

JCVI says ‘no’ to vaccinating younger teens so UK ministers ask CMOs to advise

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the independent body that advises governments, has today (Friday 3 September) advised the UK Government that the health benefits from vaccination against COVID-19 for children between 12 and 15 were only “marginally greater than the potential known harms.” It advised the Government to seek further input from the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) on the wider impacts. This includes the impact on schools and young people’s education, which has been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

UK health ministers from across the four nations have today written to their CMOs to request that they begin the process of assessing the broader impact of universal COVID-19 vaccination in this age group. The CMOs will now convene experts and senior leaders in clinical and public health in their respective nations to consider the issue. They will then present their advice to ministers on whether a universal programme should be taken forward.

People aged 12 to 15 who are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 or who live with adults who are at increased risk of serious illness from the virus are already eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine and are being contacted by the NHS, to be invited to come forward. The JCVI has advised that this offer should be expanded to include more children aged 12 to 15, for example those with sickle cell disease or type 1 diabetes.

The Health and Social Care Secretary for England, Sajid Javid, has asked the NHS to put preparations in place to roll out vaccinations to 12 to 15 year olds, should it be recommended by the chief medical officers. If this group is offered the vaccine, parental or carer consent will be sought, just as with other school immunisation programmes.

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