

# Offer a Covid-19 vaccination to clinically vulnerable children

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 1 Tachwedd 2021  
Petitions Committee | 1 November 2021

Reference: SR21/0770-1

Petition Number: P-06-1187

Petition title: Offer a Covid-19 vaccination to clinically vulnerable children

Text of petition:

The Pfizer Covid-19 vaccination has been approved in the UK for use in children age 12-16. However, the vaccination isn't being offered to any children in that age bracket. Children who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable are more at risk of hospitalisation and death from Covid-19 than the general child population. We want the Welsh Government to offer the vaccine to Clinically Extremely Vulnerable children in that age group.

Evidence suggests children neurodevelopmental disabilities are at serious risk of hospitalisation and death from Covid-19. These include those with cerebral palsy, Downs Syndrome and severe learning disability. <https://adc.bmj.com/content/early/2021/01/04/archdischild-2020-321225>

In the whole population those with a learning disability had a higher rate of death from Covid-19 than the general population. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/people-with-learning-disabilities-had-higher-death-rate-from-covid-19>



In March this year the charity, Contact carried out a survey of 3000 families, which found

- 86% of parents with disabled children have been offered a Covid-19 vaccine; 2 in 3 were offered as unpaid carers;
- 70% want their shielding or disabled children to have a Covid-19 vaccine when it has been licensed for use in children;
- 1 in 10 would like access to a Covid-19 vaccine unlicensed right now, but only 3 in every 200 parents that try have been successful in getting it unlicensed.

## 1. Background

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises all four UK health departments on immunisation, including advice on COVID-19 vaccination.

The JCVI advised on 19 July 2021 that children at increased risk of serious COVID-19 disease should be offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. That includes children aged 12 to 15 with severe neurodisabilities, Down's syndrome, immunosuppression, and multiple or severe learning disabilities. JCVI also stated that young people aged 16 to 17 years of age who are at higher risk of serious COVID-19, should continue to be offered COVID-19 vaccination, in line with their recommendations of 30 December 2020.

On 3 September 2021 the JCVI issued updated advice on COVID-19 vaccination of children aged 12 to 15. This stated that for the vast majority of children, SARS-CoV-2 infection is asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic and will resolve without treatment, and the margin of benefit was considered too small to support universal COVID-19 vaccination for this age group at that time.

JCVI's advice notes that its remit does not include consideration of the wider societal impacts of vaccination, and Wales' Health Minister on 3 September 2021 said that, alongside the other nations of the UK, she had asked Wales' Chief Medical Officer to provide guidance 'at the earliest opportunity' on the clinical and wider health benefits of vaccinating this age group.

However, the JCVI advice of 3 September also recommended, following consideration of updated data on hospital admissions and deaths, expanding the

list of conditions for which the vaccine should be offered to include children aged 12 to 15 with the following:

- Haematological malignancy;
- Sickle cell disease;
- Type 1 diabetes;
- Congenital heart disease;
- Other health conditions as described in Annex A of the guidance.

Annex A of the guidance included children with chronic respiratory disease; chronic heart disease; chronic conditions of the kidney; liver or digestive system; endocrine disorders; immunosuppression due to disease or treatment; asplenia or dysfunction of the spleen; serious genetic abnormalities that affect a number of systems; and chronic neurological disease. **The latter includes children with cerebral palsy, severe or profound and multiple learning disabilities, Down's Syndrome, and those on the learning disability register.**

## 2. Welsh Government action

On 3 September 2021, the Welsh Government's Minister for Health and Social Services issued a written statement accepting the JCVI's recommendations on the extended offer, and noted that:

Our NHS will work quickly to identify these children and young people and their Health Boards will automatically contact them. There is no need for patients to contact their health board or clinicians to check eligibility. Those children and young people already eligible under the JCVI's advice of specific underlying health conditions will have already been offered appointments.

## 3. Welsh Government response to the petition

The Welsh Government have responded in a letter dated 24 September to the Chair of the Committee, which confirms that all health boards are now offering the first dose of vaccine to those children age 12-17, and children at increased risk of serious COVID-19 disease are offered the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that

these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.