

Covid-19

Vaccination

Parent information pack

Dear Parent/ Carer

As many of you will be aware via national and local news on the 13th September 2021 the Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) for England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland recommended a single Pfizer dose for all children aged 12 to 15. The CMOs made this decision following consultation with several independent experts from a range of clinical and public health professions across the UK including the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Directors of Public Health, and representatives from the JCVI (Joint committee on vaccinations and immunisations). They also reviewed data from the Office for National Statistics and published data on the impact of COVID-19 on education.

Education is one of the most important drivers of improved public health and mental health. Evidence from clinical and public health colleagues, general practice, child health and mental health consistently highlights the massive impact that absent, or disrupted, face-to-face education has had on the welfare and mental health of many children and young people. This is despite remarkable efforts by parents and teachers to maintain education in the face of disruption.

It is likely vaccination will help reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools which are attended by children and young people aged 12 to 15 years. COVID-19 is a disease which can be very effectively transmitted by mass spreading events, especially with Delta variant. Having a significant proportion of pupils vaccinated is likely to reduce the probability of such events which are likely to cause local outbreaks in, or associated with, schools. They will also reduce the chance an individual child gets COVID-19. This means vaccination is likely to reduce (but not eliminate) education disruption. The additional likely benefits of reducing educational disruption, and the consequent reduction in public health harm from educational disruption, on balance provide sufficient extra advantage in addition to the marginal advantage at an individual level identified by the JCVI to recommend in favour of vaccinating all 12–15-year-olds with a single dose of a covid-19 vaccination.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-vaccination-of-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-15-years-against-covid-19>

Following the above recommendation, the School-aged immunisation team will be visiting all secondary schools across Berkshire over the next 6 weeks to offer all students in years 8-11 a single dose of covid-19 vaccine. No vaccines will be administered without valid consent (see consent section for further details). Consent will be captured via our electronic consent system which requires you to enter your school's unique code, which will be shared via our school e-consent letter (emailed via school). The vaccine is not licensed for anyone less than 12 years, therefore pupils in Year 7, who have reached their 12th birthday, will be called at the end of the programme, after half term.

Your support helps us protect the health of all the children within your school. By providing protection against vaccine preventable diseases, everyone should see a positive impact on school attendance for pupils and staff.

Yours Sincerely

Berkshire School-aged Immunisation Team

Covid-19 Vaccine

All children aged 12-15 will be offered a single dose of the Pfizer/ BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine.

Immunisation is a cornerstone of public health. It is one of the most successful and cost-effective health protection interventions and high immunisation rates are key to preventing the spread of infectious disease, complications and possible early death among individuals. High immunisation rates are also vital in protecting the population's health through both individual and herd immunity.

The COVID-19 vaccination will reduce the chance of your child suffering from COVID-19 disease. It may take a few weeks for their body to build up some protection from the vaccine. They should get good protection from the first dose.

Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective – some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe. Further information is available on symptoms on NHS.UK.

The vaccines do not contain organisms that grow in the body, and so are safe for children and young people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond so well to the vaccine but it should offer them protection against severe disease.

Side Effects

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-lived, and not everyone gets them. With the vaccine we use in under-18s, side effects are more common with the second dose.

Very common side effects include:

- painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm at injection site
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

The above can be safely managed by plenty of fluids, home remedies such as Paracetamol and/or Ibuprofen (following the dosing instructions) and moving the arm. They usually resolve within 24-48 hours.

Less common side effects:

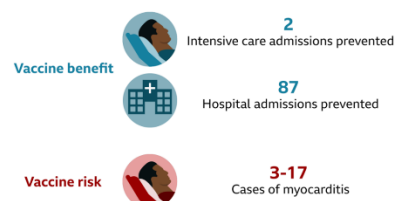
Following administration of Pfizer vaccine to protect against Covid 19 there have been very rare reports of the following side effects and usually a few days after the second dose:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Feelings of having a fast beating or pounding heart

Most symptoms are short-lived and will resolve spontaneously with some rest and simple treatments. However, should your son/daughter experience any of these symptoms, and you are concerned, please contact your GP or NHS111 and explain that he/she has recently been vaccinated with Pfizer vaccine. More information about the Pfizer vaccination can be found here: [COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for eligible children and young people aged 12 to 17 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-eligible-children-and-young-people-aged-12-to-17)

What are the benefits and risks of children taking the vaccine?

Per 1 million first doses



For further information including vaccine components see below:

Patient information leaflet - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulatory-approval-of-pfizer-biontech-vaccine-for-covid-19/patient-information-leaflet-for-covid-19-vaccine-pfizerbiontech>

Consent

How does the consent process work?

All parents or those with parental responsibility are asked for consent and will usually make this decision, jointly with their children. The [information leaflet](#) is addressed to your child (as the recipient of the vaccine) and encourages them to discuss the decision about the vaccine with you.

In secondary schools, some older children may be sufficiently mature to provide their own consent. This sometimes occurs if a parent has not returned a consent form, but the child still wishes to have the vaccine on the day of the session. Every effort will be made to contact you to seek your verbal consent. This is a well-established process which is used in other school-based vaccination programmes.

What happens if I do not consent, but my child wants to be vaccinated?

Young people who understand fully what is involved in a proposed procedure, such as vaccination, can legally give consent. This is known as 'Gillick competence'. Trained professionals within the School-aged immunisation team, with expertise in vaccinating children will speak to the child. The nurse/practitioner will assess a young person's capacity and understanding of the benefits and risks to the vaccine prior to enabling self-consent (this is known as assessing their Gillick competence), based on this assessment, the nurse will be responsible for deciding the appropriateness of administering the vaccine. Young people are encouraged to discuss with their parents/carers.

No child will be coerced into consent, his/her consent must be voluntary to be legal. Where consent is not received, and the child is not Gillick competent or does not want to be vaccinated, the immunisation will not be given.

You can read more about Gillick competence [Consent to treatment - Children and young people - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#).

This is a well-established process which is used in other school-based vaccination programmes.

Handy Tips for preparing your son/daughter for Covid-19 vaccination

- Ensure your son/daughter tells us on the day if he/she has had a laboratory confirmed positive PCR test since you provided your consent and within 28 days before the planned immunisation
- Encourage them to have breakfast and drink regularly throughout the school day.

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- Ask him/her to wear short-sleeved and loose-fitting shirt to allow us to be able to get to the top of his/her arm. The injection is usually given in the arm they do not write with.
 - If he/she is known to suffer with severe needle phobia, or prone to fainting please speak to school as we can arrange for your child to be vaccinated earlier within the day
 - Help them with strategies for staying calm during the vaccination – it's natural to worry but we want your arm to be as relaxed as possible
 - Let your child know what's going to happen in simple language – for example, "you may feel a sharp scratch that will go away very fast"

Sharing personal and health information

The school-aged immunisation service is part of the NHS, to fulfil our function we need for and record personal and health information for children and young people who access our services. This helps us treat them now and in the future. The information relating to your child's vaccination status will be added to the national database, which ultimately feeds into his/her GP records to help them provide an individual with the best care possible. However, we only provide appropriate information required to support their care and treatment. As a NHS Trust we are governed by and compliant with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Schools have the legal right* to release personal information to us so we can assure that everyone eligible and their parents or carers have been given the information and opportunity to be vaccinated, understand the risks of not being vaccinated, and have had the chance to ask any questions about vaccination.

*Under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), schools can provide non-sensitive student data with or without consent from parents. Article 6 (1) (e) states that "the processing is necessary for you to perform a task in the public interest or for your official functions, and the task or function has a clear basis in law." GDPR also governs how the information is stored, managed and processed. This relates to sensitive information such as ethnicity, whether a child has Special Educational Needs, and pupil premium.

To find out more about how we may use personal information, please see the [Berkshire Healthcare Patient Privacy Notice](#) and [Protecting Your Data Privacy Notice](#).

If you have further queries, please contact Berkshire Healthcare data protection officer on information.governance@berkshire.nhs.uk or 01344 415600.

Covid-19 Vaccine FAQs

Where can I find information on COVID-19 vaccination for children and adults?

The [NHS leaflets](#) provide more information for parents and children on the vaccine, including how it works and what to expect after COVID-19 vaccination. There are accessible versions of the consent form and leaflets available for those with a learning disability or who live with autism. There are braille and British Sign Language (BSL) videos to order or download. Translations will also be available.

[COVID-19 vaccination – A guide for children and young people \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781117/covid-19_vaccination_-_a_guide_for_children_and_young_people.pdf)

[What to expect after your COVID-19 vaccination – Advice for children and young people \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/781117/what_to_expect_after_your_covid-19_vaccination_-_advice_for_children_and_young_people.pdf)

When do the vaccinations need to be given?

The COVID-19 vaccinations for children aged 12-15 will commence around the 22nd September and will run across all secondary schools for around 6- 8 weeks. You will be provided with the date of your child's planned school session.

It is important to note that this academic year the SAI team will also be offering the nasal flu vaccine to all students in years 7-11 to help reduce the incidence and transmission of flu this winter. Following national approval where dual consent has been received for nasal flu and Covid-19 vaccine, these will be administered at the same session. Further information about the annual childhood flu programme is available here:

[Berkshire School-Aged Immunisation Team | Children Young People and Families Online Resource \(berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk\)](https://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/children-young-people-and-families-online-resource)

Who will be giving the vaccine to the children?

The programme will be delivered by an NHS commissioned School-aged Immunisation team (SAI) which will include nurses, healthcare support workers, administrative staff, and other associated professionals who specialise in the delivery of school age vaccinations. The team will administer the vaccination according to nationally agreed standards. Staff are appropriately qualified, trained (including in safeguarding) and experienced in vaccinating children and young people. Staff administering the vaccine will be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

How will the SAIS provider team identify the children to be vaccinated?

The electronic consent will be emailed out to parents and carers of all eligible students via your school (with your unique school code) and an electronic consent form will need to be completed for each individual child, who is eligible for vaccination. The form will need to be completed at least 24 hours in advance of your child's school session to allow time for the clinical nursing team to triage and ensure that your child can receive the vaccination safely. If you do not wish for your child to be vaccinated, then non-consent can also be provided by the same link.

The team will then have a list of all children for whom consent has been received in advance of the immunisation session.

What about those children turning 12 years of age within the school year, after the date of the vaccination session?

SAIS providers will offer vaccination to all children aged 12 years and over on the day of the school visit. However young people in year 7 may be 11 at the time the consent form is sent out and turning 12 when the session takes place, which means that we cannot guarantee a safe system of only consenting those students who will be 12 at the time of the session. Therefore, the cohort of year 7 students who will have turned 12 between the 1st September and the 22nd October will be offered an alternative model of delivery by the School-aged immunisation team and will be contacted separately.

A follow-up offer will be made to any children who miss the first vaccination in their school. This will help to ensure that the following pupils can access the vaccine:

- those turning 12 years after the session
- those who were absent from school on the day
- those who have recently had a COVID-19 infection
- those who subsequently change their minds or take longer to reach a decision

It is anticipated that this will be delivered outside of school setting to minimise any further disruption to education and other immunisation programmes. We will contact you with further information about this, please do not contact your GP surgery – unless your child is considered clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV).

How to contact us

The Berkshire School Aged Immunisation team covers 6 areas within Berkshire:

- Slough
- Bracknell Forest
- Reading
- Wokingham
- West Berkshire
- Royal Borough of Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead



Call: **0300 365 0077**

Email:

centralschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (for schools in Wokingham and Bracknell)

westschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (for schools in Reading and West Berkshire)

eastschoolimms@berkshire.nhs.uk (for schools in Slough and Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead)

(during school holidays, emails are checked weekly)

<https://cypf.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/immunisations>