

HPV vaccine programme for gay men introduced

From 1st April, the human papillomavirus vaccine is being offered to all MSM up to 45 years of age who attend sexual health clinics.

The roll-out comes after the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which provides independent, expert advice to governments across the UK, recommended the introduction of a targeted programme of this type.

HPV infections which persist can lead to some forms of cancers or cause genital warts. The HPV vaccine is very effective in reducing these risks.

Public Health Minister, Rebecca Evans, said:

“A HPV vaccine programme for adolescent girls has been in place since 2008. Vaccinating the majority of girls in the UK, means that their future male partners get some protection too. However boys who become MSM will get far less of this protection.

“I am pleased that a new targeted HPV vaccination programme for gay men up to the age of 45 has been introduced across Wales. Gay men attending clinics for sexual health services will now be offered the vaccine.”

The vaccine is also being offered on a case-by-case basis to people who are considered to be at risk, including MSM who are over 45, transgender men and women, sex workers and HIV-positive men and women.

Press release: Secretary of State visits HMP Onley to meet staff and see reform in action

The Warwickshire-based establishment this week launched the Ricoh training centre at the prison, which will give offenders the opportunity to gain digital media qualifications and get a job with the firm on release.

This follows the successes of the prison's Halfords bicycle academy, which provides trainees with repair and maintenance skills. More than 30 offenders from the prison have gone to achieve employment with the company.

Rehabilitation is a crucial part of the Justice Secretary's Prisons and Courts Bill, which outlines that a key purpose of prisons is to reform offenders so they stop committing crime.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss said:

I have always been clear that as well as punishing offenders, our prisons must become places of safety and reform. We must do all we can to give prisoners the best chance to turn their lives around.

There is some fantastic work going on across the prison estate and I am delighted that the innovative schemes formed by the hardworking and dedicated staff at HMP Onley are having a positive impact on lives.

Tackling the risks of reoffending will help reduce the £15 billion annual cost it has to society and reduce the turmoil faced by people who become victims of crime, therefore creating safer communities.

Since taking up post, the Justice Secretary has taken immediate action to boost safety, announcing £100m a year to recruit 2,500 prison officers to bolster the frontline and increase staff numbers.

A further £10m has been invested for increased security measures in a number of prisons. HMP Onley received £160,000 and has used the money to increase CCTV and on the wings and bringing in staff with specialist security and safety training.

Staff at HMP Onley have built relationships with local businesses, such as Halfords and the Ricoh, to explore opportunities for prisoners to gain training and employment.

This is an example of governors being empowered to take control over how they run their establishments – a key commitment in the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper.

Notes to editors:

Progress made on key reforms so far includes:

Recruitment and retention

- boosting pay for hard-working staff by up to £5,000 at some of the most difficult-to-recruit prisons and those with high levels of staff-turnover
- appointing 75 mentors for new starter prison officers to help them in their first few months in the job which we know can be a difficult time;

- starting targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need;
- launching a new Prison Officer apprenticeship scheme next year for over 1000 new officers that will help increase diversity and make it easier to join the prison service.
- developing a new graduate scheme that will encourage people from a broader range of backgrounds to join the service;
- we have set up a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the prison service after leaving the military.

News story: New water choice for English businesses

The world's biggest competitive water market officially opened on April 1st, which for the first time gives more than 1.2 million businesses, charities and public sector bodies the chance to choose their water provider wherever they are in the country.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom welcomed the launch of the market, which will deliver up to £200 million of benefits to the economy and water customers over the next 30 years, through improved service and better value for money.

By opening the market, companies ranging from businesses with very few employees to multinationals, as well as charities and public sector organisations, will be able to shop around for the best deal from all water utilities in England.

Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Over a million businesses, charities and public sector organisations will now be able to find the water deal that works best for them. Opening the market is an historic milestone, paving the way for innovation and efficiency and giving customers the same choice over their water retailer as they currently have for their energy and other essential services.

Defra has worked with partners Ofwat, which will regulate the new market, and

Market Operator Services Ltd (MOSL), which will operate the market on behalf of its water company members, to ensure there is a smooth transition for customers.

Ofwat Chief Executive Cathryn Ross said:

Business customers have been crying out for choice over their provider of water and waste water services for years. From today businesses, charities and public sector organisations in England will be able to choose their retailer to get a better deal.

The opening of the business retail market takes us into new territory. It is the single biggest change to the water sector since privatisation and I am hugely optimistic about the changes that lay ahead and the benefits they will bring to customers.

But it is important that we at Ofwat maintain effective oversight of how the new market is working and what customers are experiencing. This will mean that we can step in if we need to, to make sure customers are protected.

MOSL Chief Executive Ben Jeffs said:

This launch marks the successful delivery of the largest and most complicated transformation programmes undertaken by the water sector since privatisation. Delivering a programme of this scale and complexity has involved a huge team effort across Government, Ofwat and the entire industry.

Competition not only offers non-household customers the prospect of a better price for a better service, it will create new opportunities and challenges for the sector as a whole. The level of engagement we have had to date has been exemplary and, as the market operator, we look forward to working with companies to ensure the new market delivers on its promise to customers.

The new market in England now becomes the biggest of its kind in the world and Defra will continue to support the water sector as the market develops.

Scotland is the only other country with a competitive water market for businesses and this government has been working closely with its Scottish partners in the lead-up to the opening to draw from their learnings and expertise.

Businesses, charities or public sector organisations interested in changing their water retailer should shop around. There is more information available about available water retail suppliers on the [Open Water website](#).

Backbench SNP MSP goes rogue on the NHS

3 Apr 2017



An SNP MSP has taken the unusual step of launching his own plan for future of the NHS – despite having no involvement in his party’s health set-up.

Alex Neil, who previously occupied the role of health secretary, unveiled his strategy today through the organisation Options for Scotland.

In it, he acknowledges that the longer-term challenges facing the health service have been “swept under the carpet” and suggests a range of solutions.

However, his event doesn’t appear to have the backing of either the SNP nor the Scottish Government, even though Mr Neil is a member of both.

The launch release makes no mention of current health secretary Shona Robison.

This is the latest example of Mr Neil contradicting both SNP and Scottish Government policy, after he admitted voting for the UK to leave the EU last year.

Scottish Conservative shadow health secretary Donald Cameron said:

“It appears Alex Neil is so dissatisfied with his own government’s running of the NHS he deems it necessary to go his own way on the matter.

“SNP HQ will be furious that he is trying to sideline the health secretary on this one.

“People will wonder why on earth an SNP backbencher is taking it upon himself to do this.

“His pleas internally have obviously fallen on deaf ears, and now he is taking his own agenda to the wider public.

“There’s no question that the NHS in Scotland needs substantial review, and many of these points are worthy of consideration.

“But as long as the SNP prioritises the break-up of Britain over the running of the NHS, no real improvements will take place.”

For more on Alex Neil's plans, visit:

<http://www.optionsforscotland.com/2017/04/03/a-stimulus-for-a-national-debate-on-the-nhs/>

[Green Party: Theresa May must raise war crime allegations during Saudi Arabia visit](#)



3 April 2017

The Green Party has called on Theresa May to raise allegations of war crimes in Yemen when she visits Saudi Arabia this week [1].

Jonathan Bartley, Green Party co-leader, said:

“It is deeply disturbing to see the prime minister cosying up to an oppressive regime in an attempt to get a trade deal after Brexit. Saudi Arabia has an appalling human rights record and we should not be exposing ourselves to a dependent relationship with a country that was accused of killing civilians as recently as last month [2].

“The Met police are currently investigating Saudi Arabia for war crimes in Yemen and Theresa May must raise the allegations during her visit.

“We have repeatedly called on the Government to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia. If there's any chance UK weapons were used to violate international law and human rights, we must stop supplying them immediately.”

Notes:

1. <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/theresa-calls-closer-uk-ties-10146879>
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/02/met-police-examine-allegations-saudi-arabia-war-crimes-yemen>

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