**School immunisation service: What is self-consent?**

**Information for parents and carers**

September 2023

# What is self-consent?

Self-consent means that a young person consents to having a vaccine or immunisation, without needing permission from a parent or carer.

From the beginning of this school year (starting September 2023) the School Immunisation Service in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland may allow young people in year 8 or above to self-consent to vaccinations, if their parents or carers have not informed us of their vaccination consent or refusal.

However, in order to consent, a young person must be able to show to a health professional they understand what the vaccination entails, and that they understand the vaccination risks and benefits.

No young person will ever be forced into having a vaccine and if there is any sign of doubt, the vaccine will not be offered.

Parental or carer vaccination consent or refusal will always be used as the primary consent decision, if it has been provided.

A young person’s consent preference cannot overrule a parent or carer’s vaccination consent decision. For example, if a parent or carer refuses consent, we will not vaccinate that young person or offer them the chance to self-content.

# Why are young people now allowed to self-consent?

As a service, 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 may forget or have trouble responding to the consent request letter, which results in a consent decision not being provided. Therefore, the young person does not receive the vaccine, when perhaps they may have preferred to have it.

By allowing young people to self-consent, we hope it helps those who want the protection to get it. The service also sees this as an opportunity to empower young people to take a pro-active step towards supporting their health.

# Do young people have enough information to be able to consent for themselves?

All young people in school will be provided a range of information prior to the service coming into the school, including website links to trusted NHS sources, information videos and online leaflets. Translated materials will also be available.

Some schools may also use resources provided by the service to hold assemblies or dedicate some lesson time to talking about upcoming vaccinations.

On the day of the vaccination, if a young person is offered the opportunity to self-consent, they will receive information about the vaccine being offered in verbal and written formats. The young person will then be given time to read and digest this, before discussing next steps with a registered nurse.

# Is this safe and legal?

Yes. This process is legal and is already happening in other parts of the country.

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.

# What if I really don’t want my child to be vaccinated?

If you really don’t want your child to have a vaccination, all we ask is that you take the time to read through the information sent to you by your school and register your consent refusal on the online portal. If you are struggling to do this, you can also register your consent decision by calling the service directly on: **0300 300 0007** or e-mail **lpt.sais@nhs.net**

This will mean your child will not be vaccination or offered the chance to self-consent.

# How can I support my child to prepare for a School Immunisation Service visit?

Wherever possible, we always recommend that young people and their parent or carer take the time to read through the vaccination information provided and make time to talk it through and come to a decision together as a family.

This way, even if a parental or carer consent decision is not recorded prior to the session date, you can be confident you are aware of each other’s wishes if self-consent is offered.

There are also resources available for things like needle-phobia and lots of information and advice on the Health For Teens website ([www.healthforteens.co.uk](http://www.healthforteens.co.uk) ).