

# South West Vaccination & Screening Team

## ICARS Bulletin

  
South West Collaborative  
Commissioning Hub



*Issue 141: 29th September 2023*

**PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTERS WITH ALL RELEVANT STAFF INVOLVED WITH THE VACCINATION PROGRAMME**

*For any COVID-19 vaccination related queries, or to escalate an incident, please contact ICARS at [england.swicars@nhs.net](mailto:england.swicars@nhs.net).*

*Please note that this service operates 9am-5pm Monday to Friday*

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## NEW: COVID-19 Vaccine Selection in AW23

As described in the operational note, the latest [JCVI statement](#) recommends that monovalent mRNA vaccines targeting XBB strains are preferred for the Autumn campaign, particularly in the most vulnerable older age groups, provided it did not delay the start and completion of the programme. JCVI also indicated that the BA4/5 mRNA vaccines are a suitable alternative ahead of the introduction of the Comirnaty XBB 1.5 vaccine and therefore recommended that 'Individuals offered vaccination should be advised that timely boosting is desirable to increase and update protection over the winter. Therefore, it is advised that individuals take up the offer when it is received, irrespective of which booster vaccine is offered.'

The system letter announcing the NHS vaccination response to the new BA.2.86 variant noted that the single intervention with the greatest potential to reduce the impact of any emergent variant with the potential to increase transmission is vaccination. It was therefore the clinical recommendation from the CMO and UKHSA that the COVID-19 vaccines already licensed and in stock should be used to boost protection early rather than waiting to start the autumn campaign in October. This is in keeping with the advice of the JCVI that the latest available licenced vaccines be used until other vaccines, that target this or other more recent variants, become available.

Sites should continue to vaccinate this week with Comirnaty BA.4-5 vaccine, switching to Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5 from 02 October when POC systems will allow recording of correct vaccine type. Where demand exceeds available supply, sites should use their available vaccine, this may be Comirnaty BA.4-5 if all initial supply of Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5 is used prior to first replenishment; **individuals should not be turned away**.

Should total vaccine stock exceeds fridge capacity once supplies of Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5 have been delivered, excess stock of Comirnaty BA.4-5 vaccine should be disposed of in line with usual procedures to provide space. Sites should always follow the first in first out rule and dispose of their oldest stock first. Sites should also only dispose of a sufficient quantity of Comirnaty BA.4-5 to enable the safe storage of the new Comirnaty 30 XBB stock. Where possible sites should continue to hold both. Where there is a need to dispose of Comirnaty BA.4-5 to create space for Comirnaty 30 XBB stock, this must be recorded as wastage in Site Stock Manager.

Throughout this period of switch over, it is critical that sites continue to do regular stocktakes of all vaccine types held on site, including any Comirnaty BA.4-5 that they have quarantined.

## NEW: Revised Green Book Chapter 14a Published – Summary of Updates

The [Green Book chapter 14a \(COVID-19\)](#) was updated on 04 September 2023. This includes details of the [JCVI advice](#) recommending an Autumn booster dose for 2023. Some of the key messages are outlined below, however staff are advised read the revised chapter and familiarise themselves with the content.

For those aged 5 years and over it is recommended that a single dose is offered during the seasonal campaign. This should be offered irrespective of prior COVID-19 vaccination history, as long as a 3-month interval has elapsed since any previous dose.

Those aged 6 months to 4 years should receive two doses for a primary schedule with a minimum of THREE months between doses (previously two months). There may be individuals who become eligible for a subsequent dose during this seasonal campaign (if there is a minimum three-month interval between second and subsequent dose).

VidPrevtyn Beta, is a suitable alternative to mRNA vaccines for those aged 18 years and over where mRNA vaccine are not considered clinically appropriate. Vaccination with VidPrevtyn Beta in those aged 18 and under requires individual clinical judgement and would be unlicensed use.

### ***Severe immunosuppression:***

The term 'third primary dose' is no longer used, recommendations are for consideration of 'additional doses'.

Previously unvaccinated individuals who become severely immunosuppressed should be considered for an initial dose regardless of time of year. If an additional dose is recommended for vaccinated individuals who become severely immunosuppressed, generally a three-month interval will apply (exception for specific circumstances, with minimum three-week interval).

6 months to 4-year-olds in this category who receive a second dose before or during the Autumn 2023 campaign, can receive a subsequent dose from three months after that dose, regardless of time of year.

Individuals who undergo stem cell / bone marrow transplant will need revaccination with all vaccines. Revaccination with COVID-19 vaccine should be available at any time of year for these individuals. A subsequent dose, at a minimum three-month interval, may be aligned with seasonal campaign.

## **NEW: COVID-19 PGD and National Protocol v3.00 (Adults, Includes Com 30 XBB)**

We are pleased to be able to inform you that the updated PGD and National Protocol for COVID-19 (Adults) v3.00 have now been published, to include Comirnaty XBB 30 micrograms/dose. Copies are attached for your convenience.

- The **PGD** is attached and available here: [Coronavirus » Patient Group Directions \(PGDs\) for COVID-19 vaccines \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)
- **National Protocol** attached and here: [National protocol for COVID-19 vaccine \(adults\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- The vaccine **SOPs and vaccine characteristics** information provided by Specialist Pharmacy Service can be found [here](#).

An update to include Moderna XBB is anticipated to be published next week (plans for deployment of this vaccine are yet to be confirmed).

As the National Protocol has been given Ministerial approval and the NHSE PGD is signed off by the medical director, organisational sign off is not required for use in England. However, providers should not amend or add to the clinical content of the documents. Only section 7 of both documents is editable.

Vaccinating teams should read the new documents, familiarise themselves with all of the updates, and complete the authorisation process ahead of using the Comirnaty® 30 XBB.1.5 vaccine from **week commencing 2 October**.

## **NEW: COVID-19 PGD and National Protocol v2.00 (5 – 17 Year Olds, Includes XBB)**

The PGD and National Protocol enabling vaccination of children and young people aged 5 to 17 years have now been approved for publication. These documents have been updated to include Comirnaty XBB 10 and 30 micrograms per dose. Copies are attached for your convenience.

- The **PGD** is attached and available here: [Coronavirus » Patient Group Direction: COVID-19 vaccine \(5 to 17 years of age\) \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)
- **National Protocol** attached and here: [National protocol for COVID-19 mRNA vaccine \(5 to 17 years of age\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- The vaccine **SOPs and vaccine characteristics** information provided by Specialist Pharmacy Service can be found [here](#).

As the National Protocol has been given Ministerial approval and the NHSE PGD is signed off by the medical director, organisational sign off is not required for use in England. However, providers should not amend or add to the clinical content of the documents. Only section 7 of both documents is editable.

Vaccinating teams should read the new documents, familiarise themselves with all of the updates, and complete the authorisation process ahead of using the **Comirnaty® 30 XBB.1.5 vaccine from 2 October** and **Comirnaty® 10 XBB.1.5 vaccine from 5 October**.

## **UPDATE: e-learning Modules and Assessments**

Updated detail for each of the e-learning for health modules and assessments went live on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September. A summary for the covid 19 vaccination e-learning programme is detailed below and can be accessed through this [link](#):

### **27<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines Comirnaty 10 (XBB.1.5) Ready to use session and assessment. This session covers the autumn 2023 vaccination campaign for children aged 5 - 11 years. the content is aligned to the latest Green Book guidance and indicates the differences between the XBB. 1.5 variant vaccine now being supplied and the previous Comirnaty 10 product, an understanding of which are essential to ensure safe, accurate practice. The accompanying assessment tests knowledge of these changes.

### **20<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines (Comirnaty Original/Omicron BA.4-5 (15/15) and Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5) session and assessment. Between 6<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September this session covered only the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines (Comirnaty bivalent 15/15). From 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023 this session and assessment also provide the learning for the Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5 COVID-19 vaccine. Most information about the Comirnaty Original/Omicron BA.1

(15/15) bivalent 15/15 product have been removed. Staff who completed this session and the accompanying assessment prior to 20<sup>th</sup> September are encouraged to revisit them. The key differences between Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5 and Comirnaty Original/Omicron BA.4-5 (15/15) are outlined in the session Introduction (page 3).

Pfizer BioNTech Comirnaty 3 (THREE) Concentrate COVID-19 vaccine session. Neither the session nor the accompanying assessment have been updated but text has been added to the session description to make this clear, and to indicate that the recommended routine interval between doses of this and all other COVID-19 vaccines is now 3 months (12 weeks). The session will be updated to include the autumn 2023 campaign details and the Comirnaty 3 (THREE) XBB.1.5 variant vaccine and republished during the week commencing 11<sup>th</sup> October 2023 as directed by NHS England. Staff should meanwhile refer to the Green Book COVID-19 chapter and operational guidance from NHS England.

## **NEW: COVID-19 Vaccine Stock Management, Expiry Extension Dates and Good Practice Tips**

The attached information should be used to support information about Comirnaty BA4/5 vaccine stock management, expiry date extension and good practice tips. Links shared may periodically update and local teams should ensure they are accessing the most up to date information available.

## **NEW: Vaccine Handling Guidance and Template Standard Operating Procedures**

[Specialist Pharmacy Service \(SPS\) guidance and template SOPs](#) have been developed in preparation for the deployment of new variant vaccines. Clinical teams are advised read, understand, and adopt these in preparation for receiving and using these vaccines.

As the campaign complexity increases through the addition of vaccines to the programme, sites are advised to remind themselves of [Good governance guidance when handling multiple COVID-19 vaccines](#).

## **NEW: Summary of the Legal Mechanisms Available for Flu and COVID-19**

The NHS England webpages have been updated to streamline the information explaining the different legal mechanisms available for vaccinating individuals against flu and COVID-19. A single document replaces the previous documents and will be a useful resource particularly for new sites involved in the vaccination programmes for the first time. The document can be found [here](#).

## **NEW: Report to Support Identification of Possible Vaccine Recording Errors**

There are currently over 35,000 records of vaccination events for vaccines that are not currently deployed in the Autumn 2023 campaign. Sites are advised to utilise the updated [Paused, Decommissioned and Not in Use Vaccine Assurance Report](#) to monitor possible



vaccine selection errors when recording on Point of Care Systems. The report is grouped by site and by week, starting 11 September 2023. Sites should use this to identify records of vaccination events with vaccines that the site did not have access to at the time of the entry and proceed to investigate this entry and correct as applicable.

## **NEW: Revised Current Cohort Eligibility Tool**

The [Current Cohort Eligibility Tool](#) has been refreshed for Autumn 2023. There have been formatting changes to assist with clarity of which age cohorts can receive which vaccine, and to summarise the vaccination schedule.

## **UPDATE: Clarification Following the Updated JCVI Advice Issued on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2023 for Children Aged 6 Months to 4 Years**

### ***From the UKHSA Immunisation Team:***

This is way of additional clarification in relation to the updated statement that we shared with you on Friday afternoon, 22<sup>nd</sup> September, about the recommendation that children aged 6 months to 4 years, and requiring their second primary dose of vaccine should wait until Comirnaty 3 (Three) XBB.1.5 is available. It is important that this information is carefully conveyed to providers – and hence to the public – so that it is not misconstrued.

In practice, there are very few children to whom this will apply. Children who received their first dose soon after the programme started on 12<sup>th</sup> June will already have passed the date (@12<sup>th</sup> August) after which their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose should have been administered – and have hopefully therefore received it – because the recommended interval between the 2 primary doses was at that time 8 weeks.

The JCVI recommended interval between all primary doses has since been changed to 3 months, starting at the same time as the autumn programme commenced. Children who received a second dose of Comirnaty 3 (Three) Original before 15<sup>th</sup> September will be eligible to receive a dose of Comirnaty 3 (Three) XBB.1.5 after three months and still during the autumn programme (before 15<sup>th</sup> December). This will provide additional protection throughout the winter against the current circulating strains. Children who have not yet received their second dose are recommended to defer until XBB vaccine becomes available. This may mean that a tiny number of children who have become due their 2<sup>nd</sup> dose (at a 3 month interval) within the past week (since 18<sup>th</sup> September) may need to wait a maximum of 3 weeks longer than scheduled to receive their second dose (as vaccination with Comirnaty 3 (Three) XBB.1.5 will commence on 9<sup>th</sup> October).

The rationale for this very short additional wait is that they will then receive a dose of vaccine that matches existing strains. This is particularly important for children as the only current vaccine does not contain an Omicron strain. If they were to receive Comirnaty 3 (Three) Original now they would then have to wait 3 months for a further dose, by which time the autumn campaign will be over. (The only exception to that wait for the next campaign in which they are eligible would be for severely immunosuppressed: a severely immunosuppressed child who receives their second primary dose before or during the autumn 2023 campaign, may receive an additional dose from three months after that dose of vaccine, regardless of the time of year).

In summary, there is a clear rationale for the very short additional wait which will affect a tiny number of children and it is important that this information is carefully conveyed to providers – and hence to the public – so that it is not misconstrued.

## **NEW: Maximising Uptake of Antenatal Vaccinations During the Autumn Flu and COVID-19 Vaccine Programmes**

Please see the attached System letter or visit [NHS England » Maximising uptake of antenatal vaccinations during the Autumn flu and COVID-19 vaccine programmes](#). Key asks include:

**1. Maternity, community pharmacy and primary care services ensure that all pregnant women are encouraged at every opportunity to take up the offer of vaccination against flu, COVID-19 and pertussis ahead of the winter months.**

For maternity services in particular, this should include:

- Providing UKHSA leaflets on [COVID-19 vaccination](#), [COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy](#), and [flu and pertussis in pregnancy](#) in the pre-booking pack sent to all pregnant women. Leaflets can be ordered via UKHSA.
- Making Every Contact Count to initiate a vaccine confidence discussion antenatally.
- Making information, such as leaflets and posters in languages and formats appropriate for the local population, available across all antenatal settings for all three vaccines.

**2. Maternity and vaccine services collaborate so that women are signposted locally to receive all three vaccines as easily as possible. Vaccination and maternity services should be brought together wherever possible, so that it is as easy as possible to get vaccinated at any point in the maternity pathway.**

- The COVID-19 vaccine should be offered at the same time as the flu and pertussis vaccines, although services should not delay providing any one vaccine in order to provide them together.
- Dependent on local services' participation in the vaccination programmes, women may be able to receive seasonal flu and COVID-19 vaccinations together from their local GP, pharmacist or maternity service. This should be supported wherever requested.
- A list of contact details for Regional Vaccination Operations Centres (RVOCs) can be found in [Appendix A](#) of this letter. Maternity service leads are asked to co-ordinate with RVOCs so that all maternity staff can signpost local women effectively, and so that vaccine provision can be co-located with maternity services wherever possible.

For more information and guidance on vaccine confidence discussions, please refer to the [RCOG/RCM information leaflet and decision aid](#), and the [Green Book Chapter 14a](#) for COVID-19 specifically, [Green Book Chapter 19 for influenza](#). For more information on vaccination in pregnancy, visit [NHS.UK](#).

## **NEW: UKHSA Launches New Infectious Disease Data Dashboard**

On Tuesday, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) launched the first iteration of its new dashboard.

The [UKHSA data dashboard](#) is now available to the public: it shows data and trends on respiratory viruses (including COVID-19, influenza and RSV). Over time, the data dashboard will be expanded to provide additional health security data, including relating to incidents of public interest.

The UKHSA data dashboard builds on the success of the COVID-19 dashboard which played a huge role in helping the public and the UK government understand the impact the virus was having on communities.

The new dashboard will allow UKHSA to proactively share relevant and useful data, trends and information, in a timely, user-centred and transparent way. This ensures UKHSA is continually presenting COVID-19 data in an accessible format, while contributing and committing to the organisation's winter preparedness efforts.

This is in line with [UKHSA's new data strategy](#), which sets the direction for UKHSA to build a strong, unified data culture and improve our data capabilities.

In the future, the UKHSA data dashboard will grow to represent the broader health threats they deal with. The dashboard will be their public-facing output for presenting data, aligning with UKHSA's strategic priority to improve action on health security through data and insight.

The new dashboard is in its early development stages. The existing dashboard, developed at the height of the pandemic to make information on the virus publicly available, will remain operational for now and should be considered the current data source for COVID-19. This product will be decommissioned in due course.

Colleagues in the UKHSA Data Product Development Team are really keen to hear feedback from partners and the general public. Please do take a look and share your thoughts – either through the feedback mechanism at the top of the page, or by getting in touch with the team directly at [datadashboard@ukhsa.gov.uk](mailto:datadashboard@ukhsa.gov.uk)

Please also see the accompanying press release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ukhsa-launches-new-infectious-disease-data-dashboard>

## **NEW: GP COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard is now LIVE for the Autumn Campaign**

The latest version of the GP Vaccine Dashboard is now live. This release has new data aligned to support you with the COVID-19 Autumn 2023 campaign.

- New COVID-19 vaccine eligibility criteria applied to all cohorts.
- Updates to the Under 5's at Risk page to include a COVID-19 booster vaccination for those eligible.
- Optimisations preparing for future additions to the dashboard, including flu and co-admin functionality.

The GP COVID-19 vaccine dashboard has been developed to help Primary Care Networks (PCNs) increase vaccination uptake across their local communities. The updated user guide can be found [here](#).



## UPDATE: New Version of the Autumn/Winter 2023/24 COVID-19 Campaign Deployment Guide

An updated version of the Autumn/Winter 2023/24 COVID-19 Campaign Deployment Guide will be published early next week on [FutureNHS](#). All changes have been highlighted in yellow. Where new slides have been created, or most of the existing information on the slide has been updated, the slide title has been highlighted yellow for ease of reading.

The updates include:

### 1. New XBB vaccine timelines for children and adults (as defined in the Green Book here).

Key dates:

- 18 September: Delivery to sites of Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5
  - 2 October: Go live for 12 years and over with Comirnaty 30 XBB.1.5
  - 4 October: Delivery to sites of Comirnaty 10 XBB.1.5 • 5 October: Go live for 5- to 11-year-olds with Comirnaty 10 XBB.1.5
  - w/c 9 October: Delivery to sites of Comirnaty 3 XBB.1.5
  - w/c 12 October: Delivery to sites with Spikevax XBB.1.5
  - 16 October: Go live for 6-month- to 4-year-olds with Comirnaty 3 XBB.1.5
  - 16 October: Go live for 18 years and over with Spikevax XBB.1.5
2. Managing BA.4-5 vaccines  
3. Targeted Deployment Model

### 2. Managing BA.4-5 vaccines

### 3. Targeted Deployment Model

## Further National Links and Resources

**Operational notes:** You can find all the latest operational notes on FutureNHS [here](#).

You can find communications resources on [FutureNHS](#) including a long list of public FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions). Further resources will be added during the next few days to support planning for the forthcoming autumn/winter campaign.

**Clinical updates:** Previous editions of the clinical updates, before they were merged with this Bulletin, can be found [here](#).

**Workforce and Training Bulletin:** Previous editions of this Bulletin, before it was merged with this Bulletin, can be found [here](#).

**Workforce support:** [National Workforce Support Offer Toolkit](#) is a practical guide for local vaccination service leads with more detail about the National Workforce Support Offer.

Contact your [Lead Employer](#) to access the National Offer and additional staff and vaccinators, as well as support with your workforce needs.

For more details, please see our FutureNHS page on [case studies/FAQs](#) and recently guidance for [PCN groupings](#) and [community pharmacy](#).

## **Other Resources:**

[Coronavirus vaccinations](#): Our Digital team helps you access up-to-date information, training and onboarding guides related to the tech and data solutions that are supporting the Covid-19 and seasonal flu vaccination programmes.

[COVID-19 Vaccination Programme workspace](#) provides members with access to key documents, resources, webinar recordings, case studies and past copies of the LVS Updates. There is also a discussion forum for members.

[Equalities Community of Practice here](#), with bespoke tools, resources and content for engagement and practice in supporting and learning from people and partners within underserved communities and equalities groups.

[Supply and Delivery Hub](#) helps you access key information in a timely way and helps support you to deliver your local vaccination service. Here you will find the latest delivery information alongside the latest supply chain and customer service FAQs and other helpful information.

**All Covid-19 vaccination queries for national teams should be escalated via the SVOC/RVOC/NVOC process.**