



Department of Health & Social Care

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 9NA

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU
permanent.secretary@dhsc.gov.uk

Sent via email to: pubaccom@parliament.uk

6 April 2023

Dam Chair

COVID-19 Vaccine Liabilities: children aged 6 months to 4 years

I am writing to update you on the contingent liabilities relating to the COVID-19 vaccine programme. You will be aware that as part of the contractual arrangements with COVID-19 vaccine producers, manufacturers were provided with indemnities from His Majesty's Government (HMG) on signing their supply agreements. Given the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and the terms on which developers have been willing to supply a COVID-19 vaccine, we have had to take a broader approach to indemnification than we usually would. Willingness to accept appropriate indemnities has helped to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines for the UK, with the expected benefits to public health and the economy, much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.

We have so far informed you of the:

- indemnities arising from deployment of the Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca/Oxford and Moderna vaccines, in line with advice from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) for Phase One and Phase Two of the vaccination programme;
- potential indemnities in relation to the Janssen vaccine, were that to be deployed;
- liabilities relating to third primary doses for severely immunosuppressed individuals;
- liabilities relating to the vaccination of children and young people between 5 to 17 years of age as advised by the JCVI and the four UK Chief Medical Officers;
- liabilities arising from the deployment and expansion of the 2021 COVID-19 booster vaccination programme;



Department of Health & Social Care

- updated methodology used to calculate the liability estimates for COVID-19 vaccine indemnities;
- liabilities relating to the universal offer of a primary course of vaccination to those aged 5-11 and the spring booster programme;
- liabilities relating to the autumn 2022 COVID-19 booster programme (bivalent vaccines) and deployment of Novavax vaccine; and
- liabilities relating to the spring 2023 COVID-19 booster programme and deployment of Sanofi/GSK vaccine.

The UK's independent medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), approved the Pfizer-BioNTech infant vaccine for children aged 6 months to 4 years on 6 December 2022 after assessing the safety, quality, and effectiveness of the vaccine against MHRA's robust standards.

Following this authorisation, on 6 April 2023 HMG accepted the JCVI advice that the following groups should be offered COVID-19 vaccines:

“Children aged 6 months to 4 years in a clinical risk group (as defined in the Green Book) should be offered two 3-microgram doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (Comirnaty®) with an interval of 8 weeks between the first and second doses. The minimum interval between any vaccine dose and recent SARS-CoV-2 infection should be four weeks.”

The JCVI does not currently advise COVID-19 vaccination of children aged 6 months to 4 years who are not in a clinical risk group.

The associated liability is set out in the confidential annex attached.

We are writing to you now as the JCVI advice has been published and accepted during the Parliamentary recess. Ministers will be notifying Parliament with a Written Ministerial Statement and Departmental Minute, updating Members of the increased contingent liability of the COVID-19 vaccination programme as soon as Parliament reconvenes following the Easter recess. These will be laid in Parliament at least 14 sitting days before deployment to this group, which will begin in England from mid-June.

If the contingent liability is called, provision for any payment will be sought through the normal Supply procedure.

*From the Permanent Secretary
Sir Chris Wormald*



Department of Health & Social Care

His Majesty's Treasury (HMT) has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of fourteen sitting days beginning on the date on which this letter is received the chair signifies an objection in writing, final approval to proceed with establishing the liability will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

We are writing in equivalent terms to Rt Hon Steve Brine MP as Chair of the Health and Social Care Select Committee. A copy of this letter goes to Gareth Davies, Comptroller and Auditor General, and to the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris".

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wormald".

**SIR CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY**