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JCVI scientists 'in dark' over whether children will be offered Covid vaccines

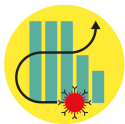
Committee has 'reached its conclusion' on contentious issue – but decision is now 'stuck' in Government

By Henry Bodkin, HEALTH AND SCIENCE CORRESPONDENT

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Scientists on the Government's vaccines advisory group have been left "in the dark" about [whether children will be offered Covid jobs](#), health sources have said.

The Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisation (JCVI) has "reached its conclusion" on the contentious issue but the decision is now "stuck" in Government.

Last week, The Telegraph revealed that ministers would be [advised against the mass rollout of Covid jobs to children](#) until scientists obtain more data on the risks.

Senior JCVI members have previously publicly questioned the ethics of vaccinating a population that faces only a tiny risk of serious illness from Covid.

However, Prof Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, last week suggested the Government was sympathetic to the idea when he said there was a "wider question" about [disruption to schooling](#).



On Sunday night, a source said: "It is about reconciling the view of the committee – which of course is evolving over time anyway – and what the politicians are minded to do. I guess that process is taking longer than usual."

JCVI members were "perplexed" by the delay, the source added, saying: "We've deliberated and we've reached some conclusions, but the position we're in is that we're waiting for a joint communique from DHSC [Department of Health and Social Care], from Matt Hancock and the whole team."

On Sunday night, the Department of Health denied that ministers had yet received JCVI's advice.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine has been licensed for use [in 12 to 15-year-olds](#) following trials in the US which showed it was safe.

However, JCVI members – most of whom are independent scientists who offer their expertise to the committee – are known to be seeking the assurance of real-world safety data from mass rollouts in other countries.

The US is currently [embarking on such a rollout](#), but the JCVI is understood to believe it is too early to derive meaningful safety data from that country. Israel has also vaccinated its

teenage population, and last week France opened up its programme to children aged 12 and over.

A key issue of concern is understanding whether mRNA vaccines such as the Pfizer jab increase the risk of myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart.

The US Centers for Disease Control said there have been more than 300 cases reported among the millions of teens and young adults who have received an mRNA vaccine, but that in the "vast majority" of cases the inflammation went away.

"The myocarditis question is highly relevant," the source said. "Hopefully the US experience will be reassuring, but you just don't know."

The Telegraph has previously disclosed that Whitehall had drawn up provisional plans to roll out vaccines to children [from as early as the second half of August](#).

A DHSC spokesman said: "Following a robust review of the evidence, the MHRA concluded the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine meets the high standards of safety, effectiveness and quality required and has authorised its use for people aged 12 and above.

"Ministers have not received JCVI advice and no decisions have been made on whether people aged 12 to 17 should be routinely offered Covid-19 vaccines. The Government will continue to be guided by the advice of the JCVI and has asked for its formal recommendation. We will update in due course."

Meanwhile, the Sun reported on Sunday night that ministers are preparing to offer the jab to 16 and 17-year-olds ahead of their return to school in September.

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