



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Sharon Hodgson MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Public Health and Prevention*

*39 Victoria Street
London
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Your Ref: MP11196

PO-1688683

Dr Manuela Perteghella MP

By email to: manuela.perteghella.mp@parliament.uk

27 May 2026

Dear Manuela,

Thank you for your correspondence of 25 March on behalf of a number of your constituents about eligibility for meningococcal B (MenB) vaccination. I apologise for the delay in replying.

I appreciate your constituents' concerns and I would like to thank you for taking the time to share them.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) is the expert scientific advisory committee that advises the Government on eligibility for vaccination and immunisation programmes.

In response to the outbreak of meningitis in Kent, the former Secretary of State announced to the House of Commons on 17 March that he asked the JCVI to review its advice on eligibility for MenB vaccination. Decisions on routine vaccination programmes are taken on the basis of independent scientific advice from the JCVI. As ever, the Government will carefully consider that advice.

While this work is ongoing, a targeted vaccination programme has been extended to everyone who has been offered preventative antibiotic treatment as part of the outbreak response. The latest guidance is that anyone who has been offered preventative antibiotics (also known as prophylaxis) should be offered the MenB vaccine.

The risk of infection to the wider population remains low. This is because transmission of MenB requires close and prolonged contact to spread. Examples of this include living in the same household and intimate contact such as kissing or sharing drinks or vapes. The bacteria are not as contagious as other infections such as measles and COVID-19. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is also looking for contacts of people who have MenB through contact tracing and offering preventative antibiotics to those who have been in close contact with cases.

The former Secretary of State recently spoke on BBC News about concerns regarding vaccine supply. We understand that people are seeing the headlines and thinking they should buy a vaccination privately. However, this is not necessary. We understand why

some people are choosing to do so, and that is within their right. As a result, some pharmacies have run out where people are buying privately in numbers they would not normally. I would like to reiterate that people do not need to buy the vaccine privately. The UK has a good stockpile of vaccines for use in the NHS to vaccinate against MenB.

This is an unprecedented situation, and the UKHSA is working to support pharmacies and private providers to improve their supply and make their supply chains more resilient. Further information about the response to the outbreak in the east Kent area, including on eligibility criteria for antibiotics and vaccines, can be found at www.kmhealthandcare.uk/meningitis-information. The vaccination programme may be expanded further as the UKHSA continues to assess the ongoing risk.

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful at this time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Sharon Hodgson'. The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name 'Sharon' and last name 'Hodgson' clearly legible.

SHARON HODGSON