

Patient's Newsletter – 18

November 2025

The Importance of Vaccinations: A GP's Perspective

Dr Sindhu Pathmabaskaran

As a GP, one of the most powerful tools I have to protect my patients and the wider community is vaccination. Vaccines are not only about individual health, but they are also about safeguarding everyone around us, especially those who cannot be vaccinated due to age, illness, or weakened immune systems.

Why Vaccinations Matter

Vaccines train the body's immune system to recognise and fight harmful pathogens without causing the disease itself. This protection prevents serious illnesses such as measles, whooping cough, meningitis, and influenza, which can lead to severe complications or even death. For patients, being vaccinated means a much lower risk of catching these diseases, fewer days of illness, and less disruption to work, school, and family life. It also helps reduce the need for antibiotics, hospital admissions, and long-term health issues resulting from infections.

The Role of Herd Immunity

When a large proportion of the population is vaccinated, it creates what is known as herd immunity (or community immunity). This means that even if someone isn't immune — such as newborn babies, people with certain medical conditions, or those undergoing treatments that weaken the immune system — the spread of disease is greatly reduced because the infection has fewer opportunities to transmit.

What Happens When Vaccination Rates Fall

When communities choose not to vaccinate, the consequences can be severe and far-reaching. In recent years, we've seen outbreaks of measles and whooping cough in areas where vaccination uptake has declined. These diseases had once been well controlled or nearly eliminated but have now resurfaced due to gaps in community immunity. Such outbreaks strain healthcare services and can lead to hospitalisations, long-term complications, and preventable deaths.

As GPs, we understand that some patients have concerns about vaccine safety or necessity. Open, honest conversations are essential — listening to worries, explaining how vaccines are tested, monitored, and proven safe, and sharing evidence-based information helps build trust. It's also important to remind patients that vaccines protect not just themselves but their loved ones and community members who rely on others for protection.

I believe vaccination is one of the greatest achievements in modern medicine. From a GP's perspective, encouraging vaccine uptake is not just about preventing illness in individuals — it's about protecting entire communities and preventing the return of diseases we once thought were in the past. By staying up to date with vaccinations, we each play a vital role in keeping ourselves, our families, and our society healthy and resilient.

Vaccination programme on the NHS

The vaccination schedule for 2025/2026 is as follows:

Under 12 months

8 weeks: 6-in-1 vaccine, Rotavirus vaccine, Meningitis B (first dose)

12 weeks: 6-in-1 vaccine, Rotavirus vaccine, Meningitis B (second dose)

16 weeks: 6-in-1 vaccine (third dose), Pneumococcal vaccine

Children aged 1 – 15 years

1 year: MMR vaccine, Pneumococcal vaccine (second dose), Meningitis B (third dose) Hib/Meningitis C vaccine (for children born on or before 30 June 2024)

1 year and 6 months: 6-in-1 vaccine (fourth dose for children born on or after 1st July 2024), MMR vaccine (second dose for children born on or after 1st July 2024)

2 – 15 years: Children's flu vaccine (every year until children finish year 11 at secondary school)

3 years and 4 months: MMR vaccine (second dose for children born on or before 30th June 2024), 4-in-1 pre-school booster vaccine.

12-13 years: HPV vaccine. This vaccine is usually administered at school.

14 years: Td/IPV vaccine (also called 3-in-1 teenage booster), MenACWY vaccine. These vaccines are usually administered at school.

Adults:

Pregnant women: Whooping cough vaccine from 16 weeks, RSV vaccine from 28 weeks, Flu vaccine is also offered during flu season.

65 Years: Flu vaccine (given every year after turning 65), Pneumococcal vaccine, Shingles vaccine (if you turned 65 on or after September 2023).

70-79: Shingles vaccine. This is a one-off vaccine administered as 2x doses

75-79: One off RSV vaccine.

75 and over: Covid19 vaccine (usually in the autumn and spring).

If you are unsure if you, or a family member has not received any of these vaccinations, I would encourage you to contact the practice, and we will endeavour to check this or book you an appointment.

Dr Sindhu Pathmabaskaran
GP Partner /GP Vaccination Lead

Healthwatch Richmond: The Independent Patient's Voice Champion

Colombine Nuquet : Communications & Engagement Project Manager

About us: The Patient's Voice Champion

Healthwatch Richmond is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care.

Our sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf. We focus on ensuring that people's worries and concerns about current services are addressed. We work to get services right for the future.

Our approach

We are here to listen to what you like about services and what you think could be improved. No matter how big or small the issue, we want to hear about it. Where possible, we will let you know when changes are planned to services in our community and help you have a say. We will also encourage those in charge of local care to involve you when changes are being planned to services. You can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally.

Our Achievements and Impact

GP Practice reports

One of our most recent works was looking at people's experience of GP practices in Richmond-upon-Thames. We conducted visits to practices, collected patients' views and created reports for each GP practice.

You can read our reports here: https://www.healthwatchrichmond.co.uk/news-and-reports/search?combine=&field_article_type_target_id_1%5B%5D=103

Hampton Pharmacy

In autumn 2023, the closing of two Boots pharmacies in Hampton led local residents not being able to access essential pharmacy services. We campaigned for over a year for the opening of a new pharmacy, collecting more than 700 residents' feedback and writing a thorough report demonstrating the hugely detrimental impact of the pharmacy closures. Thanks to our campaign, the involvement of the community and the work of Councillors and MPs, a new pharmacy has been approved.

Learn more: <https://www.healthwatchrichmond.co.uk/news/2024-10-22/victory-new-pharmacy-finally-approved-hampton> Watch our recap video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9hhHvbmLhs>

Guide to Richmond's NHS, Care and Support

We created a guide to help patients navigate the NHS services, local social care and charity's offer in the borough. You can find our guide here: <https://www.healthwatchrichmond.co.uk/advice-and-information/2024-07-24/guide-richmonds-nhs-care-and-support>

Future

In July 2025, through the NHS 10 Year Plan, the Government announced the dismantling of several health-related charities, including Healthwatch. This decision means that our functions will be transferred to the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), who will oversee activities, preventing independence in the patient's voice.

If you agree that should be independent Patient's Voice, please consider signing the petition to the UK Government and Parliament here: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/732993>

Even though we may close in the future, we are still open and will be fully operative for the foreseeable future.

Contact us

- Share your experience of health or social care
- If you need signposting to NHS services, social care, or support from local charities

Phone: 020 8099 5335 Email: hello@healthwatchrichmond.co.uk

Integrated Neurological Services (INS) for Richmond & Hounslow

Integrated Neurological Services (INS) is a local charity, working for over 30 years across Richmond and Hounslow boroughs. We help around 800 adults with neurological conditions including Stroke, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis or Brain injury, and their family carers, through community-based rehabilitation and support. We aim to help people live well with their condition and stay as independent as possible. Our professional staff offer physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, exercise groups,

counselling and social and creative activities. These take place at our adapted Twickenham centre, online or through home visits.

Everyone who comes to INS has a free assessment of their needs, so we can develop a tailored programme with them which might include individual or group sessions. Our free one-to-one sessions with a therapist or counsellor can help people work towards their rehabilitation goals, find ways to deal with emotional issues and facilitate positive change.

We run a wide variety of therapy-led groups each week focusing on different areas, including neuro exercise, fitness, symptom management, cognitive or communication skills. Our open gym and communication-friendly sessions are very popular, and our changing programme of activities currently includes creative writing, local history, music therapy and table tennis. People have said they particularly enjoy peer support from socialising with others facing similar challenges.

People with neurological conditions and their carers can self-refer to us or have a referral from their GP or health professional. We welcome referrals for adults who:

- Have a confirmed neurological condition
- Provide unpaid care for adults with a neurological condition

AND

- Live in the London boroughs of Hounslow or Richmond
- Or have a GP in Hounslow or Richmond.

Referrals can be made by:

- Adults with a neurological condition (self-referral)
- GPs, neurologists, therapists, health and social care professionals
- Unpaid carers referring themselves, or adults with a neurological condition.

(Please note that we do not provide diagnostic services, and we require a confirmed diagnosis of a neurological condition to accept a referral.)

INS is based at 82 Hampton Road, Twickenham TW2 5QS.

To find out more about the services and support we offer, please visit www.ins.org.uk or call us on 020 8755 4000 or email admin@ins.org.uk

Staff Changes

Leaving

Doctor Juan Ellauzi and Dr Rebecca Lewis have finished their training with us in August 2025 and have moved on to new roles.

Dr.Faith Chihaka completed her maternity placement in June 2025 and has left to have her own baby

Dr Isabel White and Practice Manager Lauren Hoadley are on maternity leave and will return in the summer 2026.

Joining

Doctor Charlotte Mark-Wagstaff, Doctor Stephanie Zoutewelle and Doctor Bhirom Subramaniam are GP registrars in training. Charlotte and Stephanie will be with us until February 2026, Bhirom will be with us until February 2027.

Preeti Gurang joined the practice in April 2025 as a pharmacy technician.

Eliza O'Sullivan and Rosalina Lawson have joined the practice as medical administrators in September and November 2025 respectively.

