

Departmental minute from the Department of Health and Social Care: notification of contingent liability - COVID-19 spring 2025 vaccination programme

1. It is normal practice, when a Government department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a Departmental Minute to Parliament, giving particulars of the liability created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the Minute, except in cases of special urgency.
2. On 13 November 2024, the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) published advice on the COVID-19 vaccination programme for spring 2025, autumn 2025 and spring 2026. On 12 December 2024, His Majesty's Government (HMG) accepted their advice that a COVID-19 vaccine should be offered in spring 2025 to those in the population most vulnerable to serious outcomes from COVID-19 and who are therefore most likely to benefit from vaccination.
3. Vaccination will therefore be offered in England in spring 2025 to:
 - adults aged 75 years and over
 - residents in a care home for older adults
 - individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed, as defined in tables 3 and 4 of the COVID-19 chapter of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Green Book on Immunisation against infectious disease
4. The government is considering the JCVI's advice for autumn 2025 and spring 2026 programmes and will respond in due course.
5. The vaccines that will be supplied for the spring 2025 programme are the Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) vaccine and the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) vaccine.
6. The COVID-19 vaccines to be used in spring 2025 were pre-procured as part of HMG's pandemic emergency response. There will be sufficient pre-procured COVID-19 vaccine doses, available at no additional cost, to complete the spring 2025 campaign.

7. As part of the contractual arrangements with COVID-19 vaccine producers for these vaccines, provision of an indemnity was required in order to enter into supply agreements. This only applies to vaccines purchased as part of the pandemic emergency response. HMG had therefore taken on certain liabilities to procure the vaccines on these terms.
8. Willingness to accept the need for appropriate indemnities to be given to vaccine suppliers helped to secure access to vaccines with the expected benefits to public health and the economy alike much sooner than may have been the case otherwise.
9. Despite working at pace to gain access to these vaccines in a highly competitive global market, it remains a priority to ensure that due regard for the fundamentals of protecting the taxpayer and ensuring appropriate standards of public administration are followed.
10. Each COVID-19 vaccine deployed in the UK has been assessed by teams of scientists and clinicians on a case-by-case basis and is only authorised once it has met robust standards of effectiveness, safety and quality set by the medicines regulator, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).
11. It is not possible to give details of this contingent liability with full transparency due to normal requirements of commercial sensitivity. If the contingent liability is called, provision for any payment will be sought through the normal supply procedure.
12. His Majesty's Treasury has approved the proposal in principle. If, during the period of 14 parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before Parliament, a member signifies an objection by giving notice of a parliamentary question or by otherwise raising the matter in parliament, final approval to proceed with incurring the liability will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

Ashley Dalton MP

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention

6 March 2025