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Written Statement: COVID-19 Vaccination – JCVI & Chief Medical Officers' advice on vaccinating 12-15 year olds

CABINET STATEMENT

Written Statement: COVID-19 Vaccination – JCVI & Chief Medical Officers' advice on vaccinating 12-15 year olds

Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services

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I have received advice on the vaccination of 12-15 year olds from the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and want to update you.

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The four nations Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) have considered this in detail.

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Recently, the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advised that for children and young people aged 12-15 who do not have underlying health conditions, the individual health benefits from vaccination are slightly greater than the potential known harms, but that the margin of benefit, is considered too small for them to recommend a universal programme of vaccination. They further advised that, should Ministers agree there are wider issues to consider which were outside the remit of JCVI to evaluate, for example, education and mental health issues, that the 4 CMOs were best placed to advise in this respect. These wider issues are what the CMOs have considered in detail, further informed by independent senior clinical and public health input from across the UK.

I am particularly concerned that some studies show that 1 in 7 children who have Covid infections are thought to develop post Covid syndrome.

After careful consideration, on public health grounds, the UK CMOs recommend that all children and young people aged 12-15 not already covered by existing JCVI advice should be offered a first dose of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine.

The UK CMOs have decided that the additional likely benefits of reducing educational disruption and the resulting reduction in public health harm provide enough extra advantage to recommend in favour of vaccinating this group. In addition, there is a small advantage at an individual level as already identified by the JCVI.

In line with the other nations of the UK, I thank the CMO for the advice and agree with their recommendations. Our NHS will work in the next couple of weeks to begin offering a dose of vaccine to all children and young people aged 12-15. We have a blended model of offering the vaccine with all health boards primarily inviting this age group to vaccination centres with some areas going through schools. The strength of this model is that it is based on local knowledge and it is flexible and agile so it can change depending on the circumstances.

The vaccine is not mandatory and people can choose whether to have the vaccine or not. There will be appropriate information made available for children and young people and their parents to make up their minds about vaccination. Parents or guardians will be asked to give consent. I encourage parents, guardians, children and young people to discuss together whether or not to have the vaccination.

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