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MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR SOUTH NORFOLK

Rt Hon Patricia Hewitt MP
Secretary of State for Health
Department of Health
Richmond House
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Dear Secretary of State

COMPUTER FAILURE AND FALLING CHILD IMMUNISATION LEVELS

I am writing to you about worrying trends in child immunisation levels in London which are disclosed in the Health Protection Agency's weekly communicable diseases report: *CDR Weekly* Volume 16, Number 25.

The report shows that in the past year during which new child health systems have been non-functional there has been a consistent fall in coverage of between 7% and 10% for measles, mumps and rubella and up to 19% for diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough.

The report states: "Falls in coverage of this magnitude not only indicate that individual children may be at risk, but also represent a potential major public health threat to the control of the diseases in the community".

I am sure you will agree that the national vaccination programme has been one of the NHS's greatest successes. It relies on straightforward systems which have been developed over the years for sending invitations for vaccination, identifying unvaccinated children, sending reminders and tracking their status for catch-up campaigns. Connecting for Health appears to be destroying this at the touch of a button.

I would be grateful for an urgent explanation of how you plan to deal with the consequences of this latest computer failure and to restore child immunisation levels.

I look forward to hearing from you.

RICHARD BACON MP

Member of Parliament for South Norfolk