**From the Chief Medical Officer**
Professor Sir Michael McBride

Department of Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Männystrie O Poustie
www.health-ni.gov.uk

**HSS(MD) 02/2023**

For Action:

Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Strategic Planning and Performance Group/HSC Trusts/NIAS
GP Medical Advisers, SPPG
All General Practitioners and GP Locums (*for onward distribution to practice staff)*
SPPG Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management *(for onward distribution to community pharmacies)*

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Our Ref: HSS(MD) 02/2023
Date: 16 January 2023

Dear Colleague

**CHANGES TO THE HPV VACCINATION SCHEDULE**

**ACTION REQUIRED**

**HPV Vaccination Programme**

Chief Executives must ensure this information is drawn to the attention of all staff involved in the HPV vaccination programme, including:

- school health teams, health visitors, community children nurses, and paediatricians
- GUM clinics

The Strategic Planning and Performance Group must ensure this information is cascaded to all General Practitioners, practice managers and community pharmacies for onward distribution to all staff involved in the HPV vaccination programme.

**Introduction**

1. This letter provides information about a change to the national universal HPV vaccination programme **with immediate effect,** when those eligible adolescents and adults who start the course on or after they turn 15 years old, will require **2 doses of HPV vaccine at least 6 months apart, instead of 3 doses**, to complete the course.

2. The same applies to anyone receiving the vaccine through the MSM HPV vaccination programme but does **not** apply to individuals who are known to be

living with HIV including those on antiretroviral therapy, or are known to be immunocompromised at the time of vaccination.

3. This policy change is outside the terms of the Gardasil 9 product license but is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the updated Green Book Chapter 18a.

4. This letter is aimed at health professionals who are responsible for commissioning and operationally delivering the HSC Northern Ireland HPV vaccination programme and the MSM HPV vaccination programme. We encourage you to share this guidance with all those involved in delivering the programme in your area.

5. Key points about the change to the programme:

    - with immediate effect, those individuals who would have been eligible to receive 3 doses of HPV vaccine (i.e. eligible MSM, and those aged from 15 to 25 years of age who are completely unvaccinated and remain eligible under the adolescent programme), will only require **2 doses at least 6 months apart** to be fully vaccinated

    - a 3 dose schedule should still be offered to individuals who are known to be living with HIV including those on antiretroviral therapy, or are known to be immunocompromised at the time of vaccination

    - individuals who start the HPV vaccination programme prior to the date of this notification should continue on the planned 3 dose schedule. Those who commence prior to this notification whose schedule is interrupted/delayed such that they had an interval of 6 months or more between their first and second dose only need a 2 dose schedule (do not require a third dose)

    - there is no change to the eligibility criteria for the programme

6. Accurate recording of all vaccines given, and good management of all associated documentation, is essential.

7. The provider must ensure that information on vaccines administered, including the product name of the vaccine administered, i.e., Gardasil 4 or 9, is recorded on the appropriate system for the purposes of updating the patient's record and uptake surveillance, in line with current practice.

8. Further to JCVI advice published on 5 August 2022, additional changes to this vaccination programme are anticipated from September 2023 and further detail on this will follow in due course.

9. Information provided in the annexes of this letter:

    **Annex A** - detailed information and guidance for healthcare professionals
    **Annex B** - vaccine coverage data collection

**Annex C** - supporting programme resources

10. If you have any further queries, in the first instance please email pha.immunisation@hscni.net

11. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in commissioning and operationally delivering the HPV vaccination programme and the MSM HPV vaccination programme.

Yours sincerely

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| **Prof Sir Michael McBride**<br>**Chief Medical Officer** | **Maria McIlgorm**<br>**Chief Nursing Officer** | **Mrs Cathy Harrison**<br>**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer** |

This letter is available on the Department of Health website at

https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/professional-medical-and-environmental-health-advice/hssmd-letters-and-urgent-communications

**CIRCULATION LIST**

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Assistant Director Public Health (Health Protection), Public Health Agency
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency
Assistant Director of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, SPPG *(for onward distribution to Community Pharmacies)*
Directors of Pharmacy HSC Trusts
Director of Social Care and Children, SPPG
Family Practitioner Service Leads, SPPG *(for cascade to GP Out of Hours services)*
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts *(for onward distribution to all Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians and School Medical Leads)*
Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts *(for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives)*
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Joe Brogan, Assistant Director, Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) (*for onward distribution to SPPG Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team and community pharmacists*)
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Trade Union Side
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Louise McMahon, Director of Integrated Care, SPPG

## Annex A - detailed information and guidance for healthcare professionals

This guidance is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) the UK's independent advisory committee of immunisation experts. In May 2020, the JCVI HPV sub-committee agreed that the schedule for those aged over 15 years should change from 3 doses to 2 doses given at least 6 months apart. Based on this, the JCVI main committee advised the move to a 2 dose schedule at least 6 months apart, for both those aged 15 years and over and MSM.

The JCVI also advised (in June 2021) that the 3 dose schedule should continue to be offered to individuals who are known to be HIV-infected, including those on antiretroviral therapy, or are known to be immunocompromised at the time of immunisation.

### Timing

With immediate effect, those individuals who would have been eligible to receive 3 doses (i.e. eligible MSM, and those aged from 15 to 25 years of age who remain eligible under the NHS universal adolescent programme), will only require 2 doses, at least 6 months apart, to be fully vaccinated. Individuals who start the HPV vaccination programme prior to the date of this notification should continue on the planned 3 dose schedule. Those who commence prior to this notification whose schedule is interrupted/delayed such that they had an interval of 6 months or more between their first and second dose only need a 2 dose schedule (do not require a third dose).

### Vaccine supply

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) will continue to supply vaccine for the HSC HPV vaccination programmes in the usual way. Please consider the schedule change when placing orders for HPV vaccine, and make sure that locally held stocks of vaccine are rotated in fridges so that wastage is minimised. Vaccine for uses not covered by the routine HSC schedule should be procured locally.

### Patient Group Directions (PGDs)

An updated HPV PGD and HPV (MSM) PGD template will be produced by the Public Health Agency for HSC Trusts to authorise for their commissioned services.

### Information and guidance for healthcare professionals and patients

Detailed clinical guidance on HPV vaccination is contained in chapter 18a of Immunisation Against Infectious Disease (the Green Book). Please note a revised HPV chapter will be published in due course to reflect those changes to the programme.
Healthcare professional information and guidance to support the HPV programme including a training slide set will be updated in due course to

reflect the above change and become available on the Public Health Agency's website and SharePoint.

Updated patient information materials will be available on the Public Health Agency's website in due course.

**Annex B - vaccine coverage data collection**

This change will not impact on the vaccine coverage collection for the school-based adolescent HPV vaccination programme in any way.

HPV vaccination uptake collections for the HSC MSM HPV vaccination programme will not be significantly impacted by the change announced in this letter.

## Annex C – supporting programme resources

### Health professional guidance

HPV vaccination guidance for healthcare practitioners

### Patient facing resources

Universal HPV leaflet