Dear Colleague

ANTENATAL SCREENING FOR RUBELLA SUSCEPTIBILITY

ACTION REQUIRED

Chief Executives should ensure relevant health professionals are aware that the offer of antenatal screening for rubella susceptibility is to continue for all pregnant women in Northern Ireland.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this letter is provide clarity on a recent update to the NICE Clinical Guideline CG 62 on Antenatal Care (2008) that was forwarded to the HSC by the Department of Health in Northern Ireland on 6 February. This update included the removal of recommendation 1.8.8.1 on antenatal screening for rubella susceptibility, on the basis that this is no longer offered on the NHS in England. This is not the policy position in Northern Ireland.

2. The advice given in my letter HSS (MD) 15/2016 on the prevention of congenital rubella infection in Northern Ireland is that antenatal screening for rubella susceptibility is to continue for all pregnant women in Northern Ireland and the position would be reviewed in three years’ time. I wish to confirm this advice still stands as I am aware the NICE update notification has created some confusion.
Action Required

3. Chief Executives should ensure relevant health professionals are aware that the offer of antenatal screening for rubella susceptibility is to continue for all pregnant women in Northern Ireland.

4. The policy position on antenatal screening for rubella susceptibility will be reviewed this year and that following this review, new guidance will be issued by the Department to the HSC.

Yours sincerely

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Chief Medical Officer

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications

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