



# Leicestershire Partnership

NHS Trust

A university teaching and research-active Trust

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Dear Headteacher and Immunisation Link,

The Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust's School Aged Immunisation Service (SAIS) will soon be visiting your school to deliver vaccinations from the routine immunisation schedule. **We are bringing in a significant addition to our consent process this year**, allowing eligible young people, in Year 8 upwards, the option to self-consent to vaccinations if their parents or carers have not informed us of their consent preference.

Please read this update thoroughly as it contains important details about eligibility criteria, the process and outlines what actions schools need to take.

### What are the key changes and criteria for self-consent?

If we do not have a returned parental or carer consent decision, we **will** ask the young person, if they are Gillick competent, if they would like to have the vaccination.

In order for a child to self-consent, they must be in year 8 or above. Young people under the age of 16 can consent to their own treatment if they're assessed by a registered nurse to have enough intelligence, competence and understanding of the risks and benefits. This is known as being Gillick competent. Gillick competency guidelines are nationally and legally recognised and outlined in the immunisation Green Book.

If a young person with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) is Gillick competent and their parent or carer has not given consent, the SAIS will work with school staff to ensure their self-consent wishes are made clear.

Where a young person is not Gillick competent, and we have not received a parental consent decision, we will **NOT** vaccinate.

### Why are we bringing this in?

Our aim is to offer all young people in schools the opportunity to be protected from vaccine preventable diseases, many of which can be serious, life changing or life threatening. Each vaccination programme needs a separate consent form to be completed. Sometimes parents or carers don't realise this, or they can forget to respond, resulting in children missing out on the vital protection offered through the vaccination. By allowing young people to self-consent, we hope it helps to ensure those who want the protection can get it and empowers young people to take a pro-active step towards supporting their health.

### What will be the new process?

#### SAIS pre-session process

- Schools will be asked to send out the consent invitation letter to parents and carers (as per the usual process). The letter will clearly state that young people will be offered the chance to self-consent, where Gillick competent, if parents or carers do not respond by completing an online consent form.

- Schools will be asked to send out reminders advising of online consent closing date (as per usual process).
- **NEW STEP:** schools will be asked to utilise resources in the SAIS pack they are sent to share vaccination information with relevant school years (for example an email to the year group or post on the school's intranet) so young people are aware of the vaccine, what it protects against and other important information like risks and benefits.
- SAIS will send text messages to parents or carers who have not responded to the e-consent process, using information on the Electronic Patient Record (EPR), to attempt to remind them to share their consent decision. The message will also advise that their child will be offered the chance to self-consent in the absence of a parental or carer consent decision.
- In addition to text messages, to ensure equality of opportunity with their peers, phone calls will be made to parents and carers of young people in special school to gain verbal consent or refusal to vaccinate. Voicemails will also be left with information on how to contact the service to give their consent decision.
- The online consent form will close one day before the school vaccination session.

### Day of vaccination / Gillick competency process

- Young people with parental or carer consent will be vaccinated as usual. Those whose parents have refused consent will **NOT** be vaccinated. It is important for you to know that regardless of whether we receive approval or refusal for a vaccine, the parental or carer consent decision will always be what the service uses.
- If no parental consent decision has been given, i.e., non-response, the young person will be asked if they would like to give their own permission to receive the vaccine. If the student does not want to give their permission without speaking to their parent or carer first, we will not vaccinate. An attempt to contact a parent or carer may be made on individual basis if requested by the young person; the parental decision will be used if contact is made.
- Past vaccination history and GP records will be accessed by SAIS practitioners.
- Information about the vaccine being offered will be given in verbal and written format, with translations available, and the young person is then given time to read and digest this, before discussing this with a registered nurse.
- The young person will be assessed by the registered nurse to ascertain whether they are able to retain and recount the information they have just discussed, along with their maturity and ability to decide for themselves without undue pressure from those around them.
- Clear documentation of this process is recorded, along with the conclusion of the assessment with a child being deemed either competent or not competent. They will be supported to complete a consent form and provide an email address for follow up information.
- Only competent young people will be offered vaccination and it will remain the young person's choice to continue.

- Following the vaccination aftercare advice and information about potential side effects will be given verbally, through the email address if provided and / or a post vaccination advice card containing links to useful websites.

We would like to reassure you that, following a number of impact and risk assessments, we have taken a range of measures and staff training to ensure this new self-consent process runs as smoothly and safely as possible. As always, our nurses and vaccinators will follow professional and national guidance and standards.

Please be reassured that our service will follow up directly with families if they have queries or concerns. Please direct parents and carers to our usual number: **0300 3000 007**.

If you would like to discuss the contents of this letter further, please contact myself, Sarah Ward, Family Service Manager, on 07879430060.

We want to thank you and your school community for your ongoing support to our service and look forward to our continued collaborative working.

Yours sincerely

*S. Ward*

**Sarah Ward**

Family Service Manager  
School Aged Immunisation Service  
Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust