

## Walsall Public Health

24 September 2021

Dear Parent / Guardian

We know how much disruption to school and home life COVID-19 has had on our young people, and so this autumn, all children aged 12 - 15 years are being offered one dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. This decision is based on the recommendations from the UK's Chief Medical Officers (CMOs).

One dose of the vaccine will provide good protection against severe illness and hospitalisation. Very few healthy children and young people with COVID-19 infection go on to have severe illness, but vaccinating secondary school children (12-15 years old) should help to reduce the need for them to have time off school, disrupting face to face learning and reduces the risk of the spread of COVID-19 within school settings.

The vaccination programme will be delivered within Walsall secondary schools (including secondary, special, PRU's, independent and private) by our skilled and experienced School Aged Immunisation Service. This is provided by Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, who will be legally responsible for the programme; with oversight from Black Country and West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group, and the Public Health and education teams at Walsall Council.

We understand that this may be an anxious time for you when considering if your child or children should have the vaccine and that you may have some questions. Prior to the vaccination, children and young people, and you as parents or guardians, will be offered advice and information on the vaccine including information around consent. The COVID-19 vaccination programme is voluntary, although we do encourage as many young people to take the vaccine as possible.

We are working closely to co-ordinate the vaccine programme for delivery in Walsall secondary schools and are pulling together a timetable for school visits. We anticipate the timescales will be;

- From 27 September until October half term, parents or guardians of children aged 12-15 will begin to receive letters and information with regards the COVID-19 vaccination programme.
- After October half term vaccinations will commence in secondary schools. The date will be confirmed by School Aged Immunisation Service soon.
- Mid-November, we will have vaccinated as many children as possible.

If your child is in year 7 at secondary school but has not yet reached their twelfth birthday they are not currently eligible for the vaccination. Once they become 12 they can then be vaccinated (either in school when the team comes or through the Saddlers Vaccination Centre). More information on how they can get their vaccine will be made available soon.

Children and young people aged 12 to 15 years who are at increased risk from infection or are living with someone who may be at increased risk, have already been offered two doses of the vaccine, eight weeks apart.

Detailed information on the vaccine will be provided to pupils and families by the team providing the vaccination, to help you make an informed decision. A frequently asked questions document can be online <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools/covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-young-people-guidance-for-parents>

At this time parents / carers do not need to do anything else. You do not need to contact your local GP or other NHS services, nor make an appointment through the National Booking Service. The School Aged Immunisation Service will be in touch when your child or children become eligible so please wait until you hear from us.

Please also be assured that processes will be put in place to exclude children that have already received a first dose under previous JCVI advice.

Our teams are on hand to help throughout this process. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding as we roll-out this programme.

Yours sincerely



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Walsall Council



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