

Mark Drakeford AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Jocelyn Davies AM
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Jocelyn.Davies@wales.gov.uk

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Dear Jocelyn,

I am responding to the question you asked Jane Hutt AM during Business Questions on 12 May regarding extending the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme to males.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is the independent panel of experts which advises the UK countries on vaccination programmes. JCVI undertakes a full cost effectiveness analysis on any new vaccination programme or any changes to existing programmes before providing their recommendations.

The HPV immunisation programme was introduced in 2008 for girls aged 12-13 years. At that time JCVI advised that the evidence indicated vaccinating boys was unlikely to be cost-effective, as vaccine efficacy was high, and high coverage in girls would provide herd protection for boys, meaning that a programme which included boys would provide little additional benefit.

JCVI has recognised the need to keep the HPV vaccination schedule under review. JCVI has acknowledged concerns that men who have sex with men are a group at higher risk of HPV infection and subsequent disease as they receive little indirect protection from the highly-successful HPV vaccination programme in adolescent girls. It has also recognised the importance of the ongoing assessment of HPV vaccination for adolescent boys.

In November 2014, the JCVI published an interim statement following an assessment of the potential impact and cost-effectiveness of a targeted HPV vaccination programme for men who have sex with men. JCVI noted, however, that a number of assumptions and uncertainties had been included in the modelling and cost-effectiveness studies. Comments were, therefore, invited from stakeholders on the validity of its assessment and proposals. Responses to the consultation are currently being considered by JCVI. It is anticipated that further advice on this proposed programme will be received from JCVI in early summer.

JCVI is also continuing its review of a HPV programme for boys. A preliminary cost effectiveness assessment is due to be presented to JCVI in the second half of 2015 but it is anticipated that final advice will not be available for some time beyond this, possibly not until 2017. JCVI has recognised that this is a long timescale for completion of the assessment but has indicated that speeding up the process may undermine the results.

It is important that all vaccination programmes are cost effective, evidence-based and delivers benefits to the population as a whole. I look forward to receiving JCVI's recommendations in due course.

Best wishes,
Mark.

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