



31st Jan. 2022

Deputy Neasa Hourigan,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: neasa.hourigan@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 3773-22

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in offering vulnerable high-risk children aged from 5 to 11 years of age prioritisation for a Covid-19 vaccination following the opening of the HSE online portal for this cohort on 28 December 2021; the reason that those who registered from 4 January 2022 but were not part of the vulnerable high-risk category were offered an appointment first; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The policy regarding the roll out of the booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine is determined by NIAC and the Department of Health.

The European Medicine Agency (EMA) approval to vaccinate 5–11-year-old children was received on Thursday 25th November. On the 8th of December NIAC recommended COVID-19 vaccination for those aged 5 to 11 years:

- with underlying conditions
- living with a younger child with complex medical needs
- living with a person who is immunocompromised

NIAC also stated that a COVID-19 vaccination should be offered to all other children aged 5 to 11 years because of the:

- favourable benefit risk profile of the vaccine,
- to protect them from severe disease,
- the consequences that can follow infection e.g., multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MISC), long COVID, psychosocial and developmental impacts.

We commenced the vaccinations for very high risk children in late December through the paediatric hospitals. This expanded to include vaccinations in Vaccination Centres.

On December 28th 2021 the HSE opened the online portal which enabled parents/guardians to register children aged 5 to 11 and deemed to be high risk for their Covid-19 vaccination.

This was a self-declaration process. Vaccination of high risk children was scheduled to commence from week commencing the 3rd of January.

The portal was then extended to parents/guardians of all children within this age category from January 3rd 2022. The sites commenced scheduling appointments to individuals based on their age from January 3rd, which included both the high risk group and other children. Centres should only have called high risk children initially.

This was picked up immediately and Centres then prioritised for all high risk 5-11 year olds who registered before January 3rd. All high risk children were then issued with an appointment by Friday 6th.

Given the complex nature of the NIAC advice and as there are no registers to identify those high risk children, it meant that the HSE relied on a self-declaration process by parents. This appears to have worked well.

To date over 118,000 parents/guardians have registered their children, of which 95% have been issued an appointment. The vaccination of 5 to 11 year olds has seen just under 94,000 of these children have received their dose one vaccine with over 3,000 of these now being fully vaccinated having received their dose two.

I trust the above information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme