

Phoenix Court
Christopher Martin Road
Basildon
SS14 3HG
www.swessex.nhs.uk

29 September 2009

Dear Parent/ Guardian

Re: Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme in schools

You will have heard of the tragic news that a 14-year-old girl was taken ill at a school in Coventry shortly after receiving the HPV vaccine, and later died. No link can be made between the death and the vaccine until all the facts are known and a post-mortem takes place.

NHS South West Essex has followed Department of Health guidance. As a purely precautionary measure, we have quarantined, with immediate effect, all stocks of the Cervarix vaccine from the batch given to the 14-year-old in Coventry until the incident has been fully investigated.

I would like to reassure you that, since September 2008, 7,000 doses of the HPV vaccine were given in South West Essex, with no reported problems.

It is not unusual for girls to experience mild feelings of being unwell or a headache in the 24 hours after the vaccination. As always, parents and carers should monitor their child's health and contact a health professional if they become increasingly unwell.

It is important to ensure your child is vaccinated against HPV. In the UK, about 3,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year and about 1,000 die from it.

Being able to protect young women against this disease is a tremendous development. The vaccine has been rigorously tested and over a million doses have now been given in the UK with no new risks emerging.

The Cervarix vaccine has passed the rigorous safety testing needed for it to be used in the UK and other European countries.



Chief Executive: Pam Court **Chair:** Derek Morrison
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The vaccine has a strong safety record. Several million doses of the vaccine have been given around the world, and more than 1.4 million doses have now been given in the UK.

The HPV vaccination programme will continue at schools across South West Essex, in line with national guidance. Other batches of the vaccination will be used while investigations are underway.

More information about all vaccinations routinely given to children and young people can be found at www.immunisation.nhs.uk. If you have any enquiries about the vaccination programme in South West Essex, you can contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0800 587 9159.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Katherine Gronqvist
Director of Public Health
NHS South West Essex and
Thurrock Council



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