Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

30 September 2021

Since August, schools across Wales and the United Kingdom have increasingly been targeted by anti-vaccine groups as the vaccine rollout has been extended to younger age groups.

The activity targeting schools is coordinated by a small minority of people. Children are an important target for anti-vaccine groups because of the heightened anxiety and sensitivity around what is and isn't safe for children – this serves as a radicalisation and recruitment tool for these fringe groups.

Official government and NHS communications for 12-15 year olds focus on signposting people to reliable information on vaccines and encouraging them to discuss vaccination and their choice with their parents/ guardians.

We recommend sharing this guide for children and young people on Public Health Wales's website: https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/covid-19-vaccination-information/patient-information/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-children-and-young-people/.

Information, guidance and official documents will be bilingual when coming from the Welsh Government or NHS in Wales. Misinformation is rarely bilingual (it is frequently duplicated from other sources in the UK or America), and this is a tell-tale sign that it is not official - even if it is presented to look like an official document.

This week, head teachers have been targeted with fake vaccine consent letters for distribution to parents. These letters have several functions:

- To trick teachers into distributing the checklists to parents in order to stoke anxiety among parents and school pupils.
- To encourage an over-zealous counter-response – as individuals share the checklist to raise awareness, they are also sharing key anti-vaccine talking points that are embedded within the checklist.
- To add to the fatigue and fear that schools are already experiencing around low to moderate level harassment by anti-vaccine groups, reducing confidence and creating an energy cost for engagement with the vaccine rollout.

It is essential that we encourage vigilance among school staff to these threats, pointing them to established lines of communication into the Welsh Government and UK Covid vaccine security [contact information below] where there are questions or concerns. It is important they do not share any content with staff and pupils without confirmation of its origin.

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

It is also essential to warn the public to remain vigilant of hoax consent forms without drawing attention to the contents of the form. Use all amplifiers in your network to maximise the reach and authenticity of the messaging.

Example messaging:

BE VIGILANT: We have been made aware of fake vaccine consent forms that are being circulated in schools by anti-vaccine groups which aim to spread fear, division and mistrust.

Please remain vigilant, share this warning with friends and family, and make sure you turn to reliable sources to get the facts: https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/covid-19-vaccination-information/

Report misinformation

If your school receives any correspondence which you suspect of being misinformation regarding vaccination:

- **do not distribute**
- **do not reply**
- forward a picture or copy to **schoolsvaccinecorrespondence@gov.wales** to help us monitor what is being sent to schools and identify trends.

Harrassment and threats - both in real life and online - are a crime and should be reported to the Police.