



WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR

STATUS: ACTION

CATEGORY: PUBLIC HEALTH

Title: **A change of vaccine product for the routine adult pneumococcal vaccination programme, and those with certain clinical risk conditions.**

Date of Expiry / Review: Not applicable

For Action by:

Chief Executives, Health Boards/Trusts
Immunisation Leads, Health Boards/Trusts
Immunisation Coordinators, Health Boards/ Trusts
Vaccination Operational Leads, Health Boards/Trusts
Medical Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Primary Care, Health Boards/Trusts
Nurse Executive Directors, Health Boards/Trusts
Chief Pharmacists, Health Boards/Trusts
Directors of Public Health, Health Boards/Trusts
National Director Health Protection and Screening Services/ Executive Medical Director, Public Health Wales
Head Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme, Public Health Wales
Director of Vaccine Delivery, Vaccination Programme Wales, NHS Executive
Community Paediatricians, Health Boards
Heads of Midwifery, Health boards / Trusts
Midwifery teams, Health Boards
Heads of Health Visiting, Health boards / Trusts
Health Visiting teams, Health Boards
Secondary Care Paediatricians, Health Boards
Consultant Virologists, Health Boards
Health Protection teams, Health Boards
General Practitioner Committee, Wales
General practitioners
Digital Health and Care Wales

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg hefyd / This document is also available in Welsh

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg / We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to inform you of a product change for the adult and clinical risk NHS Pneumococcal vaccination programmes, following recommendations by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).

We ask that you share this information with all parties involved in the planning, promotion and delivery of the vaccination programme in Wales. It is essential that you take appropriate action.

Currently, the pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine, which protects against 23 serotypes of the pneumococcus bacterium PPV23 (Pneumovax 23), is used for those aged 65 years and over, and from 2 years of age for those in pneumococcal clinical risk groups. The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine, PCV13 (Prevenar 13), is used in the national childhood immunisation programme, with additional doses of PCV13 given to children aged less than 2 years with asplenia, splenic dysfunction, complement disorder and severe immunosuppression

In June 2023, the (JCVI) [advised](#) that either PCV20 or PPV23 could be used for the adult pneumococcal programme, and for individuals over 2 years of age in a clinical risk group. Following a competitive tender for vaccine supply a contract was awarded for PCV20 (Prevenar 20).

In June 2025, [the Green Book: Pneumococcal Chapter](#) was updated to reflect the clinical advice to use PCV20 (when available) in children under 2 years of age with asplenia, splenic dysfunction, complement disorder or severe immunocompromise.

Key points about the vaccine change

- in January/February 2026, PPV23 central supply will be run down and PCV20 will become available to order for the programme.
- once central supply and local PPV23 stocks have been used up, PCV20 should be used for the **routine adult pneumococcal vaccination programme, and those aged 2 years and above in clinical risk groups.**
- when PCV20 is available to order from ImmForm, **children less than 2 years of age with asplenia, splenic dysfunction, complement disorder and severe**

immunosuppression, and individuals aged 2 years and over with severe immunosuppression, can be offered PCV20 in place of PCV13.

- The schedule and number of doses required will depend on the child's age at presentation. Healthcare practitioners should refer to table 25.3 in the [Pneumococcal Green Book chapter](#) for the specific requirements for each child. LHB Immunisation Co-ordinators can also assist in determining schedules for individual children.
- **Otherwise, the routine childhood pneumococcal vaccination programme remains unchanged. PCV13 should continue to be offered to all children at 16 weeks and one year of age.**
- Further information will be provided on ImmForm and via the Vaccination Programme Wales team (VPW) closer to the time, including details on ordering expectations, minimising waste of PPV23, and planning the usage of PCV20.

Programme ambitions

Vaccination is one of the most important things we can do to protect individuals against ill health. Receiving all scheduled vaccines supports better outcomes and contributes to people in Wales living longer, healthier and more productive lives. It is therefore important that GPs use every opportunity to maximise the vaccination uptake in their eligible population. Practices should work closely with their health board teams to run an efficient and effective vaccination service.

There is a need for a coordinated, equity-focused approach to vaccination, which addresses barriers and the diverse needs of underserved communities. Equity needs to be built into the design and delivery of services, to promote universal accessibility, including work to understand the issues faced by different population groups and tailored interventions to overcome the identified barriers. The evidence tells us that with the right interventions and investment in services, underserved communities are more likely to accept an offer of vaccination.

Active call and recall for pneumococcal vaccination must be in place for everyone eligible. For the infant program, call and recall is provided through the child health system (CYPrIS). For the older adult program, to align with other programmes, practices should offer vaccination within 12 weeks of a person becoming eligible.

The eligible age for the older adult programme is 65, which currently aligns with age eligibility for the routine shingles and flu vaccination programmes. As these three vaccines can be co-administered, opportunities should be maximised to reduce the need for multiple appointments and ensure eligible individuals are protected in a timely way against all three potentially serious illnesses. For any clarification on eligibility for clinical risk conditions or on co-administration opportunities, the Green Book chapter contains all relevant information.

Where issues with access to vaccination for identified eligible groups or challenges persist with uptake, these should be escalated to health board level, with a system wide approach developed to overcome them. Health boards are expected to monitor uptake levels and are asked to support practices experiencing difficulties in reaching uptake comparable to the average across Wales, and to undertake remedial action, such as deploying local immunisation teams, to assist as necessary.

For any operational queries, please contact Vaccination Programme Wales by emailing VPW.Enquiries@wales.nhs.uk. For clinical queries or queries about programme resources, please email phw.vaccines@wales.nhs.uk.

I am very conscious that planning for these changes will need to be undertaken by teams alongside many other changes in 2026. Your hard work and commitment in making all programmes a success is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Reid'.

Dr Keith Reid
Deputy Chief Medical Officer (Public Health)

Information and resources to support implementation

Funding and service arrangements

The routine NHS-funded adult/at risk Pneumococcal vaccinations programme in Wales is delivered as a directed supplementary service by GPs in Wales. Whilst there is no change to the eligible group, the existing service specification will require slight adjustment to incorporate a 12-week window for vaccinating those older adults turning 65 years old. The change in supply cost will need to be managed within health budgets, offset by savings across other vaccine product changes happening in parallel.

Practices are expected to continue delivering routine vaccinations in line with national standards, including active call/recall systems. These updates have been incorporated into the Green Book, which provides clinical guidance and eligibility criteria for all vaccines in the UK immunisation schedule.

NB. Any person with an incomplete immunisation history for their age should be managed according to the [UKHSA uncertain or incomplete immunisation algorithm](#).

Digital support

Accurate and timely recording of all vaccines given and good management of all associated documentation is an essential requirement. Currently the pneumococcal vaccination continues to be recorded in **existing** systems. In the longer term, it is our ambition for the adult/at risk Pneumococcal programme to move across to the Welsh Immunisation System (WIS). Stakeholders will be kept informed on progress on the move and supported to enable the transition.

Vaccine coverage surveillance data collection

The Public Health Wales Vaccine Preventable Disease Programme is responsible for carrying out surveillance of all routine vaccinations in Wales. Data for surveillance of childhood vaccinations are provided through CYPriS. Data for the surveillance of adult pneumococcal vaccinations are currently collected directly from general practices through Audit+ (and will continue to be collected from practices through the successor product to Audit+ in 2026).

The latest vaccine uptake data for Wales is available here (adult/clinical risk program) : [Pneumococcal Vaccination Coverage in Wales - Public Health Wales](#)

and here (childhood program): [Public Health Wales - National childhood immunisation uptake data](#) .

Public Health Wales also works with other UK nations to conduct surveillance of pneumococcal infections and incidence.

Centrally supplied vaccines

The last of the PPV23 stock is forecast to be issued in January/February 2026. PCV20 supply will open for ordering once PPV23 central supply has run down. The switch from PCV13 to PCV20, should be made immediately for children aged under 2 years with asplenia, splenic dysfunction, complement disorder, and severe immunosuppression once PCV20 is available. For all other indications, any locally

held stock of PPV23 should continue to be used up before making the switch to PCV20.

PCV20 will be available to order in the usual way online via the [ImmForm website](#). Providers should ensure that local stocks of vaccine are rotated in fridges so that wastage is minimised. It is recommended that practices hold no more than two weeks' worth of stock.

PCV20 is supplied as a pack of 10 x pre-filled syringes without needles.

See [Green Book: Storage, distribution and disposal of vaccines chapter](#) for more information on storage, distribution and disposal of vaccines.

Patient Group Directions (PGDs)

Updated UKHSA developed PGD templates will be made available as a reference resource for health boards to develop and authorise for use locally. They can be found here: [Patient Group Directions \(PGD\) - Welsh Medicines Advice Service](#).

Immunisation Against Infectious Disease (the Green Book)

The latest information on the programme is available in the Green Book: [Pneumococcal: the green book, chapter 25 - GOV.UK](#).

Training and information resources for healthcare practitioners

Staff must be trained and competent to undertake activities within their scope of practice to support vaccination programmes.

Training and information resources for Healthcare Practitioners will be made available on the [Public Health Wales website](#).

Patient facing resources

Patient facing information resources will be made available on the Public Health Wales website: [Immunisation and Vaccines - Public Health Wales](#).

Patient information leaflet resources can be ordered for free at: [Health Information Resources - Public Health Wales](#).

Consent

Guidance on informed consent can be found in in the [Green Book: Consent Chapter](#)

Reporting suspected adverse reactions

PCV20 is a black triangle product and is subject to additional monitoring by the MHRA.

Healthcare professionals and members of public are asked to report suspected adverse reactions through the online Yellow Card scheme (www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard) by downloading the Yellow Card app or by calling the Yellow Card scheme on 0800 731 6789 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday.

Responding to vaccine incidents

Guidance for those involved supporting immunisation services to decide the appropriate response to vaccine incidents: [Vaccine incident guidance: responding to vaccine errors - GOV.UK](#) .

Programme change evaluation

Vaccination Programme Wales, within NHS Performance and Improvement, is tasked with compiling an evaluation on the implementation of the changes within three months of the product change coming into effect. This evaluation must include feedback from relevant stakeholders to foster continuous improvement, and information will be made available to the NHS. Specific localised approaches to address inequity will also be evaluated and will feature in longer term assurance reporting.