

Free Chickenpox Vaccine to Roll Out on NHS: 'Fantastic News' for Tameside Families

Government decision from January 2026 will end private costs and ensure universal access to crucial childhood protection.

By Jason Nield

Local health officials across Tameside and Greater Manchester are celebrating a landmark government decision to provide a free chickenpox vaccine to all young children on the NHS from January 2026, heralding it as a transformative step for equitable healthcare access and a significant boost for family well-being.

By Jason Nield

TAMESIDE, UK – Local health chiefs in Tameside and across Greater Manchester have enthusiastically welcomed a landmark government decision to roll out a free chickenpox vaccine to all young children on the NHS, describing it as "fantastic news" for families.

The announcement, which will see the vaccine become universally available from

January 2026, marks a significant shift. Previously, the jab was only accessible privately at a cost of approximately £150.

Dr. Helen Wall, Clinical Director for Population Health at NHS Greater Manchester, highlighted the move as a crucial step towards ensuring equal access to high-quality healthcare for all.

"Our main priority is to ensure that the people of Tameside

and Greater Manchester are healthier for longer and have equal access to high quality healthcare," Dr. Wall stated. "That's why it's fantastic news that the chickenpox vaccine will now be free to all young children on the NHS from January. Previously only available privately in the UK, this means that no matter the financial situation of families, every child will be protected from chickenpox and the risk of severe side effects."

A New Era for Childhood Protection

The vaccine, which boasts decades of successful use in other countries, will be seamlessly integrated into the existing routine childhood vaccination programme. Experts emphasise that while

chickenpox is typically considered a mild illness, it carries the potential for severe complications. These can include secondary infections, inflammation of the brain and lungs, and, in rare instances,

even strokes. The universal vaccination will also play a crucial role in safeguarding against the later development of shingles.

Health and Economic Benefits Unveiled

NHS Greater Manchester anticipates that vaccinated children who still contract chickenpox will generally experience significantly milder symptoms, reducing the burden on both children and their families. The rollout is also projected to yield substantial economic benefits, with government estimates

suggesting annual savings of £15 million for the NHS in treatment costs.

"Vaccinating children protects them from chickenpox and its complications and helps reduce the spread of the virus to adults and vulnerable people," Dr. Wall elaborated. "The virus can stay in the body and sometimes cause shingles

later in life, but vaccinated children are much less likely to get chickenpox or shingles, making this an important step for long-term health."

Full details regarding the implementation and scheduling of the vaccine will be shared with parents as they become available.