

PE1477/M

Scottish Government Letter of 26 May 2016

Dear Mr Sharratt,

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1477](#) (Gender neutral Human Papillomavirus vaccination)

I refer to the letter of 9 March 2016 from the Public Petitions Committee seeking a response to the petitioner's request for the Scottish Government to take forward a gender neutral HPV vaccination programme in advance of, or potentially in spite of, the recommendation of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on the matter.

As stated in previous correspondence, the Scottish Government takes advice on all matters relating to vaccination from the JCVI. At present, the aim of the current HPV vaccination programme is to protect girls against cervical cancer, rather than protecting against the risks associated with HPV overall. The value of the indirect protection afforded to boys by vaccinating girls, was a key factor in the JCVI's original decision to recommend a vaccination programme for girls only.

The JCVI keeps existing programmes and vaccines under constant review, and recently recommended that a targeted HPV vaccination programme for men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) aged up to 45 who attend GUM and HIV clinics be implemented. This recommendation reflected the position that this group would be unlikely to receive direct protection from the vaccination of girls and the programme would provide protection against a range of cancers. Following that recommendation, the Scottish Government announced that it would implement that programme, and we are now working closely with Health Protection Scotland and NHS Scotland to find the best way to deliver this recommendation.

As the JCVI stated in its February response to the Committee, modelling work on an HPV programme for adolescent boys is being carried out by Public Health England (PHE) and Warwick University. Due to the complexity of this piece of work, the JCVI may not be in a position to provide its final advice until 2017. The Scottish Government would not propose extending the HPV programme to adolescent boys ahead of any recommendation the JCVI may make, but will of course carefully consider the final advice from the JCVI once this is available.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Smith
Health Protection Team