



Coronavirus

Anger at plans to roll back Covid vaccines to under-11s in England

Children aged 5-11 will no longer be offered Covid jabs, except those in clinical risk groups, UKHSA confirms

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The decision to reduce the number of children who are offered Covid jabs has prompted outcry from parent groups and academics.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said children who had not turned five by the end of last month would not be offered a vaccination, in line with advice published by the UK's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) [in February 2022](#). UKHSA said the offer of Covid jabs to healthy five to 11-year-olds was always meant to be temporary.

UKHSA's [Green Book](#), which provides information on the vaccine rollout for public health professionals, states: "This one-off programme applies to those aged 5 to 11 years, including those who turn five years of age before the end of August 2022.

“Subject to further clarification, on-going eligibility in 2022/23, after the one off-programme, is expected to be for children in the academic years where children are aged 11 or 12 years.”

However, Prof Christina Pagel, of University College London, criticised the move.

“JCVI itself considered there to be a benefit to young children to be vaccinated - even if most of them had already been infected,” she said.

“There is also the additional benefit to children of providing additional protection from **developing long Covid**, missing school during the acute illness and reducing transmission to household members, other children and teachers.”

Pagel said that at least one serious Covid wave was expected later this year, but that many children about to start school would now have to wait six years for vaccination, with likely relatively frequent infections in that time.

“When we know there is a safe and effective vaccine available this seems unjustifiable to me,” said Pagel, adding that - while rare - children had died from Covid.

Adam Finn, professor of paediatrics at the University of Bristol, and a member of the JCVI, said that while the Covid vaccine programme for priming jabs would probably be wound down at some point, including for children, it had not been finalised when this would happen.

He pointed out that in the UK, the proportion of parents who had chosen to have their young children immunised had been small, despite the offer being open.

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The JCVI says young children are at very low risk of developing severe disease from

Covid, while most will have gained natural immunity from infections.

“The main policy focus right now though ... is to try to immunise those who are at highest risk of severe acute Covid as per the recent [announcement on the autumn booster programme](#),” said Finn.

UKHSA confirmed all children aged five and over in clinical risk groups would continue to be offered Covid jabs, including through the booster programme.

Gavin Dabrera, deputy director of Covid-19 vaccines and epidemiology at UKHSA said: “From the outset, this offer was only applicable to children who turned five years old by 31 August 2022. The NHS in England vaccinates in line with this guidance and eligible children who turned five by 31 August can still come forward for the jab,” he said.

“The JCVI continually reviews the UK’s Covid-19 vaccination programme, including the offer to 5-11s, and any updates to its advice will be announced in due course.”

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