

JCVI Secretariat
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

T +44 (0)20 7654 8122

Juliet Lyon CBE
Chair, Independent Advisory Panel on Deaths in Custody

16 March 2021

Dear Juliet Lyon,

Re: Prioritisation of prisoners and prison staff in COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Thank you for your letters to the JCVI in relation to the vaccination of individuals in prison settings and the staff who work there. The committee are sympathetic to the unique challenges faced by such settings including difficulties with social distancing and the close proximity of individuals in these settings.

As you will be aware Phase 1 of the vaccination programme is currently underway, this first phase prioritises saving lives of those who are most at risk of dying as well as vaccinating front line health and social care. It is estimated that the groups prioritised represent around 99% of preventable mortality from COVID-19.

On the 1st March 2021, the JCVI wrote to the Secretary of State for Health Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP to update on a number of key issues in relation to Phase 1 including prison workers, prisoners and detained estates.

Most prison officers will be working with younger adults and will individually at low risk of mortality. Those prison officers at high individual risk of mortality will be targeted for vaccination in the first phase of the programme. While some prison officers will be working with individuals vulnerable to COVID-19, they are not considered have the same level of risk of exposure as health and social care workers.

In accordance with JCVI's advice on operational flexibility, in order to minimise vaccine wastage in delivery of the programme, where vaccine remains unused following an offer of vaccination to those in detained settings, such vaccine could reasonably be offered to prison officers. The Secretary of State has since advised NHS England that this should be done wherever possible.

With regards to vaccination of detainees, JCVI recognises the increased risk of transmission due to a high concentration of individuals and that there may be difficulties maintaining social distancing. The Committee agree that it would be difficult to advise additional prioritisation of detainees above the wider population based on the increased risk of exposure in the setting alone. Every effort should be made to ensure persons in detained setting are offered vaccination in line with the offer to persons in the wider community, with appropriate support to promote high vaccine uptake. This prioritisation ensures that those prisoners who are the most vulnerable to serious outcomes as a result of contracting COVID-19 due to their age or underlying health conditions are prioritised accordingly.

The letter from the JCVI and the Secretary of State's response has been published here: [Letter from the Health and Social Care Secretary on COVID-19 vaccination phase 1 advice - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

Yours sincerely

JCVI Secretariat
jcvi@phe.gov.uk

On behalf of

Professor Wei Shen Lim JCVI Chair COVID-19 immunisation
Consultant Respiratory Physician and Honorary Professor (Respiratory Medicine)
Nottingham University Hospitals