



Press Release

Polio Survivors Ireland statement on discovery of poliovirus in London sewage system

No cause for panic, ensuring vaccinations up to date protects those at risk

For immediate Release – 23 June 2022

The news that poliovirus has been discovered in London's sewage system, is without question concerning, particularly to people who have lived experience of this devastating disease. However, it should be noted that the incidence of poliovirus in the samples taken, is thought to be the result of someone travelling abroad and being inoculated with a live polio vaccine, returning to the UK and shedding virus. An outbreak of polio, a disease eradicated from the UK and Ireland since 1984, has not been detected.

Polio Survivors Ireland would caution against panic at this news, but re-iterate the importance of vaccine. We would urge parents of children who may have fallen behind on immunisation schedules due to covid, to ensure their vaccinations are up to date to protect from this disease. The polio vaccine was discovered in 1955 and has safely and effectively removed the threat of polio in the Western world.

To a representative body for those 5,000 people in Ireland, who are still living with disabilities brought about by polio, the idea of polio returning is unthinkable. Members of Polio Survivors Ireland have experienced first-hand the devastation that this illness can cause to a family and to an individual, leaving them with lifelong physical impacts. These can worsen in later life as Post Polio Syndrome (PPS).

This development highlights how essential it is that the legacy of polio is not forgotten. The challenges and adversity faced by polio survivors should not be overlooked, not at the height of polio epidemics, nor in the present day. As long as the disease remains endemic in some countries we must continue to promote vaccination and remind the public of the impact of this preventable disease.

Polio Survivors Ireland has just released a newly published edition of 'Polio & Us' – the stories of Irish polio survivors, available at www.polio.ie. Polio Survivors Ireland provides vital support, services and information to people who had polio, to help them maintain their independence and age with dignity.

To check your child's vaccination status, please contact your GP, or for more information see <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/hcpinfo/othervaccines/polio/>

If you or a family member has had polio and want to find out what support is available, please contact info@polio.ie, or call 01 889 8920.

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About Polio Survivors Ireland

We are the only organisation in Ireland providing practical services and support (and sometimes more importantly a listening ear) to those unfortunate enough to have contracted polio when babies or young children. We work to raise awareness of the issues faced by polio survivors and to educate medical professionals, social care providers and health policy makers about the reality for all those still impacted by the legacy of polio.

Most people think of polio as long gone. While thankfully, with every child now vaccinated, this debilitating disease is eradicated in Ireland, it is thought that around 5,000 people who had polio are still living with the impact of the original illness. Late Effects of Polio and Post Polio Syndrome can cause previously active survivors to lose mobility and to struggle with daily tasks, fatigue, pain, or to develop an extreme intolerance to cold.

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