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**[for immediate publication]**

**Young adults urged to join the elimination generation by having HPV vaccine**

Young adults living in Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire have the power to eliminate cervical cancer once and for all by getting vaccinated against the human papillomavirus, otherwise known as HPV.

The vaccine, which is available to both males and females aged between 16 and 25, offers protection against HPV, which is the collective name for a wide range of contagious viruses that can be spread through sexual contact.

While most cases of HPV do not result in any visible symptoms, some people can develop painful genital warts and, on rare occasions, can lead to the development of cervical cancer among women.

It is hoped that a sharp uptake in the number of people having the vaccine, which is already offered in schools as part of routine childhood immunisations, could pave the way for the elimination of cervical cancer by 2040.

This latest call to action coincides with International HPV Awareness Day, which is marked every year on March 4 as a way of encouraging those at risk to get protected.

Gill May, Chief Nurse Officer, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, said: “By getting vaccinated against HPV, our young people have a fantastic opportunity to not only protect themselves, but to be part of a movement that has the power to potentially save the lives of countless future women.

“The elimination of cervical cancer could realistically happen within the next 15 years or so, but only if people who have missed out on having the HPV vaccine at school come forward for their catch-up jab.

“It’s vital for our young people to know just how important this area of their health and wellbeing is, especially as they start to become sexually active, and that the HPV vaccine – like condoms and the pill – is another way of keeping themselves and their partners safe.”

Those young people who missed out on getting the HPV vaccine in school can receive a catch-up dose from their GP practice.

Students currently in further or higher education settings can find out more about the vaccine by speaking to their college or university’s health and wellbeing team.

Over the coming weeks, the ICB will be spearheading a digital advertising campaign in which messages about the HPV vaccine will be shared with those who are eligible.

Adverts are set to appear across a range of online platforms including Spotify, Facebook and Instagram, as well as on many local digital news websites.

Extensive information about the HPV virus, including prevention methods, possible symptoms and treatment options, can be found online at www.nhs.uk/conditions/human-papilloma-virus-hpv.

Further details on the ICB’s campaign to promote the vaccine will be shared across social media and at www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk.

**Notes to Editors**

* For further information or to arrange an interview with a spokesperson from Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, please email [bswicb.media@nhs.net](mailto:bswicb.media@nhs.net).
* Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board is a statutory organisation that is responsible for developing a plan of how to meet the health needs of 940,000 people, managing the local NHS budget and arranging the provision of local health services.
* BSW ICB is part of the wider BSW Integrated Care System, which brings NHS providers, local authorities, community providers and voluntary sector partners together to collaboratively plan and organise how health and care services are delivered. The ICB has a Board made up of representatives from various organisations across the BSW health and care system.
* The local integrated care system is known as BSW Together, and is home to 87 GP practices, two mental health trusts, three local councils, a single ambulance provider, three acute hospitals, a number of other NHS providers and more than 2,800 voluntary organisations and community groups.
* Visit [www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk](http://www.bsw.icb.nhs.uk) for more information