



Directors of Education,
Grant-aided Special Schools
Independent Schools

Cc Local Authority Chief Executives

By email

29 January 2021

Dear colleague,

VACCINATION OF SELECT STAFF WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

Ministers have decided that staff working very closely with children and young people with the most complex additional support needs are to be offered coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccinations as a priority. This will help to support the protection of some clinically vulnerable children and young people.

Staff in this group will be defined as Health and Social Care workers within group two on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) priority list. This is not a deviation from the JCVI priority list but simply a clarification to ensure that all staff working with children and young people with the most complex healthcare needs, particularly those with severe neurodisabilities are vaccinated. These children and young people require a range of interventions, including personal and intimate care and invasive procedures such as PEG feeding, and staff who support them regularly undertake healthcare duties, social care duties, and moving and handling, all of which may mean they are in regular close contact with many of these children. It is important to stress that vaccinating those that are providing this care is designed to support the protection of those receiving the care given no one under 16 years old is eligible.

This does not affect all staff working with children and young people with additional support needs, just those working with those with the most complex healthcare needs.

A clear definition of who will be eligible for a vaccine has been developed in consultation with colleagues in local government and is attached as an Annex to this letter. We will work with local authorities to identify the appropriate staff involved and ensure they are called forward.

A Chief Medical Officer letter will be issued shortly to inform NHS Boards of the inclusion of staff working with children and young people with the most complex additional support needs to help them to put plans into operation. It is expected that this vaccination programme will



be complete by early February in line with our previous commitment to complete JCVI priority groups 1 and 2 within this timeframe.

Delivery of the NHS Scotland Covid-19 vaccination programme is well underway. Consideration is ongoing as to whether other key worker groups, including school staff and childcare workers could be considered a priority for vaccination, once the clinically high-risk groups defined by JCVI have been vaccinated.

Yours sincerely,

ALISON CUMMING
Interim Director for Early Learning & Childcare
Scottish Government



Annex

Definition

Staff directly involved in the direct care of children and young people with the most complex additional healthcare needs who are clinically vulnerable to severe effects of COVID and may be at higher risk of exposure due to their close contact with those providing health and social care support. This includes staff working in special schools and units, and in some cases in mainstream schools. Staff supporting these children will undertake roles which will align to the multi-agency educational and care plans for these children who are the most clinically vulnerable.

There are currently very limited data on clinical risk factors in childhood, but these limited data suggest that children with neurological comorbidities may be at a greater risk of developing severe COVID-19. Given the very high risk of exposure to infection and outbreaks in institutional settings, vaccination may be considered for children with severe neuro-disabilities who tend to get recurrent respiratory tract infections and who frequently spend time in specialised residential care settings for children with complex needs.

Staff should be offered the vaccination if they are supporting these children and young people who have the most complex healthcare needs which require the co-ordination and provision of support from education, health and/or social care services within school settings. It is expected that the support provided must be over and above the routine processes of feeding, washing and toileting.

Staff who are eligible will undertake regular healthcare and social care duties with multiple children/young people, and moving and handling, all of which mean they work in close proximity for prolonged periods of time providing a range of interventions, including personal and intimate care and invasive procedures such as PEG feeding. Although not exhaustive the type of clinical interventions may include:

- Empty colostomy bags
- Clean sputum from tracheostomy sites
- Replace 'speaky' cap
- Monitor infections and cleanliness of gastrostomy and stoma sites
- Mop up spills from gastrostomy and bile bags
- Monitor requirements for suctioning which requires to be in very close contact
- Monitoring and responding to Epilepsy seizures and safety management, reporting and recording
- Moving and handling post-op
- Moving and handling of brittle bones
- Support positioning and 24 hour postural management and respiratory difficulties
- Following identified Physiotherapy programmes e.g. passive stretching, rebound therapy, respiratory health
- Placement of orthotics
- Monitoring of Oxygen ventilation/saturation levels
- Monitoring of pupil temperatures
- Delivery of identified direct close contact SLT programmes
- Delivery of identified of OT programmes



It is expected that vaccines should be available irrespective of who they are employed by (for example local government, NHS, private sector, third sector and agencies).