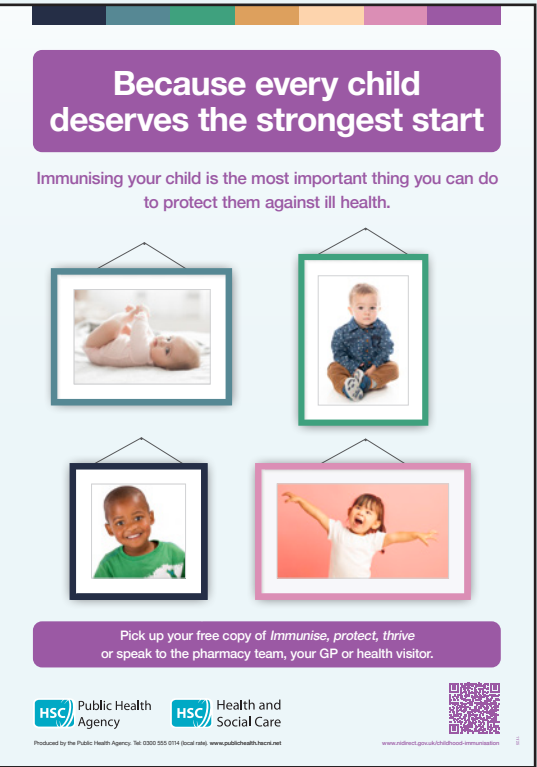
1 x A3 poster:
Because every child deserves the strongest start



1 x A3 poster:
'Vaccinations' typographical



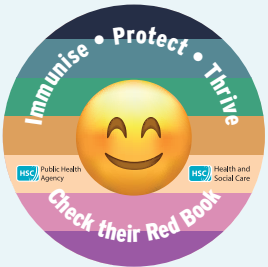
1 x A1 poster: *Because every child deserves the strongest start*



A5 booklet:
Immunise, protect, thrive



A4 sticker sheets
Immunise, protect, thrive



Pharmacies should display the posters and leaflets in the pharmacy within a designated health promotion display area. Posters can be rotated over the two-month period, but if space permits within the pharmacy all posters may be displayed at the same time. Pharmacies must show a poster in at least one window unit for the full duration of the campaign. The booklet can be added to prescription bags or handed to a customer upon request.

Suggested activities

The *Immunise, protect, thrive* campaign leaflet can be used as a conversation starter with parents or guardians and can be handed out to those attending the pharmacy or with prescriptions. This would provide the opportunity for parents or guardians to discuss what they have read with the pharmacy team.

Stickers have been provided for this campaign as a tool to engage with parents and their children. Pharmacy staff could either give to parents or guardians to pop on children when in the pharmacy or use on prescription bags being collected /delivered to the target audience.

Staff may wish to set up a question and answer station in a quiet area where parents can speak confidentially with pharmacists about any concerns.

Contact local Sure Starts, nurseries, play groups or schools to make them aware of the campaign. Some may welcome a member of the pharmacy team attending a parent information evening to highlight the importance of immunisation. These are often places where parents may feel more relaxed and comfortable with asking questions or raising concerns.

Signposting for further information and support



The PHA has produced a new suite of immunisation materials to reflect the revised childhood immunisation programme and can be viewed by searching for childhood immunisation programme at www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications

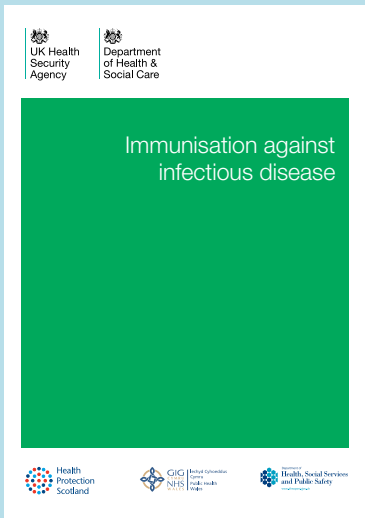
A number of new video resources also available for both staff and parents or guardians to view in relation to childhood immunisation on the PHA site here <http://pha.site/socialmediaresources>

Pharmacy staff may also wish to direct parents or guardians to further information on the childhood immunisation programme at www.nidirect.gov.uk/childhood-immunisation

NI Direct has been updated to reflect a recent factsheet for the public in relation to vaccine safety from the MHRA at www.nidirect.gov.uk/vaccines

The Green Book

Refer to the Green Book for all the latest information on vaccines and vaccination procedures, for vaccine preventable infectious diseases in the UK here: www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book



Training and professional development

Staff may wish to watch the webinar recording provided by NICPLD, Childhood vaccination schedule changes: What you need to know. Andrew Cheung, Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health and PHA, provides an overview of the routine childhood immunisation programme. This is available at www.nicpld.org/url/recordedwebinars