



SUBMISSION TO THE HIQA PUBLIC CONSULTATION: EXTENDING THE IMMUNISATION SCHEDULE TO INCLUDE HPV VACCINATION OF BOYS

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Part 1: Are you replying in a personal capacity or on behalf of an institution or organisation?

On behalf of an organisation: National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI)

Part 2: Please outline any general or specific feedback on the documents. In your response, where applicable, please specify the section to which you are referring.

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) is the leading national women's membership organisation representing 180 member groups and a growing number of individual members. We develop and promote policies and measures that are based on the diverse experiences of women. We work to ensure women's equal access, participation and recognition in Irish society. NWCI advocates for the Irish healthcare system to develop policies and deliver services which respond to the needs of women, uphold women's right to health and reduce health inequity between groups of women.

Reproductive health and cancer care have been a core area of NWCI's work for many years. We developed our *Every Woman* model for women's reproductive healthcare in 2017 which advocates for quality, universal, lifelong reproductive healthcare for women and girls in Ireland.

WHY NWCI SUPPORTS A GENDER NEUTRAL HPV VACCINATION PROGRAMME:

- Vaccinating both girls and boys would reduce HPV related disease in Ireland, particularly reducing the risk of women getting cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is predominantly a disease of younger women, the most common cancer for women aged 35 and under¹. Cervical cancer kills 90 women in Ireland each year and women who survive face devastating consequences such as infertility due to the side effects of harsh and invasive medical treatment for the disease².
- Gender neutral HPV vaccination programmes have been effective in other countries, such as Australia and the United States. For example, since its introduction in 2013, the Australian vaccination programme has shown early signs of success, including a 77% reduction in HPV types responsible for almost 75% of cervical cancer, and a 90% reduction in genital warts in men and women under 21 years of age. As cervical cancer usually develops over 10 or more years, the role of the gender neutral vaccine in reducing cervical cancer will be evident in time³.
- Introducing HPV vaccination for boys prevents them passing the infection to unvaccinated partners, and it ensures the programme is resilient to changes in the female uptake rate⁴.

NWCI's WORK ON HPV VACCINATION:

- Our membership recognises cervical cancer as a major health issue for women. At this year's Annual General Meeting, a motion, calling on NWCI to fully support all efforts around increasing the uptake of the HPV vaccine was passed by our membership.
- NWCI's *Every Woman* model of women's reproductive healthcare⁵ named reproductive cancer care, including; vaccination, screening and treatment as one of our six priority areas.
- NWCI is a member of the HPV Vaccination Alliance⁶, a group of organisations that have come together to sign a contract against cancer, specifically HPV-related cancers. This shows our strong support for the HPV vaccine, a key weapon in the fight against cancer, providing a long-term strategy that reduces infection and the subsequent risk of cervical cancer.

¹ National Cancer Registry Ireland (2017) Cancer Trends. Cervical Cancer
https://www.ncri.ie/sites/ncri/files/pubs/CervicalCaTrendsReport_MP.pdf

² HPV Alliance (2017) Contract Against Cancer <https://www.cancer.ie/about-us/news/hpv-vaccination-alliance#sthash.KyMqW3AO.dpbs>

³ Cancer Council Australia (2018) HPV Vaccine Program. <http://www.hpvvaccine.org.au/the-hpv-vaccine/vaccine-background.aspx>

⁴ Lee & Garland (2017) Human papillomavirus vaccination: the population impact in F1000 Research (1)(6) 866
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5473416/>

⁵ NWCI (2017) Every Woman https://www.nwci.ie/index.php/learn/publication/every_woman

⁶ HPV Vaccination Alliance <http://www.hpvalliance.ie/>