

Teenage Cancer Trust submission of 16 February 2023

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

1. About Teenage Cancer Trust

- 1.1. Every day, seven young people in the UK are given the news they have cancer, and this figure continues to rise decade on decade. Cancer is the leading non-accidental cause of death in young people in the Scotland.¹
- 1.2. Teenage Cancer Trust is the only UK charity dedicated to meeting the specialist nursing, care and support needs of those with cancer aged 13-24-years-old. We fund 4 specialist units in Scotland, as well as expert nurses and Youth Support Coordinators (YSCs, who work alongside nursing teams to help young people deal with the emotional and practical impact of cancer), so young people with cancer can access age-appropriate care and support to help them through diagnosis, treatment, and beyond.
- 1.3. This is vital as young people with cancer have unique psychological, psychosocial, social and physical needs to be met which differ from children and older adults.²

2. Background: Human papillomavirus (HPV) and cancer

- 2.1. Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that most of us will have at some point in our lives. There are over 100 types, each with its own number. 13 HPV types are linked to cancer.³ These types are called high-risk HPV. Cases of cancer linked to

¹ Public Health Scotland, 'Children and Young People with Cancer in Scotland' (2021), via <https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/9256/2021-09-21-cyppublication-report.pdf>, accessed on 13 January 2022.

² Teenage Cancer Trust (2016), 'The Blueprint of Care: for teenagers and young adults with cancer' Second Edition, 27, via https://pureadmin.qub.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/128955595/TCT_Blueprint_31_10_2016.pdf accessed on 9 August 2021.

³ Macmillan Cancer Support, 'Human papilloma virus (HPV) (factsheet)' via <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/worried-about-cancer/causes-and-risk-factors/hpv> accessed on 20 December 2022.

high-risk HPV are rare in young people⁴ – vaccination is a preventative measure ahead of adulthood.

2.2. HPV types 16 and 18 have been closely linked to cervical cancer, with almost all cases of cervical cancer (99.8%) being caused by infection with a high-risk type of HPV.⁵

2.3. Cancers that can affect men, such as cancer of the anus, penis, head and neck, are also linked to infection with HPV types 16 and 18. HPV is the cause of 91% of anal cancers.⁶ Gay and bisexual men are at higher risk of HPV infection and 15 times more likely to develop anal cancer than heterosexual men.⁷

3. The HPV vaccination programme

3.1. The HPV vaccine aims to stop people getting some types of high-risk HPV. For example, ground-breaking research published in November 2021 (Sasieni et al) estimated that the HPV vaccine has cut cases of cervical cancer by nearly 90% (around 450 cancers and 17,200 pre-cancers) in the UK.⁸

3.2. Since 2008, the HPV vaccine has been routinely offered to girls aged 12 and 13. In June 2018, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation recommended extending the current girls programme in schools to boys. Girls and boys aged 11-13 have been able to receive the HPV vaccine from the 2019/20 school year onwards (age differs depending on UK nation).

3.3. The longstanding HPV vaccination programme in girls can indirectly protect boys against cancers and genital warts linked to infection with HPV because girls will not pass HPV on to them. This is called 'herd immunity'. However, men who have sex with men have not benefited in the same way from the girls' HPV

⁴ UK Health Security Agency (2021), 'Cancer in children and young people – what do the statistics tell us?' via <https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2021/03/15/cancer-in-children-and-young-people-what-do-the-statistics-tell-us/> accessed on 1 April 2022.

⁵ Cancer Research UK (2015), 'Cervical cancer risk (factsheet)' via <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/cervical-cancer/risk-factors> accessed on 22 December 2022.

⁶ Cancer Research UK (2015), 'Anal cancer risk (factsheet)' via <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/anal-cancer/risk-factors> accessed on 22 December 2022.

⁷ M. Lawton et al (2013), 'HPV vaccination to prevent anal cancer in men who have sex with men', *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 89:342-343, via <https://sti.bmj.com/content/89/5/342> accessed on 22 December 2022.

⁸ P. Sasieni et al (Nov 2022), 'The effects of the national HPV vaccination programme in England, UK, on cervical cancer and grade 3 cervical intraepithelial neoplasia incidence: a register-based observational study', *Lancet* 398:10316 via [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(21\)02178-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(21)02178-4/fulltext) accessed on 22 December 2022.

vaccination programme. Fortunately, men who have sex with men up to and including the age of 45 are eligible for free HPV vaccination on the NHS.

3.4. In Scotland, uptake of the vaccine is high. Statistics from the 2021/22 school year published by Public Health Scotland show:⁹

3.4.1. Coverage of the first dose of HPV vaccine for eligible pupils aged 11-13 increased in 2021/22, with overall coverage rates of 73.5%, compared with 52.1% in 2020/21. Drop off in uptake in 2020/21 was due to the impact of the coronavirus on the vaccination programme.

3.4.2. However there remains a disparity between males and females; female coverage in 2021/22 was 77.5%, while male coverage was 69.6%, a difference of 7.9%.

3.4.3. In our response to the Scottish Government's consultation on a 10-Year Cancer Strategy, Teenage Cancer Trust called for the Strategy to include a plan to monitor uptake, and to bridge the disparity between boys and girls.

4. The Jab4Lads campaign

4.1. At the start of the programme for girls in 2008, there was a catch-up programme for girls born between 1991–1995 (13-17 year olds). This meant that girls who missed the vaccine were able to get the HPV vaccine for free on the NHS up until their 25th birthday.

4.2. However, only boys from the 2019/20 school year onwards are eligible for the catch-up service until they are 25. This means that all 12-13 year old boys in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and 11-12 year old boys in Scotland were eligible for the HPV vaccine. If they did not have it then, they can visit their GP and receive it for free anytime until they are 25 years old.

4.3. But, unlike the programme for girls, there is no catch-up programme for those older than this cohort. Boys who were older

⁹ Public Health Scotland (Nov 2022), 'HPV immunisation statistics Scotland school year 2021/22' via <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/hpv-immunisation-statistics-scotland/hpv-immunisation-statistics-scotland-hpv-immunisation-statistics-scotland-school-year-202122/#:~:text=Coverage%20of%20the%20first%20dose,52.1%25%20in%202020%2F21> accessed on 22 December 2022.

than 11-13 years in 2019 were not, and are still not, eligible to get the HPV vaccine for free.

- 4.4. If anyone is not eligible for the vaccine, they can pay to have the injections. These cost between £160-£180 per dose of the vaccine.¹⁰
- 4.5. Both the JCVI and UK Governments have ruled out implementing a catch-up programme for boys, based on a position that it would not be cost-effective to vaccinate these boys, due to reasonable levels of herd immunity.¹¹
- 4.6. There are arguments that herd immunity does not provide full protection. For example, it does not protect boys who have sex with girls who have not been vaccinated, which in the UK currently stands at approximately 16-17% of girls, or girls who are from outside the UK, such as France where HPV vaccination uptake in teenage girls is a public health concern, standing at just 40.7% for the year 2020.¹²
- 4.7. In September 2019, Teenage Cancer Trust called for the NHS and all UK Governments to include this generation of school-aged boys who are currently missing out on the vaccine, asking that the vaccine is available to them too, for free on the NHS, if they request it. The campaign was called #JabsForLads and can be found here: <https://www.teenagecancertrust.org/get-help/blog/hpv-vaccine-changing>

¹⁰ Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, 'Having the HPV vaccine privately' via <https://www.jostrust.org.uk/information/hpv-vaccine/private#:~:text=You%20can%20pay%20to%20have,%C2%A3160%20to%20%C2%A3180> accessed on 22 December 2022.

¹¹ Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (Jul 2018) 'Statement on HPV vaccination', via https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/726319/JCVI_Statement_on_HP_V_vaccination_2018.pdf accessed on 22 December 2022.

¹² Fadia Dib, Philippe Mayaud, Cécile Renaudie, Odile Launay & Pierre Chauvin (2022) Determinants of human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine uptake among girls in France: A population-based telephone survey, *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics*, 18:5, DOI: [10.1080/21645515.2022.2083894](https://doi.org/10.1080/21645515.2022.2083894)