

News story: HPV vaccination programme for men who have sex with men

The government has confirmed that it will introduce a nationwide HPV vaccination programme for men aged 45 or younger who have sex with other men.

NHS England and Public Health England (PHE) will work to start the programme from April 2018, for those attending sexual health (GUM) clinics and HIV clinics in England.

Since 2008 girls aged 11 to 13 have been vaccinated against the HPV virus, and this provides indirect protection to boys. HPV is a virus transmitted through sexual contact, with over 100 different types of HPV. It is most commonly associated with causing cervical cancer in women.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have recognised increasing evidence of the association between HPV infection and non-cervical cancers on men who have sex with men (MSM). MSM do not benefit from indirect protection from the vaccination programme for girls.

As a result, a vaccination pilot started in 42 specialist sexual health services clinics from June 2016. The pilot assessed the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of a national HPV vaccination programme for MSM.

The vaccination pilot was a success.

A phased nationwide rollout to protect men who have sex with men from some cancers caused by HPV as well as genital warts, will now go ahead.

Given the phased approach to the rollout, patients should not contact their clinics to request the vaccine. If the vaccine is available patients will be offered it as part of their routine sexual health check-up.

Dr Michael Edelstein, Consultant Epidemiologist at PHE, said:

Our evidence shows that men who have sex with men are welcoming an HPV vaccination programme, and it can be delivered successfully through sexual health services.

MSM are a group who receive little indirect protection from the adolescent girls' vaccination programme. We expect the new programme to reduce the number of cancers that are directly caused by HPV.