



Department
of Health

From Steve Brine MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care

Richmond House
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London
SW1A 2NS

POC-1091665

Vinny Smith
Meningitis Research Foundation
Chief Executive
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19 OCT 2017

Dear Vinny,

Thank you for your letter of 18th July 2017 requesting a meeting to discuss matters related to the Cost Effectiveness Methodology for Immunisation Policy and Procurement (CEMIPP) report.

As you recognised from reference to the campaign in 2011, I do understand the devastating impact meningitis can have on children and families and want to ensure children are protected from this disease. I am therefore proud that the UK has vaccination programmes in place that protect against causes of meningitis including meningococcal and pneumococcal disease, mumps and Haemophilus influenza type b (Hib). In 2015, we were also the first country (and I understand still only one of two) to introduce a national and publically funded vaccination programme using the vaccine Bexsero®.

Vaccination is a vital way to protect children (and others) against a range of serious diseases. The Government therefore strongly supports our national vaccination programmes and, during the last administration, responded to concerns about the methodology for determining the cost-effectiveness of new and existing immunisation programmes by setting up the CEMIPP group to see if and how methodology could be improved. I should stress that this review was not about vaccination against meningococcal disease but vaccination in general.

As you know the CEMIPP report was submitted to the Department last summer and my predecessor, Nicola Blackwood, recognised its complexity and the potential implications beyond immunisation and referred it to the Appraisal Alignment Working Group (AAWG) for advice. This advice is due later in the year. One of the reasons the



advice is taking some time was the need to await publication of some relevant research without which the AAWG's advice would have been incomplete.

I know that Nicola was concerned about the timescale for the research and asked if there was scope to speed it up. However all steps had already been taken to ensure the research process delivered quality assured results in a timely manner. Whilst I recognise the delay has been frustrating, it was not possible to expedite things without jeopardising the quality of the research findings.

In terms of consultation on the report itself, the CEMIPP group shared their draft report with key stakeholders (including MRF) and submitted a summary of stakeholder views to the Department alongside the report. The MRF and other key stakeholders have also had the opportunity to discuss the report with representatives from the AAWG. In terms of whether there will be any wider consultation, this has not been ruled out but it would not be prudent to commit to this until I have considered the CEMIPP report and the AAWG's advice.

You note that an analysis of how the CEMIPP recommendations would impact on vaccines already in use was going to take place but that you have not yet seen this. This is an analysis that is being carried out to inform the advice that will come to Ministers and is likely to be commercially sensitive. I don't believe there was a commitment to publish this but I note your interest in it and I will bear that in mind. I also note your concern about the scope of membership of AAWG. That is something that I will also reflect on when I consider the CEMIPP report and AAWG's advice.

In response to your general concerns about lack of transparency in the process, I will summarise the process here. The CEMIPP report has gone to the AAWG, they will advise later this year, I will consider the CEMIPP report and their advice and then make a decision on what, if any, action needs to be taken.

I appreciate the offer to meet to discuss these issues in more detail but I don't think it is appropriate to interfere with the AAWG process or potentially pre-empt its findings. I would like to assure you that I am not being dismissive of your concerns. I am grateful that you have raised them with me and I will bear them in mind when I consider the CEMIPP report and AAWG advice.

Finally you asked for an update on a meningitis awareness campaign. In 2016/17, as you know, Public Health England (PHE) provided funding to the Meningitis Research Foundation and Meningitis Now, to support your work increasing awareness and



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knowledge of meningitis and septicaemia amongst parents. PHE inform me that this has meant that thousands of parents have been reached through your posters and leaflets and Meningitis Now's social media campaign which I understand achieved around 470,000 video views and an 80% rise in app downloads. PHE also provides vital information on meningitis and septicaemia to parents through the Start4life Information Service for Parents email programme which reaches over 430,000 parents of 0-5 year olds across England and through its immunisation leaflets. As you know, additional awareness raising takes place around our immunisation programmes aimed at meningitis and septicaemia.

The research you refer to that was commissioned by PHE confirmed that awareness of meningitis and septicaemia is high amongst parents and gave recommendations on how existing charity promotional materials could be improved to help parents. The research also suggested that there could be a role for 'safety-netting' information for parents who have sought advice from the NHS. This is an element you might wish to follow up with NHS England to discuss options to progress with this. More generally if there are any specific recommendations that you wish to discuss further, you can contact PHE via duncan.selbie@phe.gov.uk

I hope that this response helps you to understand our position better.

Yours sincerely,



STEVE BRINE