

# Meningitis Matters

## Briefing

December 2012



*Meningitis and septicaemia are devastating diseases. They can kill within hours and those who survive may be left with life altering after effects.*

*This briefing sets out a series of recommendations for Government that have the potential to improve the lives of those who survive and lead to the elimination of meningitis.*



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Research Foundation

# Background: Meningitis and Septicaemia in the UK

Meningitis occurs where the lining surrounding the brain and spinal cord, the meninges, become inflamed and infected. Septicaemia is the blood poisoning form of the disease.

- Meningitis and septicaemia can occur separately, but often happen together<sup>1</sup>
- In the UK, around 3,400 people are affected by meningitis and septicaemia each year<sup>2</sup>
- Each day, up to 10 people – mostly babies, children and adolescents – will contract meningitis or septicaemia<sup>2</sup>
- Meningitis and septicaemia kill more children under the age of five than any other infectious disease<sup>3</sup>
- Of those who contract meningitis and survive, a quarter will be left with a permanent disability such as brain damage, limb loss, blindness or deafness<sup>4</sup>
- Meningitis Research Foundation estimates the life-long cost to the taxpayer of someone severely disabled by these diseases in the UK is approximately £3 million<sup>5</sup>

- There has been significant progress over the last decade in tackling meningitis and septicaemia in the UK. The introduction of three vaccines onto the national childhood immunisation programme (Hib meningitis, pneumococcal conjugate and meningococcal C conjugate) has prevented thousands of deaths. Meningococcal C and Hib infection have been virtually eliminated in the UK
- Yet even with these advances, there are many deadly forms of meningitis that are currently uncontrolled. This includes meningococcal group B, which accounts for 90% of all meningococcal cases in the UK<sup>6</sup>, and is the most common type of meningitis for which there is currently no vaccine available<sup>6</sup>

There is continuing need for:

- **Prevention:** new vaccines that can protect against all forms of the disease to be made available on the NHS
- **Awareness:** healthcare professionals to be able to recognise meningitis and septicaemia and deliver best treatment
- **Support:** assessment and integrated good quality aftercare for those left with disabilities

## The beginning of your life should be just as important as the end of your life

The proportion of the total NHS budget that is spent on care for children and young people has been historically low. Department of Health (DH) estimates from 2010 show that £6.7 billion of the £110 billion health budget goes towards child health.<sup>7</sup>

End-of-life care on the other hand accounts for at least a fifth of NHS costs, approximately £20 billion.<sup>8</sup>

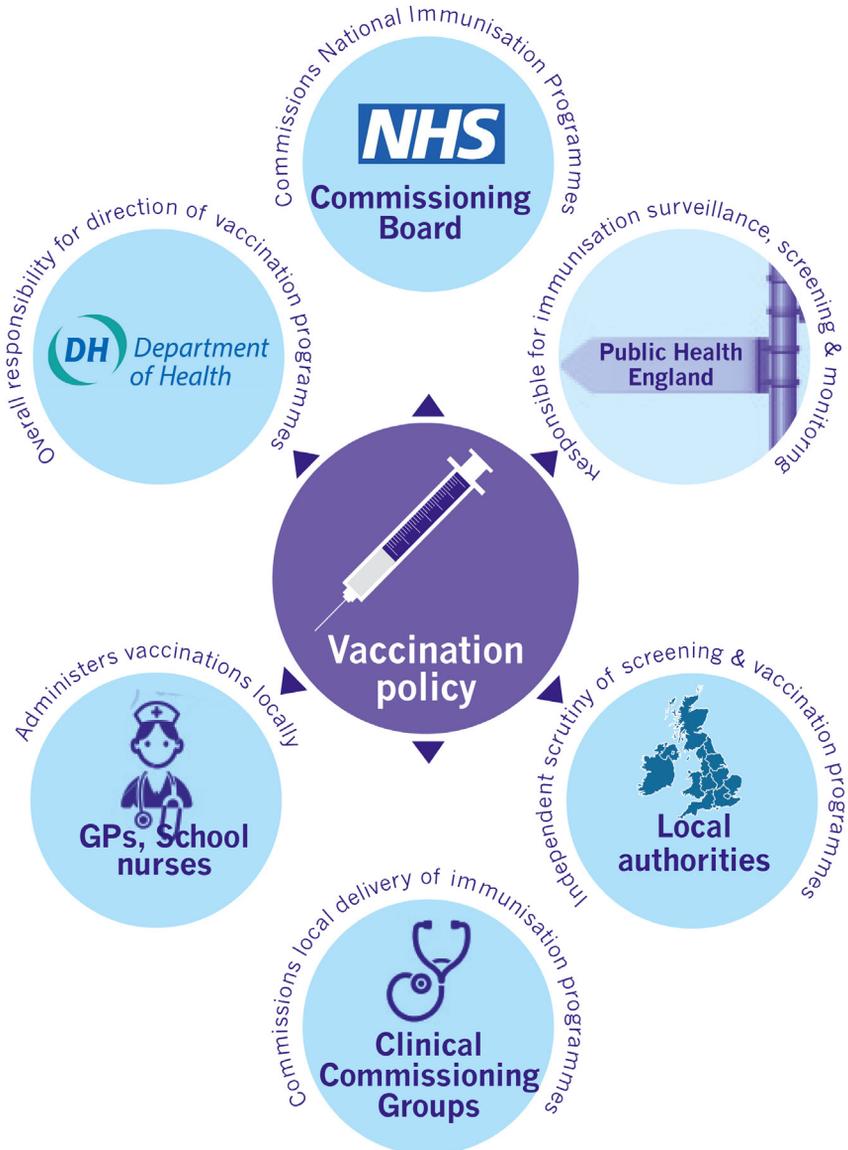
By getting it right from the start, by ensuring children and young people are protected from preventable diseases, we can safeguard the next generation and work towards eliminating diseases such as meningitis.

## Policy context

- Vaccination is one of the most important public health interventions for protecting children and young people from serious diseases, such as meningitis
- The UK is currently recognised as a world leader in vaccination policy, surveillance and immunisation
- Following the passing of the Health and Social Care Act 2012<sup>9</sup>, national immunisation programmes, including those for meningitis, are to transition to new commissioning arrangements
- The NHS Commissioning Board will assume responsibility for the commissioning of national immunisation programmes for babies, young children and the elderly
- Service specifications for each individual immunisation programme will be prepared by Public Health England to ensure that quality is maintained
- Local Authority Directors of Public Health will have a duty to protect their local populations by providing independent scrutiny of immunisation programmes that are largely going to be delivered by the NHS
- Public Health England will analyse immunisation coverage and surveillance data and be responsible for developing disease awareness campaigns
- Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will be responsible for providing immunisation programmes through GPs
- CCGS will also take on responsibility for after-care support, such as speech therapy and physiotherapy for those that survive meningitis

The complexity of these new arrangements will require effective partnership and joined-up delivery to ensure the safe transition of services. We need to avoid a destabilising effect on vaccine coverage rates, particularly among children and after-care support.

# The new vaccination landscape



Vaccination is one of the most important public health interventions, protecting children from serious diseases like meningitis. It is essential that there is effective partnership and joined-up delivery amongst these different health bodies to avoid a destabilising effect on current vaccination rates.

# Policy proposals and recommendations

Below are a series of recommendations we would urge the Government to consider in order to extend the prevention of meningitis and to improve the lives of survivors.

<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New vaccines that prevent meningitis in children and young people to be introduced into the immunisation schedule as soon as they become available</li><li>• An adolescent meningitis vaccination programme to continue to be primarily delivered through schools, with Local Authorities committing to invest in school nursing services</li><li>• The NHS Commissioning Board, Public Health England and Directors of Public Health to work in partnership to ensure the smooth transition and effective delivery of current and future meningitis immunisation programmes</li></ul>
<b>Awareness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New NICE Quality Standard for bacterial meningitis and meningococcal septicaemia in children and young people (QS19) to be implemented in full</li><li>• Public Health England to work jointly with patient groups such as Meningitis Research Foundation, to develop communication strategies to raise awareness of the importance of meningitis and the need for vaccination</li></ul>
<b>Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clinical Commissioning Groups to commission appropriate and effective support for meningitis survivors with debilitating after-effects, such as speech and language therapy, physiotherapy and occupational therapy among others</li></ul>

# Conclusion

Meningitis Matters. This Government has already acknowledged that no child should die of a preventable disease - it is unthinkable in today's world. It also supports vaccinating children in developing countries to ensure healthier, and therefore more economically robust nations. As the Government implements its wide ranging NHS reforms, those with the responsibility for delivering immunisation programmes must ensure the safe transition of these critically important public health services.

## About Meningitis Matters 2012

- Meningitis Matters gives people directly affected by the disease a voice in Westminster. It helps raise awareness of meningitis and septicaemia among policy makers by bringing them face to face with the human stories behind the statistics
- The day has been organised by Meningitis Research Foundation, a registered charity, with the support of Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics Limited ("Novartis Vaccines")
- Meningitis Research Foundation has a vision for a world free from meningitis and septicaemia. It aims to achieve this by funding research into prevention, detection and treatment of the diseases, promoting education and awareness amongst health professionals and the public, and providing support to those affected
- Novartis Vaccines is a global leader in the research and development of influenza, meningococcal, paediatric and travel vaccines

## Contact details

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