# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TITLE**  | **COVID-19 vaccination – Spring booster offer to most vulnerable** |
| **DATE**  | **07 March 2023** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), as part of its latest review of the COVID-19 vaccination programme, has today published a statement, which recommends an additional spring booster dose for our most vulnerable citizens.

The primary aim of the COVID-19 vaccination programme continues to be the prevention of severe disease (hospitalisation and mortality) arising from COVID-19. Older people, residents in care homes for older adults, and those who are immunosuppressed continue to be at highest risk of severe COVID-19. The Committee has recommended, as a precautionary strategy, a second booster dose in the spring for:

* **adults aged 75 years and over;**
* **residents in a care home for older adults, and**
* **individuals aged 5 years and over who are immunosuppressed (as defined in table 3 or 4 in the** [**Green Book**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a)**)**

In making this recommendation they considered available data from the UK and internationally which suggests that older people are more likely to experience waning of immunity due to a decreased capacity of the immune system to respond effectively to infections or vaccines, and much more likely to experience severe disease if infected. Practically, because they were prioritised for vaccination at the start of the COVID-19 Autumn booster programme that started in September 2022, older people are also now furthest in time from their last vaccine dose.

The Committee has also advised that the VidPrevtyn Beta COVID-19 vaccine developed by Sanofi/GSK and approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in December, can be deployed alongside the very latest mRNA vaccines by Pfizer and Moderna during this programme. In clinical trials the Sanofi/GSK vaccine had results comparable to the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines and has been recommended by the JCVI for people over 75. This vaccine, which is suitable for those intolerant of mRNA vaccines, also has less stringent storage conditions, as compared to the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, which will allow for greater operational flexibility in its use and may improve access to vaccination.

I have accepted this advice and have asked health boards to firm up the plans they have been making for some time. The details of the programme will be set out in a Welsh Health Circular issued by the Chief Medical Officer.

On the basis of advice received by the JCVI, I recently announced the end of the universal offer of the original booster that was offered to all those aged over 5 years from autumn 2021. This offer ends at the end of March, so there is still time for anyone that hasn’t taken it up to come forward for vaccination and I would urge people to do so.

As ever, I am extremely grateful to the NHS and everyone involved in the vaccination programme for their continued hard work.