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Ignoring expert advice on child vaccines will dissolve public trust in the state, ministers warned

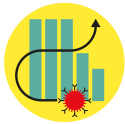
Backbench rebellion over Government's 'willingness to to chart its own course independent of the country's scientific advisers'

By Camilla Turner, EDUCATION EDITOR *and* Lizzie Roberts, HEALTH REPORTER

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Ministers faced a backbench rebellion on Friday night over [children's vaccines](#) after 26 Tory MPs warned that overruling expert advice risks "dissolving the bond of trust" between the public and the Government.

In a letter to Sajid Javid, the Health Secretary, MPs said that the Government's willingness to "ignore" the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is a [cause for "serious concern"](#).

Their intervention comes as Prof Chris Whitty, England's Chief Medical Officer, prepares to advise ministers on whether there is a wider [benefit to society from vaccinating children](#).

In the letter, MPs pointed out that a "large part" of the UK's inoculation programme success stems from the work of the JCVI which had "successfully determined the priorities for the vaccination rollout since January".

They added: "As a result of their leadership, the UK has one of the [lowest levels of vaccine hesitancy](#) in the world, and so far over 90 per cent of the adult population has felt enough

trust in its analysis to confidently have at least one vaccine dose.

“Every step of the way, from the first jab administered back in December, to three quarters of us now being fully vaccinated, the JCVI has brought the country along with it.”

Signatories of the letter include Esther McVey, the former secretary of state, Sir Graham Brady, the chairman of the 1922 committee of backbench MPs, and William Wragg, the chairman of the public administration and constitutional affairs committee.

MPs said they are concerned that any attempt by the Government to “overrule” the advice now risks “dissolving the bond of trust that has grown between state and public”.

Last week, the JCVI delivered its [long-awaited verdict](#), saying the “margin of benefit” of jabbing 12- to 15-year-olds was “considered too small” and citing the low risk to healthy children from the virus.



However, Mr Javid said he wanted Prof Whitty and the chief medical officers from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to “consider the vaccination of 12- to 15-year-olds from a broader perspective”.

He said he would then “consider the advice from the chief medical officers, building on the advice from the JCVI, before making a decision shortly”.

MPs told Mr Javid that the Government's "willingness to challenge this decision, and to chart its own course independent of the country's scientific advisers, is a moment for serious concern".

They said that if the JCVI was overruled, and vaccinations were rolled out to children, then a cost-benefit analysis must be published immediately so that Parliament can debate the issue properly.

Molly Kingsley, the co-founder of the parent campaign group UsForThem, which organised the letter, said that many parents were "horrified" about the prospect of the vaccine rollout to children going ahead.

She added: "It doesn't sit well with the JCVI's latest position and there are escalating and serious concerns about risks to young people both short and long term which must be addressed."

Earlier this week, a major study found that teenage boys were six times more likely to suffer from [heart problems from the vaccine](#) than be hospitalised from Covid-19.

Anti-vaccination protesters demonstrate outside Parliament in London | CREDIT: Andy Rain/Shutterstock

Children who face the highest risk of a "cardiac adverse event" are boys aged between 12 and 15 following two doses of a vaccine, according to new research from the University of

California.

Booster jab rollout

Adult patients are also being added to waiting lists and booked in for booster jabs ahead of the anticipated rollout, it has emerged.

Dr Mike Smith, a GP in Stevenage, said they have prepared a database of highly vulnerable patients and have made some “anticipatory plans” to start their boosters, including planning how many are housebound and how many could travel to the surgery.

“We are going to do it quite quickly because what we don’t want to do is bring vulnerable people up to the surgery whilst other people are turning up with their coughs and colds,” he said.

But he added the information remained “conflicting” around who may be eligible for a booster, meaning they are currently only able to plan the “bare minimum”.

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Dr Krishna Kasaraneni, a GP in Sheffield, said although there is still no clarity on who will be eligible, his practice has their patient lists ready to go from the first and second doses, should a rollout be announced.

Other patients across the country have shared on social media that they’ve been added to a “waiting list” for their third dose.

One man in his 60s, who did not want to be named, said his GP surgery in County Durham had added him to a list but said they were “in the dark” about who would actually be eligible.

Joseph Gellman told The Telegraph his 83-year-old grandfather, who lives in Harrow, has already been booked in for his booster for the end of the month.

“He was told to come for his flu jab mid-September and then his Covid booster a week later,” he said.

The JCVI is expected to announce their recommendations for booster jabs imminently.

The Front Bench Newsletter