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Dear Colleagues

COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME: JCVI ADVICE FOR VACCINATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 12 TO 17 YEARS

This letter provides details of the recent JCVI recommendation on COVID-19 vaccination of children and young people aged 12 to 17 years.

KEY OBJECTIVES

1. To update on the advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) at this time not to routinely vaccinate children and young people under 18 years of age, except in certain circumstances where children are at a particularly high risk.
2. To clarify operational guidance flexibility.

The JCVI does not recommend vaccination of children and young people except in certain circumstances where children are at a particularly high risk:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-17-years-jcvi-statement/jcvi-statement-on-covid-19-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-17-years-15-july-2021>

3. The JCVI has recommended against routine vaccination of children and young people under 18 years of age.
4. This is based on the current available clinical data, and having considered the risks and benefits of the vaccine in younger members of our society. Until more data becomes available, the JCVI does not currently advise routine universal vaccination of children and young people under 18 years of age. The JCVI will keep this advice under review as more safety and effectiveness information becomes available on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in children and young people.

**From Chief Medical Officer
Chief Nursing Officer
Interim Chief Pharmaceutical
Officer**

Dr Gregor Smith
Professor Amanda Croft
Professor Alison Strath

23 July 2021

SGHD/CMO(2021)18

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
Medical Directors, NHS Boards
Primary Care Leads, NHS Boards
Directors of Nursing & Midwifery, NHS Boards
Chief Officers of Integration Authorities
Chief Executives, Local Authorities
Directors of Pharmacy
Directors of Public Health
General Practitioners
Practice Nurses
Immunisation Co-ordinators
Operational Leads
CPHMs
Scottish Prison Service
Scottish Ambulance Service
Occupational Health Leads

For information

Chairs, NHS Boards

Further Enquiries

Policy Issues

COVID Vaccination Policy Team
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Medical Issues

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Pharmaceutical and Vaccine Supply Issues

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5. At this stage, the evidence strongly indicates almost all children and young people are at very low direct clinical risk from COVID-19, given the incidence of severe outcomes is very low.
6. The JCVI has carefully considered reports of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the membrane around the heart), following the use of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in younger adults. These reports are being closely evaluated by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the JCVI.
7. Less evidence is currently available on the safety of vaccines for children and young people compared to adults.
8. At this time, the JCVI therefore does not consider that the benefits of routinely vaccinating all 12 to 17 year olds is outweighed by the risks and has concluded that a precautionary approach should be adopted until more data has accrued and been evaluated.
9. The JCVI intends to keep this issue under active consideration which will be important as more evidence becomes available and the pandemic evolves into Autumn and Winter.
10. The Scottish Government is guided by the clinical and scientific advice on vaccination provided by the JCVI. COVID19 vaccination will be offered to the eligible children and young people in the following circumstances:
 - Those who meet the existing eligibility criteria for 16-17 year olds (those who have underlying health conditions and meet the criteria for this as set out in Phase 1): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a>
Under existing advice, young people aged 16 to 17 with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious COVID-19 should have already been offered vaccination but any 16-17 year olds who newly entered these criteria should be vaccinated;
 - Children aged 12-15 years of age with severe neuro-disabilities, Down's Syndrome, underlying conditions resulting in immunosuppression, and those with profound and multiple learning disabilities or who are on the learning disability register;
 - Children and young people aged 12-18 years of age who are household contacts of adults or children who are immunosuppressed, based on the potential for additional indirect protection.
11. The JCVI is not currently advising routine vaccination of children outside of these groups, based on the current evidence.
12. The National Vaccination Team is currently creating the cohort files for all of these included groups, and have worked up a provisional operational plan (See Annex A). The model and timeframes of delivery are also being planned nationally in conjunction with Health Board operational leads. Annex A gives the provisional time frames at present.

Operational flexibility

13. For operational flexibility, it is considered reasonable to allow a lead-in time to offer vaccination to those children who are within three months of their 18th birthday to ensure good uptake of vaccine in newly-turned 18 year olds.

Pfizer only

14. The Pfizer-BioNTech BNT162b2 COVID-19 vaccine is the only vaccine currently authorised for use in persons aged 12 to 17 years in the UK.

Action

15. Health Boards are asked to note the requirements to deliver to high risk children and young people, as identified by the JCVI, and to plan to deliver within the provisional timeframes in Annex A – in line with the National Plan emerging as also described in Annex A. Boards should consider utilising a range of staff and delivery settings - such as delivery being part of existing care packages by Learning Disability or Paediatric Services to ensure staff have the skills required to vaccinate these young people.
16. From now, the vaccine may be offered to all 17 year olds who are within 3 months of turning 18 years of age. National and local communications will be put out to invite the initial group with an 18th birthday in the next 3 months (1st August to 31st October) to come to drop in clinics or to self-register on the portal via the phone lines. This communication will then refresh monthly to invite the next month's 18th birthday group.

We remain very grateful for your continued support and ongoing efforts in relation to the national Covid vaccination programme.

Yours sincerely

Gregor Smith

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Amanda Croft

Professor Amanda Croft
Chief Nursing Officer

Alison Strath

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Interim Chief Pharmaceutical Officer

Annex A: Provisional *DRAFT* Operational Plan for Vaccinating the At Risk 12-15 Young People

12-15 year olds, with:	When we will have national cohort file	Cohort Size	How we will reach them (Scheduling)	Where and who will deliver	When vaccine will be given to young people
immunosuppressed	28 th July	tbc	Letter	Mostly HB run –dedicated clinics, home visits, delivery by health professionals if already seeing young person e.g. specialist nurses Small number boards may use GPs if locally agreed	2 nd August – 29 th August
Down's Syndrome	28 th July	tbc	Letter	As above	As above
Severe Neuro-Disability	28 th July	tbc	Letter	As above	As above
Severe LD, PMLD; or on a LD register	28 th July	tbc	Letter	As above	As above
Living with a person who is immune suppressed	28 th July	tbc	Letter	As above	As above

- National Team preparing the PGD's/training/professional and public materials/letter formats/cohort files/preparedness of NVSS system/preparing public communications/preparing phone line teams to take enquiries and NHS Inform pages
- Local Board asks at present – to prepare for timeframes and to consider with partners in child health, learning disabilities, care settings, education settings, GPs and others the where, who and how of the delivery (column 5 above).