

# LONDON ASSEMBLY

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**Emma Best AM**

## **Chairman of the Health Committee**

Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Department of Health and Social Care

Sir Sadiq Khan  
Mayor of London  
City Hall

(Sent by email)

27 March 2026

Dear Mayor and Secretary of State,

I am writing to you as Chairman of the London Assembly Health Committee, regarding the recent measles outbreak in London.

On the 9 March, the Committee held an urgent evidence-gathering session in response to a measles outbreak in North London. The Committee heard from representatives from Enfield Council, North Central London Integrated Care System, the UK Health Security Agency, NHSE

London and the Greater London Authority.<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank guests for providing the Committee with a valuable insight into the local and regional response to this outbreak.

This letter outlines some of the issues raised in the meeting and makes several suggestions to improve vaccination rates across London.

Measles is a highly infectious virus which can cause serious complications and even death.<sup>2</sup> There is no treatment for measles, however vaccination provides excellent lifelong protection; after one dose, 95 per cent of people are protected, rising to 99 per cent after two doses.<sup>3</sup> Children are offered two doses of the vaccine when they are 12 months and 18 months old.<sup>4</sup> Average vaccination rates in London (70 per cent) are significantly lower than the rest of England (84 per cent)<sup>5</sup>, with significant variation across boroughs.<sup>6</sup>

Since the beginning of 2026, the UK Health Security Agency has recorded 299 confirmed measles cases, with 178 of these recorded in London and 89 in Enfield.<sup>7</sup> Enfield has one of the lowest uptake rates of the vaccine in the country (64 per cent).<sup>8</sup> The outbreak is primarily affecting unvaccinated children, with around one in five infections requiring hospital treatment.<sup>9</sup>

### The response in Enfield and London

The Committee was pleased to hear from guests that a range of coordinated, multi-agency work was occurring across the borough to contain the outbreak and raise vaccination rates.

Dudu Sher-Arami, Director of Public Health at Enfield Council, told the Committee that agencies had been working closely with schools at the start of the outbreak, to ensure they could respond effectively. Other activities included engaging with the Enfield Faith Forum and setting up catch-up vaccination clinics in community settings.<sup>10</sup>

The Committee were reassured to hear that compliance with containment advice was high. Nalini Iyanger, Consultant in Health Protection for the UK Health Security Agency told us:

“Yes, in general, the compliance with our advice is great. Schools are very helpful in trying to minimise the disruption to individual children and to parents.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> London Assembly, [Health Committee meeting](#), 9 March 2026

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation, [Measles](#), 28 November 2025

<sup>3</sup> NHS, [Measles guidance for healthcare services](#), Updated 9 December 2025

<sup>4</sup> NHS, [MMR Vaccine](#), Updated 8 March 2024

<sup>5</sup> BBC News, [More measles cases in London amid outbreak](#), 19 February 2026

<sup>6</sup> The Standard, [Mapped: London's MMR vaccination rates as measles outbreak hits London](#), 16 February 2026

<sup>7</sup> UK Health Security Agency, [Confirmed cases of measles in England by month, age, region and upper tier local authority: 2026](#), 5 March 2026

<sup>8</sup> BBC News, [More measles cases in London amid outbreak](#), 19 February 2026

<sup>9</sup> BBC News, [Fast-spreading' measles outbreak hits several schools in London](#), 15 February 2026

<sup>10</sup> Dudu Sher-Arami, [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 1, 9 March 2026, p.15

<sup>11</sup> [Health Committee meeting](#). Panel 1, 9 March 2026, p.6

The Committee also heard about the preventative actions taken prior to the outbreak, by partners at a London-wide level to improve vaccination rates. This included a measles vaccination catch-up campaign in all schools in London as part of routine flu vaccinations.<sup>12</sup>

However, despite best efforts to contain this outbreak, guests emphasised that it was not unexpected and sustained efforts to improve vaccination rates were needed to prevent future outbreaks. As Dr Yimmy Chow, Regional Deputy Director London, UK Health Security Agency told us:

“We cannot keep on just having a lot of catch-up campaigns and not concentrating on getting that fundamental universal programme in.”<sup>13</sup>

### Vaccination rates

Evidence suggests there are several complex reasons for low vaccination uptake. The Committee heard from the panel that deprivation and inequality are key drivers of low vaccination rates in Enfield. Dudu Sher-Arami told us:

“The outbreak at the moment is not specific to specific communities. It is more based on a geography of the communities that are living within our areas of highest deprivation.”<sup>14</sup>

The panel also emphasised it only took small pockets of significantly low vaccination rates to cause outbreaks, given the highly infectious nature of measles. As Susan Elden, Consultant in Public Health, NHS England warned:

“In a big school environment, you can go from zero to 30 cases quite quickly... There is an element of unpredictability with measles that creates a bigger challenge.”<sup>15</sup>

The Committee heard that vaccination services needed to be ‘flexible’ and meet the needs of London’s increasingly ‘fluid’ population which may not always engage with the traditional GP model. Guests also emphasised the need for vaccinations to be promoted in a variety of settings, with schools identified as presenting a key opportunity to improve vaccination rates. As Susan Elden told us:

“This is very much about working differently. How can we use every opportunity for access? For these kids coming into school, put MMR on that consent form and make sure that MMR gets checked.”<sup>16</sup>

When asked about what would help to improve vaccination rates guests consistently told us tailored community campaigns were most effective. For example, Dudu Sher-Arami stated:

“We know that very localised community engagement is a really effective way of opening those conversations about vaccination and developing the trust ... What we have learned

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<sup>12</sup> Dr Yimmy Chow, [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 1, 9 March 2026, p.17

<sup>13</sup> [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 2, 9 March 2026, p.5

<sup>14</sup> [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 1, 9 March 2026, p.13

<sup>15</sup> [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 2, 9 March 2026, p.7

<sup>16</sup> [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 2, 9 March 2026, p.3

is that it is really important to work with those faith organisations and community settings.”<sup>17</sup>

### Data sharing

The Committee heard from guests about the importance of data sharing between agencies in order to effectively monitor and address areas of low vaccination uptake.

Susan Elden told the Committee that there were certain areas of London, such as Kensington and Chelsea, with large numbers of private GPs or international schools which did not record or share measles vaccination status.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, ensuring there is consistent data sharing practices for vaccination status between agencies in London is essential to understand and improve vaccination rates.

**The Committee were pleased to hear about the rapid and coordinated response of partners in Enfield and across London to address the current measles outbreak. However, as we heard from our guests, this outbreak was not unexpected, and without long-term, community-led engagement to improve vaccination rates, outbreaks will continue to occur.**

**The Committee is therefore asking the Mayor and Secretary of State to consider how they can support London boroughs with low vaccination uptake to deliver sustained, localised vaccination campaigns. The Committee heard that targeted engagement with communities is the most effective way to address low vaccination rates and is calling on the Mayor and Secretary of State to explore how they can support these efforts.**

**The Committee also encourages the Mayor to work with London boroughs to improve the consistency of vaccination-status data collection and sharing practices. The Mayor should advocate more resource so a catch-up programme for measles vaccinations can happen without creating further gaps in ‘business as usual’ vaccine provision.**

Thank you for considering the Committee’s findings on this important issue. I hope that these can be addressed in your ongoing efforts to improve vaccination rates and reduce the incidence of measles in London.

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>17</sup> [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 1, 9 March 2026, p.13-14

<sup>18</sup> [Health Committee meeting](#), Panel 2, 9 March 2026, p.10

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EMMA BEST'.

**Emma Best AM**

**Chairman of the Health Committee**