

Review over second jabs for children

By Nina Massey

SCIENTISTS are looking at whether children need a second dose of Covid vaccine and if so which type would be best.

Researchers are launching a study of vaccination schedules in 12 to 16 year olds. Professor Matthew Snape, chief investigator on the trial, said: "As well as looking at the standard two full doses of the Pfizer vaccine, we will look at how well volunteers respond when their second dose of Pfizer is half that of the first dose. Or if different vaccines are used altogether."

"This will provide the JCVI [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation] with information crucial to informing their advice about immunising teenagers."

Professor Andrew Ustianowski, NIHR clinical lead for the vaccination programme, said: "It is important to establish the most effective vaccine doses for different groups."

First doses of the Pfizer vaccine for over 12s were approved this week.

Javid warns of twin NHS bottlenecks

By Christopher McKeon

THERE will be two backlogs after the pandemic, the Health Secretary warned.

Sajid Javid told a think tank event in Blackpool yesterday that the UK would have to deal with a "social backlog in mental health and public health" as well as ballooning NHS waiting lists.

He said: "Passing the peak of the pandemic has been a bit like a receding tide, revealing the underlying health of our nation. It's revealed some fractures within - and in many cases the pandemic has deepened those fractures."

Pointing to differences in Covid admissions between the most and least deprived parts of the country, and the variation in mortality rates between racial groups, he said: "These are symptoms of the disease of disparity."

He said the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities would have a "relentless focus" on inequalities as part of the "levelling up" agenda. He also said Government had pledged an extra £2.3 billion a year to transform mental health services by 2023.

EXCLUSIVE
By Sarah O'Grady
Social Affairs Correspondent

CAMPAIGNERS have demanded that "dictatorial" care home bosses finally relax visiting rights so families can see their loved ones.

Despite the easing of Covid restrictions, many care homes are still enforcing a variety of rules which contravene Government guidance.

Actress Ruthie Henshall joined a Rights For Residents protest yesterday to try to put a stop to residents "dying of loneliness", as family and friends continue to be forbidden from visiting.

The West End star accused some homes of "making up their own rules" on visitation, adding: "I cannot bear hearing the stories of suffering that are still going on."

Ruthie was one of more than 100 campaigners who gathered at Downing Street yesterday, chanting and waving placards.

She said: "It is still happening in care homes, that people are getting half-hour visits every couple of weeks. They're still dying of loneliness and isolation and I cannot have this."

"This is just devastating to think all this time later, this is still going on. They have no voice, no voice, because they're behind the door."

She was an essential care giver for her mother Gloria, who died in a care home in May. Ruthie added: "I got to hold her as she died, I got to



Love... Ruthie with her mum Gloria, who died in May

play her classical music, I got to tell her everything that I wanted to tell her, they let my sisters in as well.

"If I had been robbed of that experience, I don't know where I would be, because the grief of losing your mother is enormous, but to lose your mother when you have not had the chance to see them, it's unthinkable."

Ruthie, who hugged Rights for Residents co-founder Jenny Morrison at the demonstration, also posted a social media video of care home resident Frances, who is 100, to share her story.

In the video, Frances says: "After 18 months of being shut out from the outside world my daughter can now see me in my room."

"But my other daughter and my son are not allowed - though 90,000 people can visit the Leeds festival."

Recent research by Rights for Residents of its 6,500 members showed almost two-thirds had been denied an essential care giver.

The group yesterday delivered a petition to Number 10 bearing more than 267,000 signa-

Ruthie's tears for care home residents 'dying of loneliness'

tures, calling for visiting restrictions to be lifted in line with freedoms for the rest of society.

The campaign's survey showed just 60 per cent of visitors are allowed to see their relative any day of the week.

Nearly a quarter are limited to between Monday and Friday - while more than 40 per cent are still restricted to a 30-minute visit.

More than a third of residents are only allowed one visitor at a time.

But current guidance says there is no limit on the number of named visitors a resident can receive, nor how many visits

they can receive each day. All care homes without Covid cases should seek to enable indoor visits and each resident should be able to nominate an essential care giver, it adds.

While the guidance is not underpinned in law, providers are expected to follow it, with breaches investigated by the Care Quality Commission.

Yet campaigners say many providers are still taking strict measures by using screens, restricting the number and duration of visits and not letting residents nominate a care



Campaigner Diane Mayhew

Mum stopped from seeing disabled son for weeks

DEVOTED mother Joan Gillham has had to go weeks at a time without seeing her son, Robert.

He was born with Angelman syndrome, a genetic disorder that causes development problems.

The 32-year-old's health problems are so severe he was placed in a home when he was 11 so he could have 24-hour care.

Joan saw him regularly, both at

the care home in Mirfield, West Yorks, and on Robert's visits to her home in Pudsey - until the pandemic struck.

Speaking to the Daily Express in June, Joan, 72, said: "Before lockdown Robert came home nearly every Saturday, so these past 15 months have been extremely hard emotionally."

"We have been able to go to the

home and stand outside...but we couldn't go into his room and interact fully with him."

Robert has occasionally been allowed to go to his mum's house, but he has to stay outside. If he went inside, he would be locked up in his room for 14 days when he returned to the care home.

When he leaves his room, Robert is strapped into a

wheelchair that restricts his movement. Joan said carers sometimes brought him to the entrance of the home in his chair but he was "unresponsive".

She added: "Robert has no verbal skills, he doesn't understand. It's not self-isolation - it's forced. In Robert's case it is a deprivation of his liberty. It's always on my mind."



Emotional Ruthie hugs Rights for Residents co-founder Jenny Morrison at the protest

Pictures: STEVE REIGATE

COMMENT

KATE TERRONI
Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care at the Quality Commission

THE past year has been heartbreaking for so many who have lost loved ones, but also for those who have been unable to see family and friends in care homes.

We have been clear throughout the pandemic that the individual must be at the centre of decisions around visiting.

Blanket approaches to visiting are unacceptable and may trigger an inspection.

We have sought assurances from care home providers about how they are facilitating visits, and we are verifying this information when we go out and inspect.

We have a mandatory question on each of our care home inspections which looks at how safe visiting is being supported.

We have found that 95 per cent were enabling visiting to happen, and action was taken with those five per cent of providers where we were somewhat assured or not assured.

Concerns have been raised with us about potential blanket bans and we have taken action in every case.

This includes following up with providers, as well as inspecting, raising safeguarding alerts where appropriate and following up with local authorities.

We expect providers to follow government guidance on visiting.

People are entitled to have designated visitors, and if we are made aware that this is not happening then we follow up with the provider, then inspect if we think something isn't right.



Frances...clip of the 100-year-old

giver. Jayne Connery, of Care Campaign for the Vulnerable, has branded some care home bosses "dictatorial".

She said: "Some managers and owners are refusing to see the bigger picture of neglect and isolation."

"With staff levels so low, it's crucially important that families are allowed into care homes, not just to have a chat, but to feed and dress their relatives. It's all very well mentioning Covid all the time, but we also don't want to see elderly residents dying of neglect."

Rights for Residents want the Government to pass Gloria's Law, named after Ms Henshall's mother, to protect the right of an essential care

giver to continue visiting their loved one even if the care home is in the middle of an outbreak. It also wants "clear penalties" for homes that do not follow government guidance.

Reports have poured into the Daily Express from across the UK, warning that "inhumane" visiting policies have led to a "growing reluctance" to place a loved one into care, which is having a financial impact on the sector.

Diane Mayhew, co-founder of Rights for Residents, said people are paying thousands of pounds "for the privilege of being held prisoner", adding: "You cannot have one rule for one group of people and another rule for another. It's actually an abuse of their human

rights and it absolutely has to stop." Shadow social care minister Liz Kendall was also at the protest. She said: "They think it's wrong, I think it's wrong, so we have to keep pushing for that legal change to happen."

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesman said: "We are doing everything we can to support care providers in facilitating visits safely."

"Our message is clear: all care home residents should be supported to get the care and companionship they need from visitors as this is essential to their health and wellbeing."

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Staff exodus fear over vaccine deadline

CARE homes will have to choose between sacking unvaccinated staff and risking unsafe services, or breaking the law by keeping employees on, sector leaders said.

Providers and unions have warned of an exodus of staff due to the Government's requirement for them to be fully vaccinated by November 11, meaning yesterday was their last chance for a first dose unless they are

By Jemma Crew

medically exempt. Less than 24 hours before the deadline the Government announced a temporary self-certification process for medical exemptions, which has been described as "hastily thought-out".

It will let staff and volunteers self-certify that they meet the medical exemption criteria

before the new "NHS Covid pass" system is introduced - with these exemptions expiring 12 weeks after its launch.

Those covered include people with a severe allergy to the vaccines and people receiving end-of-life care. Providers said it could be misused by employees who are not prepared to get jabbed and wish to stay in work for longer, and that it pushes the

issue of staff dismissals 12 weeks down the line. The GMB union said the Government had "fudged it" at the eleventh hour.

Prof Martin Green, chief executive of Care England, told BBC Radio 4: "Care homes are in the position of either having to transgress the law or expose people to levels of staffing that are not going to deliver the safety you're required to."



Devoted... Joan and Robert Gillham