

Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation

Statement on COVID-19 vaccination of children and young people aged 12 – 17 years

July 2021

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has previously advised COVID-19 vaccination of all adults aged 18 years and over in the UK, and vaccination of some specific groups under the age of 18 years. The COVID-19 immunisation programme has been highly successful, with rapid delivery and high uptake. The programme has already substantially reduced the risk from serious COVID-19 in the UK population.

In view of the progress in offering COVID-19 vaccination to all adults, the Department of Health Social Care asked JCVI for advice on a possible extension of the programme to children and young people. JCVI has also received representations from professional bodies and members of the public on vaccination of children, both for and against such an extension. **The JCVI has deliberated on the potential risks and benefit of vaccinating children and young people in the context of very high vaccine uptake in those older people at highest risk from serious COVID-19 infection in the UK.**

With regards to a COVID-19 immunisation programme for children and young people, JCVI's main consideration remains the potential benefits of vaccination in terms of reductions in hospitalisations and deaths in the population. As disruption of education is likely to have medium to long term impacts on public health, JCVI has also considered the potential for vaccination to prevent outbreaks in educational facilities. These potential benefits have been considered against the potential risks from vaccination.

Vaccine safety

The Pfizer-BioNTech BNT162b2 COVID-19 vaccine has been authorised for use in persons aged 12 years and over in the UK. This follows evidence from a clinical trial where around 1000 individuals aged 12 to 15 years received two doses of the vaccine. There is good evidence that the vaccine is relatively reactogenic in this age group, with short-lived side effects including fever being common. There are emerging reports from the UK and other countries of rare but serious adverse events, including myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the membrane around the heart), following the use of Pfizer-BioNTech BNT162b2 and Moderna mRNA-1273 vaccines in younger adults. These reports are being closely evaluated by MHRA and JCVI. Data on the incidence of these events in children and young people are currently limited, and the longer-term health effects from the myocarditis events reported are not yet well understood. MHRA reports on COVID-19 vaccines are available [here](#).

Any decision on deployment of vaccines must be made on the basis that the benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks to those people who are vaccinated.