

England's Chief Medical Officer admits to deliberate mass infection of millions of children

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UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government sent 10 million children back to school this term in the certain knowledge they would be infected with COVID-19. This monumental crime was openly admitted by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for England Chris Whitty and his deputy Jonathan Van-Tam on Wednesday.

Their comments were made giving evidence to parliament's education select committee on the inclusion of children aged 12-15 in the government's COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Whitty estimated that "roughly half" of all schoolchildren this age in England have already been infected. He added, "virtually any child unvaccinated is likely to get an infection at some point between 12 and 15."

Answering a question on the (miniscule) risks of vaccination, he responded, "You're not comparing a child being vaccinated against nothing happening, you're comparing a child being vaccinated against a near-certainty that child will get COVID."

Van-Tam confirmed, "we are not looking at a theoretical risk of children 12-17 becoming infected. I think it is really quite inevitable that they will be so at some point."

Mass infection of children will have incalculable consequences. Close to 90 children in the UK have already been killed by COVID-19 and an estimated 38,000 aged 2-16 are currently living with Long COVID, according to the Office for National Statistics. Whitty admitted, "we don't know the long-term effects of catching COVID in children."

Whitty and Van-Tam made their comments in support of the Tory government's decision to vaccinate 12-15-year-olds, against anti-scientific opposition from the ultra-reactionary wing of the Conservative Party. But this necessary decision has been made only after children have already returned to the classrooms, and it will be longer still before vaccinations in this age group actually begin.

The government, with the support of the Labour Party and

the education trade unions, rushed children back to school to facilitate the reopening of the economy, in the interests of the corporations and the super-rich. So vital was this policy to the ruling class that Johnson did not even wait for the cover of a vaccination rollout to enforce it, sending overwhelmingly unvaccinated children into crowded settings five days a week.

The move to vaccination is driven by the same cold economic calculation, out of fear that the unchecked spread of COVID-19 will cause a breakdown in the school system, undermining the reopening of the economy and the return of parents to work. Whitty argued, "You would have fewer days lost as a result of being vaccinated compared to allowing people to be infected." He spoke of "damage that could be done" only "in terms of disruption."

Children of secondary school age already have the highest rate of COVID infections, followed by primary school children, and the numbers are increasing rapidly. Infection rates among five to 14-year-olds increased 80 percent week-on-week to September 19, to a record 811 per 100,000. Infection rates for the five to nine age group stood at 382 per 100,000.

A snapshot of the social crime now unfolding was provided by the Department for Education (DfE)'s school attendance figures the day before Whitty and Van-Tam's appearance.

On September 16, only two weeks after state schools in England formally reopened, and less than two weeks after most did so in practice, over 100,000 children were absent with a confirmed or suspected infection. This dwarfed the previous record set in mid-July of 82,000. Some 59,000 had a confirmed COVID-19 infection and another 45,000 were absent with suspected cases. One in every 100 secondary school pupils is ill with the disease. The DfE figures found that staff are being infected at a high rate with one in every 100 teachers in state schools off work with Covid last week.

There is also clear evidence that children are spreading the

virus to older generations. The *Financial Times* noted Wednesday, “The steep jump in Covid-19 infections among children has been followed by an uptick in cases affecting people aged 30 to 49—their parents’ generation—which now stand at 286 per 100,000, having grown 7 per cent in the past four days.” This is despite their estimated levels of social mixing remaining steady.

Responding to Whitty and Van-Tam’s comments, Lisa Diaz, a parent and member of the SafeEdforAll (Safe Education for All) group, told the *World Socialist Web Site*, “How can you say that ‘it is really quite inevitable’ children will get COVID-19, and it’s ‘a near-certainty’ a child will catch it, without it causing huge concern, without saying ‘now we have to do this and take these actions to prevent it?’

“Even in the US, Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and chief medical adviser to President Joe Biden, has said that no child should just be left to catch COVID. Now 88 children have died in the UK from this, and there is the risk of Long COVID which we know one in seven of those infected will get.

This book compiles the most critical programmatic statements, polemics, scientific analyses, interviews, and news articles published by the World Socialist Web Site on the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a social and political chronology of this world historic event based on a Marxist and Trotskyist perspective.

“So this is horrific. Especially when it is not inevitable that children will be infected. It is only inevitable when they are being forced into schools. People are being gas-lighted, told that children aren’t a risk and everything is under control. Those who fight for eradication, for Zero COVID, are treated as if we are the outliers, as if we are out of step with reality. The opposite is the case.

“We are now in a worse situation than we were one year ago. Infections are 26 times greater. Britain is basically like Bolsonaro’s Brazil—no eradication, no mitigation, they are just letting it rip.”

Mass infection of children has always been the government’s plan. In June, the *Byline Times* website revealed that the UK’s Cabinet Office asked the Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies (SAGE) to model “herd immunity” through a “resurgence” of infection in young people. A document authored by SAGE in February noted that “many younger age groups have not yet been vaccinated or infected” before concluding in bold, “herd immunity is not reached without a large resurgence of transmission.”

At this stage, the government was still speaking in terms of “herd immunity”, through the murderous policy of mass infection, bringing an eventual end to transmission. It now

pursues the same policy while admitting the extremely infectious Delta variant and waning immunity renders herd immunity impossible. Johnson’s winter autumn/winter strategy is based on the acceptance that COVID-19 is “endemic” and will remain so.

Whitty confirmed this approach on Wednesday, saying, “because immunity wanes, we’re not going to see a situation where this just sort of stops at a certain point.” Highlighting the fraud of the Johnson government’s focus on vaccination to the exclusion of all public health measures, Whitty added, “I don’t think we should assume that either having had an infection or having been vaccinated provides full long-term protection.” This leaves the door wide open to the development of even more infectious, dangerous and/or vaccine-resistant variants.

Every infection of a child is an act of violence carried out by the ruling class. Pfizer reported in March that a study of 2,260 children aged 12–15 found its vaccine was 100 percent effective in preventing COVID-19. Had schools been closed as part of a programme of workplace closures, rigorous testing and tracing, strict safety measures in essential industries and vaccination, tens of thousands of Long COVID cases, thousands of hospitalisations, and scores of deaths among children could have been prevented.

Precisely this policy is necessary to avert the next tidal wave of infections and suffering already underway. The biggest obstacle to its implementation is not scientific knowledge or technical skill but the treachery of the trade unions and the Labour Party, complicit at every stage of the reopening of schools and the economy. The National Education Union, the largest education union in Europe, responded to the DfE figures with a call for the education minister to report more details of COVID infections to help the union and the government “do everything we can collectively to ensure that as many young people as possible continue to learn on site”.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on school workers to form rank-and-file committees independent of the unions to defend their safety and that of the children in their care and fight for the necessary programme of eliminating COVID-19. Contact the Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee today for information and guidance in this vital struggle.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)