

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2211](#): Follow the science and broaden eligibility for Covid vaccines

[PE2211](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to recognise the flaws in JCVI guidance and broaden eligibility for updated Covid vaccines (including Novavax) to include those at moderate and high risk.

Background to the petition

The NHS vaccination programme is guided by advice issued by the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations (JCVI).

The JCVI published its [guidance on COVID-19 vaccination in June 2025](#). In this it set out that the recommendations were aimed at focusing vaccination on those most at risk of serious disease.

The role of the JCVI is to provide advice to UK Ministers on vaccination policy but Scottish Ministers are not bound by this advice. Decisions on whether to accept the JCVI's advice are taken by Scottish Ministers together with public health professionals such as the Chief Medical Officer (CMO). The outcome of these decisions are then issued in Chief Medical Officer letters. The [latest letter detailing the winter and spring flu and covid vaccination programme](#) was published on 29 August 2025.

The key objectives of the Scottish 2025/26 flu and COVID-19 vaccination programme were outlined in the letter as:

1. To protect those in society who remain at higher risk of severe flu and COVID-19, in order to prevent severe illness, hospitalisation and death.
2. To minimise additional pressure on the NHS and social care services, during the winter period, as a result of flu and COVID-19 infection.
3. To increase uptake across the entirety of the programme, but with a particular focus on improving uptake in the clinical at risk flu groups, and flu vaccination for health and social care workers, where we saw significant reductions in uptake in winter 2024/25.

The letter goes on to highlight the following eligibility for the vaccine:

COVID-19 Eligibility

6. Eligibility for COVID-19 vaccination has changed for winter 2025/26 compared to winter 2024/25. The following groups are being offered a COVID-19 vaccination in winter 2025/26. These individuals will also be eligible for flu vaccination:

- Residents in care homes for older adults
- All adults aged 75 years and over
- Individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed (as defined in tables 3 and 4 in the COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book).

7. The following groups are no longer eligible for COVID-19 vaccination from winter 2025/26 (unless they fall into any of the three eligible groups listed in point 6 above):

- Those aged 65-74
- Those in a clinical risk group (as defined in tables 3 and 4 in the COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book), including pregnant women
- Frontline health and social care workers

The letter goes on to explain the change happened as the COVID-19 vaccination programme was scaled down following JCVI advice in November 2024. This included a move to the standard cost-effectiveness assessment used by the JCVI for other routine vaccines.

The letter also explains that population immunity has increased through infection recovery and vaccination, making COVID-19 generally mild for most people. Hospitalisation and death rates have also fallen significantly and this has led to a move to a more targeted approach focused on those at highest risk, primarily older adults (especially 80+) and immunosuppressed individuals, who remain most vulnerable to severe outcomes.

Uptake and vaccine effectiveness

The [most recent statistics from Public Health Scotland](#) show the following vaccine uptake in the key priority groups (as of 15 January 2026):

- **Aged 75+** - 73.2% (n= 410,064)
- **Older care home residents** – 79.2% (n= 23,202)
- **Weakened immune system** – 45.5% (n= 93,120)

Data on the effectiveness of the vaccine are not published until later in the year.

Novavax

The petition also calls for the inclusion of Novavax in the vaccination programme. Novavax is the pharmaceutical company and the COVID-19 vaccine it produces is called Nuvaxovid.

Nuvaxovid is a different type of vaccine to the mRNA vaccines and is categorised as a recombinant protein subunit vaccine.

The CMO letter advises the use of the Pfizer BioNTech (Comirnaty) vaccines for all groups but does set out that the Scottish Government's position is that non-mRNA vaccines should also be made available for individuals where mRNA vaccines are not suitable.

However, the letter goes on to explain that there are no non-mRNA products authorised for use in the UK which are available to purchase. It states the Scottish Vaccination and Immunisation Programme (SVIP) will keep the situation under review to see if supply will become available at a later date.

The JCVI has no role in the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines or any other vaccine.

Kathleen Robson
Senior Researcher
SPICe

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