

20 February 2026

Dear

Thank you for your most recent email to us, dated 3 February 2026, where you have raised again your dissatisfaction with the Welsh Government's policy on shingles vaccination eligibility.

This letter is responding to both your complaint about the relevant policy and your request for recorded information.

Section 1: Vaccination Policy

JCVI advice

As you have been informed previously, vaccination policy in the UK is set nationally, following advice from the **Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)**, and implemented by the UK Government departments, Public Health agencies, and the NHS. The JCVI is recognised as the UK's independent, expert, evidence-based authority on immunisation. The Committee is composed of epidemiologists, immunologists, clinicians, modellers, economists, and public health experts who review the best available scientific evidence. JCVI's role is explicitly to provide high-quality, considered advice so that the greatest public health benefit is achieved.

For more information on the JCVI, including their Code of Practice and contact details, please see the attached link: [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation - GOV.UK](#)

The JCVI bases their advice on evaluating the disease burden, vaccine safety and efficacy, cost-effectiveness modelling, the impact on public health and implementation feasibility. Its advice is formed through appraisal of the best scientific evidence available, including clinical trials, surveillance data, and modelling.

There is transparency in the formation of the Committee's advice. Modelling, evidence or data taken into account by the JCVI sub-group meetings when making recommendations (such as on shingles vaccination), whilst not published immediately, would have been released into the public domain shortly after ratification by the main committee. I attach a link below to the evidence considered by the JCVI when making their recommendation on the initial shingles vaccination programme in 2010.

[ARCHIVED CONTENT]

As the above document highlights, the data considered by the Committee indicates that disease burden is more prevalent in adults, particularly with increasing age.

The most recent JCVI advice on shingles vaccination can be found here:

This latest advice generally confirms the incidence and severity of shingles increases in older age cohorts. Further, the advice indicates that the suppression of the immune system is associated with an increased risk of shingles, from either immunosuppressive treatment, underlying medical conditions or a decline in the immune system associated with aging.

Previously, you have outlined that in some vaccination programmes (like COVID-19 during the pandemic) carers were included as they were seen as at high-risk of developing the disease. This was indeed the case. However, in its most recent advice, the JCVI does not recommend that carers are included in the eligibility criteria for COVID-19 vaccination, as based on the latest available data, they are no longer at high risk, and the vaccine has limited protection in terms of onward transmission.

Please note however, that the epidemiology for different viruses is not the same. **Shingles is different to COVID-19, in that:**

- it cannot be caught from someone else's shingles
- it comes from reactivation of a virus already in the body

The shingles vaccination programme aims to prevent reactivation of the varicella zoster virus and its complications in **individuals at greatest clinical risk**.

Consequently, JCVI advice for shingles vaccination is focused on the individual clinical risk of reactivation and severe disease, rather than on population level transmission reduction. This means that based on the evidence available to the JCVI, carers are **not** at higher risk than the general population.

On this basis, JCVI **has not recommended inclusion of carers as a separate eligibility group within the shingles vaccination programme**. Instead, the current programme focuses on protecting those at highest clinical risk, including severely immunosuppressed adults, who are eligible under Wales' expanded programme.

If **low-risk groups were deemed eligible** ahead of higher-risk groups this would not follow scientific advice.

Without any public health evidence to the contrary, Welsh Ministers have accepted the JCVI recommendations on shingles eligibility, as have all other UK devolved nations. Other than the [Green Book](#) exception quoted to you in our previous correspondence, that of:

Individuals who have received a short course of high dose steroids (equivalent >40mg prednisolone per day for more than a week) for any reason in the previous month.

We would not expect any deviation from this policy within NHS Wales.

In summary,

Unpaid carers are not eligible for the shingles vaccine because:

- Shingles risk is determined by age and immune status, not exposure.
- JCVI does not classify carers as a higher risk clinical group.

- The programme is tightly defined and does not include occupational categories.

Non-compliance with Statutory duties/ Discrimination

As you have been informed previously, the Welsh Ministers make decisions on vaccination policy based on supporting evidence and with the necessary regard to the relevant statutory duties.

Shingles vaccine eligibility, as advised by the JCVI, is based strictly **on age and clinical risk** and is informed by evidence which we have referenced above. The policy is designed to comply with the **Equality Act 2010** and the **Human Rights Act 1998**.

Section 2: Recorded information requested – handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You asked for recorded information in relation the Shingles Vaccination Programme and as such this section of the letter is being handled under the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

You requested the following:

1. *The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for the shingles vaccination programme, including any consideration of carers.*
2. *The Human Rights Impact Assessment (HRIA) or equivalent analysis.*
3. *Any risk assessments relating to severely immunosuppressed individuals and indirect exposure via carers.*
4. *Any correspondence or advice from JCVI relating to carers, indirect risk, or subgroup modelling.*
5. *The Ministerial decision-making record demonstrating how statutory duties were considered.*

Our Response

For points 1, 2 and 5 above, we have interpreted your request to be in relation to the eligibility for shingles vaccination as advised by the JCVI in 2010, prior to the vaccination programme being introduced in 2013. As described in section 1 of this letter, the JCVI recommended an age-based programme.

Following a full search of relevant Welsh Government systems, I can confirm that the Welsh Government does not hold the information you have requested. Records are retained only in accordance with the Welsh Government's Records Retention and Disposal Schedule, and any relevant older records that may previously have been held were lawfully destroyed in line with that schedule, prior to the receipt of your request.

For point 3, Welsh Government did conduct an integrated impact assessment for the most recent expansion of the shingles programme in 2025, where those who are severely immunosuppressed aged 18-49 became eligible for shingles vaccination following the recommendation by the JCVI. This information is available via this published [link](#)

In terms of point 4 above – the Welsh Government does not hold any correspondence from the JCVI relating to carers, indirect risk, or subgroup modelling. The JCVI publishes its official advice, statements, and summary evidence reviews and can be located on the following: [JCVI shingles - Search - GOV.UK](#).

Next Steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of the FoI request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Dissatisfaction with the complaints process

Following the submission of your complaint, the Welsh Government Complaints Team advised that the issues raised by you relate to vaccination policy rather than concerns about service delivery or maladministration.

As such, your correspondence falls outside the scope of the Welsh Government Complaints Procedure. If you are dissatisfied with this response to your complaint or if you feel the response is not accurate or sufficient, you can request a formal review by writing to:

Complaints Advice Team
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ
Telephone: 03000251378

Email: complaints@gov.wales

Yours sincerely,