

Hackney Education

Hackney Council
1 Reading Lane
Hackney
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Headteachers in Hackney Secondary & Special
Schools and Colleges

27 August 2021

Dear Colleague,

Covid-19 vaccination for children & young people

We are aware of concerns being raised with schools by parents, carers and young people about Covid-19 vaccination for children & young people and wanted to respond to some of the issues of concern. You are welcome to use all or any of the following in communications with your staff, pupil and parent stakeholders.

Covid-19 - what are the risks to children and young people?

For most children and young people Covid-19 is usually a milder illness that rarely leads to complications. Coronavirus can, however, affect anyone, with some children and young people being at greater risk of severe disease than others - e.g., those with severe neurodisabilities, severe learning difficulties, Down's syndrome and other serious conditions.

Children & young people - who can get vaccinated and how will this happen?

Under previous guidance, the Joint Committee on Vaccination & Immunisation (JCVI) recommended two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine (Pfizer/BioNTech), 8 weeks apart, for the following groups of children and young people:

- 12-15 year olds with specific vulnerabilities
- Those aged 12 years and over who live with individuals who are immunosuppressed
- 16-17 year olds at increased risk of severe infection.

As of 4th August 2021, the JCVI now recommends vaccination for all 16-17 year olds in addition to the above groups. This will be offered as a single dose initially, before guidance on the second dose is formalised.

Vaccination of the above groups will not be undertaken in schools. The NHS will contact eligible children aged 12-15 to invite them for vaccination. However, if parents believe that their



child is eligible but has not been contacted by the end of September they should contact their GP.

All 16-17 year olds have been invited via the National Booking System (NBS) to book their vaccination at appropriately resourced local vaccination sites, which might also include vaccination centres, community pharmacies and Hospital Hubs.

Is the vaccine safe for children & young people?

Vaccines are usually tested in adults first, and only later assessed in children when safety has been proven in adults. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) has concluded that the Pfizer/BionTech vaccine is suitable for use by people aged 12 years and above.

The JCVI has looked at the very latest safety data from the UK and other countries. It is known some serious side effects have been reported in a very small number of cases in this younger age group. It should be noted that these side effects are extremely rare and usually occur within a few days of the second dose.

As such, the JCVI suggests prioritising the first dose, and delaying the recommendation on the second to allow them to provide the best available advice with the latest available information for the second dose. The initial dose will provide some immediate protection from severe disease.

Should children & young people be vaccinated?

Latest figures show people aged 18 to 34 now make up more than 1 in 5 of those admitted to hospital with the virus. Whilst we acknowledge there is a very small risk of side effects, the benefit of vaccination in reducing the risk of catching Covid-19 and / or becoming seriously unwell or dying is evident. Vaccination protects individuals and those around them as well as playing a crucial role in stopping the spread of the virus. We are, therefore, strongly encouraging all adults, 16-17 year olds and vulnerable 12-15 year olds to take up vaccination when invited to do so.

I hope that you find the above information useful when talking to parents / carers and children & young people about vaccination. It may also be helpful to share this [video](#) featuring young people and frontline staff telling their stories of being unwell with or treating patients with Covid-19. Please also remember that, on top of vaccination, it will be important for pupils / students and staff to continue to undertake regular twice weekly LFD testing.

If you have any queries or concerns, please email Hackney's Public Health team at testandtrace@hackney.gov.uk

Yours sincerely,



Annie Gammon
Director of Education



Dr Sandra Husbands
Director of Public Health