

JCVI Secretariat  
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Dr Sarah Wollaston MP  
House of Commons,  
London,  
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Sent by email to: [sarah.wollaston.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:sarah.wollaston.mp@parliament.uk)

23 February 2016

Dear Dr Wollaston MP,

**Re: Meningococcal B vaccination in the UK**

I thought it might be helpful to write to you in my capacity as Chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) regarding the capsular group B meningococcal (MenB) vaccination programme, so that the current JCVI position is clarified.

As you will know, the decision about introduction of a universal MenB programme was difficult because of the uncertainty surrounding vaccine effectiveness, and in particular the potential for induction of herd immunity, the falling rates of disease over the past decade and borderline cost-effectiveness. Although JCVI members, who include clinicians, public health experts, health economists and modellers and members of the public, would like to see all cases prevented, a broad programme would not be cost-effective and, under the NHS constitution, JCVI recommendations would not be mandatory on the Secretary of State.

From our best evidence, the infant programme which commenced in September 2015 is likely to be cost-effective, but only at a low vaccine price. JCVI did not consider a catch up to four years of age, which was the next best option in early childhood, because the evidence indicated that such a catch-up programme was unlikely to be cost-effective. In view of the very low rates of disease among school-age children, a catch up to eleven years of age, as called for in the media, would not be cost-effective. Perhaps the optimal approach would be to vaccinate teenagers, but that is only likely to be cost-effective if the vaccine induces herd immunity, and so we asked the Department of Health to undertake some research to address this issue.

In your media interview, you asked that JCVI reconsider the methodology for cost-effectiveness for vaccines. Indeed, we did ask The Department of Health to consider reviewing this in 2014. A Department of Health co-ordinated committee has been meeting over the last 12 months or so, and is in the process of drafting a report for the Department. The implications of this report for current or future vaccine programmes is not yet known but I am sure you will be interested in the outcome, as will JCVI.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss this further or contact Dr Mary Ramsay who is Head of Immunisation at Public Health England.

Yours sincerely

Professor Andrew Pollard  
Chair of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation  
[JCVI@phe.gov.uk](mailto:JCVI@phe.gov.uk)

Cc:

Jane Ellison MP – Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health

Dr Mary Ramsay – Head of Immunisation, PHE

Prof. John Watson – Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DH