

Dr Lucy Jessop is a Consultant in Public Health Medicine – Health Protection National Immunisations Lead.

She studied medicine at Cambridge University, where Prof Margaret Stanley the renowned HPV expert was her pathology supervisor. She developed an interest in infectious diseases during her elective in a remote part of Thailand, so spent time during her pre-registration year working in infectious diseases at Addenbrookes Hospital.

She then went on to specialise in paediatrics in London, including time in infectious diseases at St Georges and Great Ormond Street Hospitals. However, it soon became apparent to her that her time in medicine would be better spent preventing disease rather than trying to cure disease, and watch the pain felt by patients during their treatment and devastating effects on families on the loss of a child.

She completed the public health training scheme in London, specialising in health protection, and even spent six months at UCD under the inspirational supervision of Prof Cecily Kelleher, publishing several papers on the immunisation status of participants in the Lifeways Cohort Study which celebrates 20 years in February.

Lucy became a public health consultant at the age of only 32, in Buckinghamshire, leading on health protection, immunisations, child, maternal and sexual health. Here she improved the immunisation uptake of Buckinghamshire from one of the worst to one of the best performing in the area and among other work, instigated a programme to improve infant mortality.

In 2014 she moved to Northern Ireland to take up a post as a consultant in health protection at the Public Health Agency, with lead responsibilities for immunisations and hepatitis B and C. As well as managing many outbreaks including a significant outbreak of pneumococcal disease in welders in a Belfast shipyard, Lucy led the introduction of the Meningococcal ACWY and B vaccine programmes for the region and became a co-opted member of the Joint Committee of Immunisation and Vaccinations (JCVI)

Whilst at UCD, she had visited the National Immunisation Office (NIO), and thought at the time that it would be wonderful to work on immunisations full time, so when the position of Director of Public Health at the NIO became available, she felt she had to apply. Lucy was successful so took up the post in 2019.

It has been an extremely busy time for immunisations in Ireland over the past 4 years, with a large amount of the entire NIO team's time spent supporting the HSE in implementing the COVID-19 vaccine programme, with its many changes. However, work on the routine immunisation programmes also continues, including expanding the influenza vaccine programme to all children aged 2-17 years old with the live nasal (LAIV) vaccine and introducing the HPV vaccine to boys in first year of second level school, and Men ACWY to all in first year.

This week we are promoting Cervical Cancer Prevention, including setting the roadmap for elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem in Ireland. It is a great testament to science and public health that due to high HPV vaccine uptake, cervical screening and early treatment, this goal can become a reality. Part of this, is the recently launched Laura Brennan HPV catch-up programme, which is offering the vaccine to those previously eligible who are under 25 years old. It commemorates the amazing work of HPV vaccine campaigner Laura Brennan, as well as the continuation of the work by her family. More information can be found at [www.hpv.ie](http://www.hpv.ie)

The response to COVID-19 has been a major challenge to all those who work in public health across Ireland, but it has shone a spotlight on an often little recognised medical speciality, which has now achieved consultant status. Lucy was privileged to be in the first tranche of consultants in Public Health Medicine appointed in Ireland, and she hopes consultant status will help inspire the next generation of doctors to consider this rewarding and varied speciality.

In her spare time she enjoys swimming, long walks on the beach and family movie nights. She hopes to reawaken her love of travelling now that restrictions have eased.