Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

February 2012

IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT

Dear Principal or Course Organiser,

The Health Service Executive wishes to advise language colleges to be aware of the possibility of measles infection among their students or young staff attending or assisting in courses in 2012.

In 2011 over 30,000 measles cases and eight deaths were reported in 29 European countries. Many cases of measles resulted from infected people travelling between countries.

Measles is highly infectious and any non-vaccinated individuals are at particular risk of measles and are then likely to transmit the infection to non-immune students or staff.

Vaccination with MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine is the only way to protect against measles. In Ireland the first MMR dose is given at 12 months of age, and the second dose at 4-5 years of age (either by school vaccination teams or by GP).

For their own protection, I recommend that young people and staff from any country or Ireland attending your college ensure they have received TWO doses of MMR vaccine prior to attendance. Students and young staff should be asked to provide documentation of MMR vaccination status (or of measles immunity) from their own doctor or immunisation service.

Vaccination of all students and staff should ensure that no measles outbreaks occur in your college. In the unlikely event that a measles case is identified despite the above measures unvaccinated individuals may be requested by public health to absent themselves from the course in order to protect themselves and others from measles.

Please alert students, parents and staff to this information in advance of attendance at your language course. Further details are available at www.immunisation.ie

Yours sincerely,

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