



Sarah Wilkinson  
Chief Executive  
NHS Digital  
1 Trevelyan Square  
Boar Lane  
Leeds LS1 6AE

03 April 2019

Dear Sarah,

I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care ('the Secretary of State') to direct the Health and Social Care Information Centre, known as and referred to in this Direction as NHS Digital, to establish and operate an informatics system for the collection of information on childhood vaccine coverage in England.

The purpose of this Direction is to enable NHS Digital to collect information on the numbers of eligible children up to the age of five years completing each vaccine course on the routine childhood immunisation schedule. This information will be provided to Public Health England to publish as quarterly Official Statistics, and be jointly published by Public Health England and NHS Digital as annual National Statistics, to support work across England to maintain and improve vaccine coverage.

PHE is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care. It fulfils the Secretary of State's statutory duties to protect health and address health inequalities, and executes the Secretary of State's power to promote the health and wellbeing of the nation. PHE's annual remit letter from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care sets out its responsibility for improving the screening and immunisation programmes provided to the population of England. This includes the childhood immunisation programme.

This Direction is given to NHS Digital in exercise of the powers of the Secretary of State conferred by sections 254(1) and 304(9) of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 ('the Act').

In accordance with section 254(2)(b) of the Act, the Secretary of State considers it to be in the interests of the health service in England for this Direction to be given.

This Direction is to be known as the **Cover of Vaccination Evaluated Rapidly (COVER) Direction 2019** and comes into force on 03 April 2019.

## Collection and analysis

Under section 254 of the Act, NHS Digital is directed to:

- Collect and analyse information on the numbers of children aged 12 months, 24 months and five years eligible to be vaccinated and completing each vaccine course on the routine childhood immunisation schedule, as specified in the COVER Information Standard Specification<sup>1</sup>, which may be revised by Public Health England from time to time.
- Collect and analyse this information on a quarterly and annual basis from Child Health Information Systems for each General Practice and tier 1 Local Authority in England, as specified in the COVER Information Standard Notice<sup>2</sup>, which may be revised as agreed by Public Health England and NHS Digital from time to time.

## Dissemination and publication

Under section 262(3)(a) of the Act, NHS Digital is directed to disseminate the information obtained by complying with this Direction to Public Health England to publish as Official Statistics of General Practice and tier 1 Local Authority vaccine coverage statistics on a quarterly financial year basis<sup>3</sup>.

In accordance with section 260(4)(a) of the Act, NHS Digital is directed to jointly publish with Public Health England the information obtained as National Statistics of General Practice and tier 1 Local Authority vaccine coverage statistics on a financial year basis.

NHS Digital is directed in accordance with section 260(2)(d) of the Act not to publish the information obtained by complying with this Direction other than for the purposes described in this Direction. Under section 262(5), NHS Digital is further directed not to exercise its power under section 261(1) or to further exercise its power under section 261(4) of the Act to disseminate the information obtained. This is because the information is to be published as quarterly Official Statistics and annual National Statistics in accordance with the UK Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics<sup>4</sup>.

In accordance with section 254(5) of the Act, NHS Digital has been consulted before this Direction has been given.

Yours sincerely,



**Professor John Newton**  
Director of Health Improvement

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<sup>1</sup> The COVER Information Standard Specification is published at <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/information-standards/information-standards-and-data-collections-including-extractions/publications-and-notifications/standards-and-collections/dcb0089-cover-of-vaccination-evaluated-rapidly-cover>

<sup>2</sup> The COVER Information Standards Notice is published at the same location as above.

<sup>3</sup> Quarterly Official Statistics and annual National Statistics for COVER are published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/vaccine-uptake>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/the-code/>