# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice on the 2023-24 Influenza vaccination programme** |
| **DATE** | **09 December 2022** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is an [independent expert advisory committee](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FNational_Immunization_Technical_Advisory_Group&data=05%7C01%7CChristopher.Jones%40gov.wales%7Cdc82d4d6c8c44f20d88108da63177ffc%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637931249816477220%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2FA7I7VS6fSDP%2BK%2FgUYOvRAIZForu5mpEFdnDAZ616Fw%3D&reserved=0), which advises the four United Kingdom Government’s health departments about [immunisation](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fen.wikipedia.org%2Fwiki%2FImmunisation&data=05%7C01%7CChristopher.Jones%40gov.wales%7Cdc82d4d6c8c44f20d88108da63177ffc%7Ca2cc36c592804ae78887d06dab89216b%7C0%7C0%7C637931249816477220%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KSpiV5mYCzoB6PuMa6U5uvA6agex%2F9H38etE4to7M3o%3D&reserved=0), for the prevention of infections and/or disease.

As part of its ongoing review of the Influenza vaccination programme, the JCVI has published its latest advice on the [2023-24 programme](https://app.box.com/s/t5ockz9bb6xw6t2mrrzb144njplimfo0/file/1079253178131), which details both the cohorts eligible for vaccination for next season and the recommended vaccines. The [advice](https://app.box.com/s/t5ockz9bb6xw6t2mrrzb144njplimfo0/file/1079253178131) from the Committee, which I have accepted, largely mirrors their recommendations for the current season, in that, the Committee has again recommended older people, children and those at clinical risk as the main groups eligible for flu vaccination.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic JCVI has been supportive of the temporary expansion of the influenza programme to those aged between 50 and 64 years of age to protect the population from the potential threat of co-circulation of COVID-19 and influenza and alleviate pressure on the NHS. For the current season, the Committee agreed that it would be acceptable to vaccinate this group, if funding was available. In the absence of cost-effectiveness analysis, the Committee has recommended the same approach for next season, that is, nations should vaccinate 50-64 year olds, if funding is available.

Whilst I took the decision last year to proceed with vaccination for this group for the current season, given the extremely challenging financial context we are currently experiencing, I have decided to defer my decision on whether to vaccinate this cohort until further cost-effectiveness data is available for analysis. I expect to be in a position to make and announce this decision in spring 2023.

This should not impact on the ordering of vaccines by the service, as Welsh Government will take responsibility for the procurement of any additional vaccine supply required to cover the 50-64 year old group, should their inclusion in the programme be agreed.

Connected to this, I have made the decision to remove the QIVe vaccine from the list of vaccines we approve for reimbursement in 2023-24. This is based on the advice from the JCVI that it should only be used in the low risk 50-64 cohort or as a substitute when other preferred vaccines are unavailable.

Influenza vaccination is part of the annual Winter Respiratory Vaccination Programme and is a strategic priority for Welsh Government. In 2022-23 the influenza vaccination programme was for the first time delivered alongside the COVID-19 autumn booster vaccination campaign and we plan to operationalise in the same way for next year, where possible, to maximise take up and protect as many vulnerable people as we can.

A Welsh Health Circular will shortly be issued from the Chief Medical Officer to the NHS in Wales, to notify the service of the published JCVI advice and what this means for Wales. The circular will also provide immunisers with guidance on cohorts, highlighting the recommended, most effective reimbursable vaccines for use next year.

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