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Sent by email to: Samantha.clark@LDEngland.org.uk

18/12/2020

Dear Samantha

Thank you for your letter to the JCVI raising your concerns about the prioritisation of persons with learning disability for COVID-19 vaccination. The Committee has discussed this and notes your concerns and acknowledges that this is a socially disadvantaged and vulnerable group.

JCVI has advised that for Phase 1 of the COVID-19 Vaccine Programme, the first priorities should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems. Increasing age is very strongly associated with COVID-19 mortality and mathematical modelling indicates that offering vaccination to older age groups first is the optimal strategy both if aiming to a) minimise future deaths, or b) minimise quality adjusted life year (QALY) losses (similar to the metric of Years Life Loss). Accordingly, COVID-19 vaccination is largely prioritised by age.

Those considered clinically extremely vulnerable have also been prioritised for vaccination as have those in clinical risk groups aged 16 years and over. In early November 2020, adults with Down's Syndrome were added to the group of persons identified as clinically extremely vulnerable. This change reflected new data from the QCOVID analysis demonstrating that persons with Down's Syndrome were at high risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19. In comparison, whilst persons with learning disabilities not associated with Down's Syndrome

had elevated risks related to COVID-19, these were not of the same order of magnitude as persons with Down's Syndrome. JCVI understands that the PHE Report on the impact of COVID-19 on persons with Learning Disabilities did not differentiate between persons with and without Down's syndrome and was based on an identified population of about 250,000 persons with learning disabilities. The Committee concluded that the data from the PHE Report most likely corresponded to persons identified in primary care and health services records as having learning disabilities and generally represent persons with severe or profound learning disabilities. These individuals are eligible for vaccination in Phase 1 of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

The Committee considers that it is important to focus current efforts on persons with Down's syndrome and persons with severe and profound learning disability. Appropriate identification of these persons in primary care records will facilitate their identification for vaccination.

The Committee is in the process of considering the next phase of the vaccination programme. The points you have raised regarding the wider numbers of persons with mild and moderate learning disabilities will be taken into account in the relevant discussions and considerations ahead.

Thank you for your support in the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Promoting good vaccine uptake will help protect lives in the months ahead.

Yours sincerely

JCVI Secretariat

On behalf of

Professor Wei Shen Lim JCVI Chair COVID-19 immunisation
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