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Written Statement: COVID-19 Vaccination – JCVI announcement on vaccinating Children & Young People

CABINET STATEMENT

Written Statement: COVID-19 Vaccination – JCVI announcement on vaccinating Children & Young People

Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services

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I want to provide members with an update on the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) latest advice, published today, for COVID-19 Vaccination of children and young people.

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The JCVI advise to offer an initial dose of Pfizer vaccine to all 16 and 17 year olds who haven't been vaccinated. This is in addition to the existing offer of two doses of vaccine to 16-17 year olds who are in 'at-risk' groups.

We are already inviting young people who are within three months of their 18th birthday, in line with JCVI advice.

The advice on 12-15 year olds has not changed and remains that persons aged 12-15 years with specific underlying health conditions that put them at risk of severe COVID-19, as set out in the Green Book, should be offered two doses of Pfizer vaccine with an interval of eight weeks between doses.

Also, children and young people aged 12 years and over who are household contacts of persons (adults or children) who are immunosuppressed are now being offered the vaccine. People who are immunosuppressed have a weaker immune system. They are more likely to have poorer outcomes if they get infected with COVID-19. Vaccinating household contacts will help limit the spread of the virus.

The JCVI note that further data and experience relevant to the vaccination of otherwise healthy persons aged 12-15 years are accumulating. The current epidemiology of COVID-19 in the UK is also changing rapidly. JCVI considers these factors important in determining the overall harm-benefit balance related to the vaccination of healthy 12-15 year olds and will continue to review emerging data and provide further advice in a timely manner.

In all instances, the offer of vaccination to children and young people must be accompanied by appropriate information to enable children and young people, and those with parental responsibility, to be adequately appraised of the potential harms and benefits of vaccination as part of informed consent prior to vaccination.

In line with the other nations of the UK, the Welsh Government welcomes the latest JCVI advice and thank them for their expertise and considered judgement on such important issues. We are now working with the NHS on the arrangements needed to offer the vaccination to all 16 and 17 year olds in line with the JCVI advice.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.

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