

The fully immunised child

All children everywhere must be receiving life-saving vaccines.

Vaccines save millions of lives every year and are one of the best ways to prevent childhood illnesses such as diphtheria, measles and polio. In 2017, the number of children immunised – 116.2 million – was the highest ever reported. But despite these impressive gains, all of the targets for disease elimination are behind schedule, and many children still die from easily preventable, treatable and curable diseases. Countries must do more to ensure that all children receive all 11 World Health Organisation-recommended vaccines. 2019 and 2020 provide a big chance for improving vaccination rates and working towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), two of the world's biggest multilateral health partnerships, both have vital roles to play to improve vaccine coverage and strengthen health systems. Both funds need renewed funding over the next 18 months. World Immunisation Week (24 – 30 April) is a chance to show the importance of supporting these global health institutions. Now is a critical time for parliamentarians and the Government to understand the importance of building a strong, coordinated global approach to vaccination, and to continue the UK's historic leadership in global vaccination. This month, we are asking you to take to your local media and social media channels to demonstrate the value of vaccines for the health of children, communities and the world, to show your MP that there is public support for global vaccination programmes.

The vital importance of vaccination

Child mortality more than halved between 1990 and 2015, and vaccination has played a big role. Vaccines save millions of lives every year and are one of the most effective ways to prevent childhood illnesses. We are closer than ever to ensuring that everyone is protected from vaccine-preventable diseases such as diphtheria, measles and polio. Polio cases have decreased by 99.9% since 1988, making it nearly the second disease in history to be eradicated. In 2017, 116.2 million children were immunised – the highest ever reported. Immunisation rates are at their highest ever, with coverage rates of 85% in 2017, up from 72% in 2000.

Immunisation saves 2-3 million lives each year and plays an important role in poverty reduction. It is one of the most cost-effective health interventions, with every \$1 invested yielding up to \$44 in return. Immunisation is often at the core of a country's health system as well as providing immediate protection from diseases.

But progress is stalling

Although investment in immunisation programmes in developing countries has dramatically increased over the past two decades, all the targets for disease-elimination are behind schedule, and over the last two years, rates of diseases that were falling are now [on the rise again](#). The world has seen [multiple outbreaks of measles](#), diphtheria and other vaccine-preventable

diseases. Too many children are still missing out on essential vaccinations, and many still die from diseases that are easily preventable, treatable and curable. In 2017, 1 in 10 children did not receive any vaccines, and only 7% of children in the world's poorest countries are 'fully immunised', i.e. they have access to all 11 vaccines recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Most of the children missing out on essential vaccines live in the poorest, most marginalized and conflict-affected communities.

Vaccination and Universal Health Coverage

For everyone everywhere to survive and thrive, to end poverty and achieve the Global Goals, countries must intensify their efforts to ensure that all children receive the life-saving vaccines they need. A full course of all recommended vaccines is the only way to prevent increases in vaccine-preventable diseases, and fully protect children, families and communities. A healthy child will be more likely to survive, learn in school, and grow up to be a healthy and productive member of society.

2019 and 2020 provide a vital opportunity for reversing stalling vaccination rates over the next 5 years and making progress towards the goal of [Universal Health Coverage](#) (UHC). [Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance](#) and the [Global Polio Eradication Initiative](#) (GPEI) are two of the world's biggest multilateral health partnerships, and

both have critical roles to play to address stagnating coverage of life-saving vaccines. They are both developing new strategies and will require their funding to be replenished over the next year. And a new Global Vaccine Action Plan is being developed that will guide global immunisation priorities and progress from 2020. These processes have never aligned like this before, providing a chance to ensure that these mechanisms work together to have the greatest possible impact on saving lives and building sustainable health systems.

Essential immunisation often enables children and their families to gain access to other essential health services. By ensuring that everyone, no matter who they are or where they live, has access to vaccines, countries have an important opportunity to achieve UHC.

Reduced funding for polio eradication

As we move closer to polio eradication, the GPEI is winding down, with a 50% reduction in funding between 2017 and 2019. However, the job is not done yet. Last year there were 33 cases of the wild polio virus in Afghanistan and Pakistan – and while polio exists anywhere, it is a threat everywhere. The GPEI's funding will run out next year, and it is vital that it is funded to continue its work toward eradication.

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

The creation of Gavi in 2000 dramatically increased the funding available for immunisation. It has contributed to the immunisation of 690 million children, preventing more than 10 million deaths. While overall financial resources for immunisation have risen, it will be vital for Gavi to be fully replenished in 2020 to continue its work to work toward global vaccination targets.

The UK's support for vaccination

Through funding Gavi, the UK has helped immunise 67.1 million children against vaccine-preventable

diseases, saving 1.4 million lives. During Gavi's last replenishment in 2015, the UK contributed £1.1 billion, making it Gavi's largest donor. Without historic and current UK support, the remarkable achievements the world has made in immunisation would not have been possible. In 2020, the UK will host Gavi's replenishment conference, a good sign it intends to remain a leader in immunisation funding.

The UK has also been a leading supporter of the GPEI, pledging £100 million for polio eradication in August 2017. This will help immunise 45 million children against polio each year until 2020.

The UK Government must remain committed to Gavi and GPEI over the coming years, if we are to reach the Global Goals on health. [Now is the critical moment](#) for parliamentarians and Governments to understand the importance of building a strong, focused global approach to vaccinations. This means that demonstrating public support for vaccinations is vital.

World Immunisation Week

[World Immunisation Week](#) (24 – 30 April) is a chance to celebrate progress, and also to show how much we have still to do – and can do if these global health institutions are strongly supported. The theme is 'Protected Together: Vaccines Work!' We are asking you to take to your media and social media channels to demonstrate the value of vaccines for the health of children, communities and the world, and in particular, to show your MP that there is public support for global vaccination programmes. We want to show decision-makers the need to ensure that all children are fully immunised, and that support for Gavi and GPEI is essential for achieving this, and for creating sustainable health systems and UHC. A groundswell of public and parliamentary support is needed over the next 18 months to make the vision of the fully immunised child a reality.

Take action

- 1. Please write a letter or article for your local media or social media outlets**, using World Immunisation Week (24-30 April) as an opportunity to celebrate the success of vaccination programmes and to promote continued UK support for GPEI and Gavi. If you can, name your MP or use their Twitter handle so they are aware of the debate. Check online (such as @resultsuk and @APPGVaccination) for discussions about immunisation, and help us promote them widely using the hashtag #VaccinesWork.
- 2. Is your MP a polio champion yet?** If not, ask them to sign up on the [One Last Push website](#), where they can pledge their support for polio eradication, and ask them to tweet about it!