

T: 0300 244 4000
E: MinisterforMWPHSAD@gov.scot

08 July 2026

Dear Members of the Health, Care and Sport Committee,

URGENT TIME-LIMITED MENINGOCOCCAL GROUP B (MENB) VACCINATION PROGRAMME IN 2026

I writing to inform the Committee about the targeted, urgent and time-limited MenB vaccination programme, which is being delivered in Scotland from 6 July 2026. The programme follows recent outbreaks and clusters of meningococcal group B (MenB) disease and aims to protect those at highest risk before the start of the 2026/27 academic year.

Background

Following the unprecedented MenB outbreak, primarily among University of Kent students, in March 2026, and clusters in Weymouth and Reading more recently, this letter outlines a targeted, urgent and time-limited offer of MenB vaccination to those considered at highest risk, with the aim of vaccinating individuals before the start of the 2026/2027 academic year and the peak season for MenB disease in the autumn.

Those at highest risk are older teenagers and young adults under 25 years of age who are either entering university for the first time or starting college for the first time and living away from home in shared student accommodation. This targeted offer is intended to provide protection during a period associated with an increased risk of meningococcal disease transmission.

As two doses of the Bexsero® vaccine are required for protection, it is important to start offering vaccination as soon as possible, to ensure those entering higher education and residential further education settings for the first time in the academic year 2026/27 have the opportunity to be fully vaccinated prior to the start of or early in their first term.

The programme is being rolled out across the UK and it is possible for young people to have their first and second doses in different parts of the UK should that be necessary.

Transmission of meningococcal bacteria, which can lead to meningitis and sepsis, generally requires close and prolonged contact. This includes, for example, living in the same household or intimate contact such as kissing or sharing drinks, cigarettes or vapes.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

Eligibility

The cohort for the Scottish programme is as follows:

1. **Age cohort:** Young people born between 1 March 2008 and 28 February 2009, and others who were in S6 during the 2025–26 academic year, regardless of future education plans. The age-based cohort has been included to allow rapid and equitable delivery of the programme.
2. Young people starting university or college in academic year 2026/27 who are not covered by the age cohort. These are:
 - a. **University entrants:** Anyone under 25 starting university for the first time in academic year 2026/27, including international students; and
 - b. **College entrants:** Anyone under 25 starting college for the first time in academic year 2026/27, while living away from home in shared student accommodation. This includes international students.

To note: Individuals who turn 25 years of age between 6 July 2026 and 31 December 2026 are eligible.

Programme timings

The programme will operate from 6 July 2026. First doses must be administered by 31 December 2026. To allow individuals time to complete the course, second doses may be administered up to 31 March 2027.

MenB vaccine information

The Bexsero® Meningococcal Group B vaccine for injection in pre-filled syringe is routinely used in Scotland. Two doses administered at least 28 days apart) are essential to protect against meningitis and sepsis caused by meningococcal group B bacteria. **It is essential that individuals receive both doses, as a single dose does not provide adequate protection.** Unlike most other meningococcal vaccines, the Bexsero® vaccine does not prevent carriage or transmission of the bacteria, and so it does not provide herd immunity to the wider population but does provide good protection against invasive meningococcal group B disease in vaccinated individuals. Bexsero® vaccine is effective against most, but not all, strains of MenB bacteria causing disease in the UK. It cannot protect against all causes of meningitis or sepsis.

Further information

Information on the programme, including eligibility criteria and how young people can access the vaccine, is available through [NHS Inform](#). Information about the vaccine and its side effects can also be found there.

Public Health Scotland has developed a range of awareness-raising materials and resources, which have been distributed to more than 1,300 stakeholders, including NHS Board communications teams, universities, colleges, education settings, and charities representing young people and parents. In addition, UCAS will email students throughout July and August to promote awareness of the programme.

A paid media campaign launched on 6 July, alongside the distribution of 3,000 campaign posters to community settings across Scotland. Officials are also exploring further press and communications opportunities to coincide with key milestones, including the start of the programme, SQA results day, and university and college freshers' periods.

I would be grateful if members could share this information with their party colleagues to help maximise awareness of this time-limited vaccination programme across the Parliament. Such

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Silver



awareness will help ensure MSPs are able to respond appropriately to enquiries from eligible young people, parents and carers.

Should Members receive enquiries relating to the matters covered in this letter, individuals should be directed in the first instance to [NHS Inform](#), which provides further information about the programme, including contact details for relevant NHS Board Immunisation Teams for queries relating to local delivery arrangements.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,



MAREE TODD

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Silver

