

Scottish Government submission of 2 May 2023

PE1939/E: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys

Thank you for your letter of 21 March in relation to petition [PE1939: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys](#) published on Wednesday 8th March 2023.

The Scottish Government position is clear, timely vaccination protects people from vaccine-preventable diseases. It is important that people receive their immunisations at the right age to ensure maximum protection – from the first immunisation appointment, scheduled at two months of age, continuing through the teenage years and throughout adulthood.

From January 2023, a one dose schedule was introduced in Scotland for all those eligible in the HPV vaccination programme up to their 25th birthday. We envisage that this programme change will increase the number of people completing their vaccination schedule as it will remove the requirement to be recalled to receive a second dose, as well as allowing more opportunities for follow up appointments, if people have missed their appointment for any reason.

The policy set in Scotland for eligible cohorts for teenage immunisation programmes is defined by academic year as opposed to date of birth. This supports the delivery of the schools' vaccination programme. For HPV, this means that any boy that was in S1 for the 2019/2020 academic year will be offered vaccination and remain eligible up to his 25th birthday. As the Committee is aware the Scottish policy, along with the rest of the UK and in line with JCVI advice does not recommend a catch up programme, so any boys in academic years above S1 in 2019/2020 are not eligible.

Approaches to policy implementation across the devolved administrations can vary due to different factors. School years differ across the four nations and hence different approaches are adopted however, children in S1 are usually 12 to 13 years old by the end of the

academic session and are therefore a similar cohort to the group vaccinated in England. This is reflected in the associated Green Book Chapters (advice on immunisation, developed for health professionals by UKG), for example, in this case, there is a reference to DOB specifically in relation to England.

We have outlined to Health Boards that some of the resource freed up due to the reduction in vaccination sessions, following the change to a one dose schedule for HPV should be re-directed to interventions that strengthen programme delivery, increase coverage rates and reduce inequalities.

In Scotland, uptake for HPV vaccination remains high, however we recognise that further work is required to increase uptake for all those currently eligible including to reduce disparity between boys and girls. The Scottish Government's updated Cancer Strategy will be published shortly and will set out a number of measures to reduce disparity within the HPV vaccination programme.

In addition, the Scottish Government is currently undertaking work to interrogate immunisation uptake rates to drill down further on particular data, including deprivation, to ensure that we focus vaccination services on areas of most need. We will continue to work in partnership with Public Health Scotland (PHS) and Health Boards to support these groups and encourage uptake of HPV vaccination.