

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

16th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday  
8 November 2023

## PE1939: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys

**Lodged on** 20 June 2022

**Petitioner** Suzanne Thornton

**Petition  
summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to demonstrate a commitment to health equality for young males born between 01/09/1997 and 01/09/2006 by allowing them to access the HPV vaccination via the NHS

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1939>

### Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [8 March 2023](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new responses from the Scottish Government and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
5. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing for this petition](#).

6. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 35 signatures have been received on this petition.
8. The Committee may wish to note that the Scottish Government published its Cancer Strategy for Scotland 2023-2033 on 15 June 2023, and is available on the [Scottish Government website](#).

## Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

### **Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

# PE1939: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys

## Petitioner

Suzanne Thornton

## Date Lodged:

20 June 2022

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to demonstrate a commitment to health equality for young males born between 01/09/1997 and 01/09/2006 by allowing them to access the HPV vaccination via the NHS.

## Previous action

I have written to my MSP.

I have also contacted NHS Child Health Service.

## Background information

I'm concerned about this health inequality as all girls are vaccinated, also men who have sex with men (MSM) up to and including the age of 45 in Scotland.

Looking at the process in England the age was raised to any boy 12 or 13 in July 2018, as this would afford greater herd immunity which would, in turn protect older boys.

Young males living south of the border, in addition to females and MSM young people are afforded protection by way of the vaccine, yet the same level of opportunity is not available for young males in Scotland. This is unfair and doesn't demonstrate equity to this service in Scotland.

My family members missed being included in the school vaccination scheme as they were born prior to September 2006.

I have made enquiries with the Child Health Immunisation service and have been advised they will not be eligible for this vaccine due to their date of birth. They advised doing this privately. Looking at private care it would cost approximately £500 per male to vaccinate them. A prohibitive cost to most families.

Please support this petition.

## Annexe B

### Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1939 on 8 March 2023

**The Convener:** PE1939, lodged by Suzanne Thornton, calls on the Scottish Government to demonstrate a commitment to health equality for young males born between 1 September 1997 and 1 September 2006 by allowing them to access the human papillomavirus vaccine via the national health service.

We previously considered the petition on 26 October 2022. At that point, we agreed to write to various organisations to gather further information on the issues raised. Members will be aware from our papers that we have received responses from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, Young Scot and the Teenage Cancer Trust. Importantly, in its response, the JCVI set out the reasons why a time-limited catch-up programme for boys was not pursued when the HPV vaccination was extended in 2018. The reasons provided included the different epidemiological situation now compared with when the programme for girls was launched; the good levels of herd immunity as a result of the girls' programme; and the priority of extending the routine adolescent programme to boys while maintaining high uptake among girls. The JCVI also states that it has no plans to review the need for and value of a catch-up of the HPV immunisation programme for males aged 25 and under, as it believes that that would not be cost-effective.

I also draw members' attention to the response from the Teenage Cancer Trust, which notes a disparity between the uptake rates of vaccination between males and females of 7.9 per cent and calls for the Scottish Government to include plans for monitoring uptake to be included in the 10-year cancer strategy.

Do members have any comments or suggestions?

**Alexander Stewart:** At the previous meeting, I asked for some of that information, which we have now received. In the circumstances that we now find ourselves in, I propose that we close the petition under rule 15.7 of the standing orders on the basis that the JCVI has no plans to review the need for or value of an HPV vaccination catch-up programme for boys due to the indirect protection offered through herd immunity. We have collated and brought forward information, but I do not believe that it will change the direction of where we are.

**Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP):** From reading the papers, I can see that, in June last year, the petitioner argued that young males living south of the border are afforded protection that is not available for young males in Scotland. I looked at the JCVI response to see what it said about that. Maybe it is my failure to comprehend some of the medical information in that, but I could not see a direct response on why it is fine in England but not in Scotland.

I was looking for the answer to the question that the petitioner has posed. I do not know whether the clerks can help me—maybe it is hidden in here somewhere—but I did not see any reference to what is, according to the petitioner at least, a situation in Scotland that is different from that in England. We are probably reaching the end of the petition, but I wonder whether that is something that the clerks might clarify with the JCVI. Perhaps I have missed something.

**The Convener:** No, that is a fair point. Mr Stewart, are you happy for us to leave the petition open while we pursue that point?

I note also the Teenage Cancer Trust recommendation in relation to the 10-year cancer strategy and the disparity that the trust had identified. That is not so much something for a response, but we should certainly write to the Scottish Government to draw its attention to the Teenage Cancer Trust's representation.

**Carol Mochan:** That is a relevant point. We should raise that with the Government as something that it must make sure that it monitors in its cancer plans.

**The Convener:** We will defer closing the petition, Mr Stewart, if you are content, although I think that your analysis is largely correct. It would be interesting to put that question more directly back to the JCVI. Mr Ewing is correct: I do not think that, in all the representations that the JCVI has made, we have a specific explanation of why it is right in one place and wrong in another.

**Alexander Stewart:** I am more than happy to take the views of the committee, convener.

**The Convener:** Okay, are we agreed on that basis?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

# Annexe C

## Scottish Government submission of 2 May 2023

### PE1939/E: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys

Thank you for your letter of 21 March in relation to petition [PE1939: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys](#) published on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

The Scottish Government position is clear, timely vaccination protects people from vaccine-preventable diseases. It is important that people receive their immunisations at the right age to ensure maximum protection – from the first immunisation appointment, scheduled at two months of age, continuing through the teenage years and throughout adulthood.

From January 2023, a one dose schedule was introduced in Scotland for all those eligible in the HPV vaccination programme up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. We envisage that this programme change will increase the number of people completing their vaccination schedule as it will remove the requirement to be recalled to receive a second dose, as well as allowing more opportunities for follow up appointments, if people have missed their appointment for any reason.

The policy set in Scotland for eligible cohorts for teenage immunisation programmes is defined by academic year as opposed to date of birth. This supports the delivery of the schools' vaccination programme. For HPV, this means that any boy that was in S1 for the 2019/2020 academic year will be offered vaccination and remain eligible up to his 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. As the Committee is aware the Scottish policy, along with the rest of the UK and in line with JCVI advice does not recommend a catch up programme, so any boys in academic years above S1 in 2019/2020 are not eligible.

Approaches to policy implementation across the devolved administrations can vary due to different factors. School years differ across the four nations and hence different approaches are adopted however, children in S1 are usually 12 to 13 years old by the end of the academic session and are therefore a similar cohort to the group vaccinated in England. This is reflected in the associated Green Book Chapters (advice on immunisation, developed for health professionals by UKG), for example, in this case, there is a reference to DOB specifically in relation to England.

We have outlined to Health Boards that some of the resource freed up due to the reduction in vaccination sessions, following the change to a one dose schedule for HPV should be re-directed to interventions that strengthen programme delivery, increase coverage rates and reduce inequalities.

In Scotland, uptake for HPV vaccination remains high, however we recognise that further work is required to increase uptake for all those currently eligible including to reduce disparity between boys and girls. The Scottish Government's updated Cancer Strategy will be published shortly and will set out a number of measures to reduce disparity within the HPV vaccination programme.

In addition, the Scottish Government is currently undertaking work to interrogate immunisation uptake rates to drill down further on particular data, including deprivation, to ensure that we focus vaccination services on areas of most need. We will continue to work in partnership with Public Health Scotland (PHS) and Health Boards to support these groups and encourage uptake of HPV vaccination.

## **Public Health Capabilities Division**



## JCVI submission of 17 May 2023

### PE1939/F: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys

The question is to seek clarification on the reasons why young males living in England appear to be afforded protection that is not available to young males living in Scotland. The person responsible for the petition is saying that their son was born in September 2006 and therefore was in year S2 when the programme for boys started.

The Green Book guidance on Immunisation against infectious disease states that HPV vaccination is routinely recommended for all girls and boys at 11 to 14 years of age with the first dose offered in school year 8 in England and Wales, S1 in Scotland, and school year 9 in Northern Ireland. This is based on the JCVI advice issued in 2008 for a routine programme for girls aged 12-13. The age was not raised in July 2018. What changed was that starting in the academic year 2019/20 boys were included in the routine HPV immunisation programme which was a policy decision based on the JCVI advice issued in July 2018. JCVI advice is published, and it is up to the NHS in each of the nations of the UK how to operationalise JCVI's advice and to plan implementation. Year S1 in Scotland covers the ages 11-12 whilst year 8 covers ages 12-13. The decision to offer vaccination in year S1 does not lie with JCVI as it is for Scottish policy and the Scottish NHS to decide how to operationalise JCVI advice.

Currently the programme has a two dose schedule but for the academic year 2023/24 the HPV programme will move to a single dose schedule.