

SOCIAL CARE COVID-19 VACCINE Q&A

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Accessing the COVID Vaccine

Who is going to be administering these vaccines?

Recruitment of workforce has focused on those who already have experience in handling vaccinations but may currently work outside of NHS settings, for example, independent nurses or allied health care professionals.

Is the plan for nursing homes to administer vaccinations themselves?

No, vaccinations will be carried out by the appointed NHS services.

How are social care workers and care residents being prioritised for the vaccine?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisations (JCVI) has confirmed in its advice on priority groups for vaccination, that adult social care is in its top priority groups. Group 1 is 'Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers' and Group 2 includes 'Frontline health and social care workers'.

The people you care for and your staff are the priority for the vaccine, and we want to work with you to get it to them as rapidly as possible to save lives.

When and how will care home workers start to receive the vaccine?

The people you care for and your staff are the priority for the vaccine, and we want to work with you to get it to them as rapidly as possible to save lives.

Vaccines will be available from Tuesday 8 December 2020, initially in 70 Hospital Hubs across the UK. We are working hard to bring a vaccine to those who need it, and over the coming weeks, more Hospital Hubs and other vaccination locations will be operational.

At the moment vaccinations for care home workers are being offered and arranged directly with employers at a local level.

The three models of delivery are:

- Hospital Hubs - NHS providers vaccinating staff onsite. From December, more than 70 hospitals began delivering the vaccine across the UK.
- Local Vaccination Services – Community and primary care-led service based on local and logistical considerations but is likely to include GP practices, local authority sourced buildings or other local facilities, and potentially roving teams if vaccines are transportable in this way.
- Vaccination Centres - Large scale centres such as sports and conference venues set up for high volumes of people.

At the time of writing, the hospital hub model of delivery is currently active and hundreds of local vaccination services run by family doctors and their teams will open across England this week. Practices in more than 100 areas of the country will start vaccinations this week. We are working hard to bring other models online as soon as possible.

We will be assisting our NHS colleagues by providing them with information on care homes. Recognising that there are many small care homes, we are asking Local Authorities to work with NHS colleagues and local care homes to ensure that we fill up the available vaccination slots, including by assisting providers, where needed, with their transport plans.

We are working with the NHS on how we may be able to vaccinate care home residents and staff with the Pfizer-bioNTech vaccine at their care home. The ambition is to be able to begin this phase of the programme before Christmas, although for many homes this is likely to run into the New Year.

How will I prove that I am a social care worker when I go to get my vaccine?

The [Minister for Social Care has written to care providers](#) asking them to be ready to provide each staff member with a letter confirming their employment in the care sector.

At the moment vaccinations for care home workers are being offered and arranged directly with employers at a local level.

When will you start vaccinating in care homes? Will residents have to travel to be vaccinated?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisations (JCVI) has confirmed in its advice on priority groups for vaccination, that adult social care is in its top priority groups. Group 1 is 'Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers' and Group 2 includes 'Frontline health and social care workers'.

Getting the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to care home residents is challenging because of the requirements for transporting it and the temperature at which it is stored. So our focus, initially, is on vaccinating care home workers and the over 80s initially in 70 Hospital Hubs across the UK. We are working hard to bring a vaccine to those who need it, and over the coming weeks, more Hospital Hubs and other vaccination locations will be operational.

We are working with the NHS on how we may be able to vaccinate care home residents and staff with the Pfizer-bioNTech vaccine at their care home. The ambition is to be able to begin this phase of the programme before Christmas, although for many homes this is likely to run into the New Year.

We are keeping the operational plans under constant review and if further vaccines are licensed by the Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) we will examine the use of these for care home residents.

Will you make the vaccine compulsory for all social care staff?

No, the Covid-19 vaccine will not be compulsory. The UK operates a system of informed consent for vaccinations.

What should we do if a care staff member refuses to have the vaccine?

Vaccines are the most effective way to prevent infectious diseases. They save millions of lives worldwide. By having the COVID vaccine we expect that health and care staff will be less likely to pass infection to their friends and family and to the vulnerable people that they care for.

However, the Covid-19 vaccine will not be compulsory. The UK operates a system of informed consent for vaccinations.

With or without a vaccine, we all have a vital role to play in protecting our own health and likewise the health of those around us.

So, you will still need to follow the guidance in your workplace, including wearing the correct personal protection equipment and taking part in any screening programmes.

To continue to protect yourself, your residents, your family, friends and colleagues you should follow the general advice at work, at home and when you are out and about:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands carefully and frequently
- follow the current guidance

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

What about unpaid carers/care settings not registered with CQC?

We are following the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to prioritise care workers and as such we are initially encouraging care workers in CQC registered settings but will quickly move on to other priority recipients.

What about agency workers?

The vaccination will be available to all care workers deployed into CQC registered care homes.

Does this mean you don't have to restrict staff movement?

The vaccination requires two doses three weeks apart and it will take some time to roll out. In the meantime, and until we are confident that the virus is under control, it is vital that care homes continue to adopt practices which limit infections including restricting staff movement, testing and the use of PPE.

The latest information for healthcare staff involved in delivering the vaccination programme can be found [here](#).

Will you pay care workers costs for getting to vaccination centres?

We will be assisting our NHS colleagues by providing them with information on care homes. Recognising that there are many small care homes, we are asking Local Authorities to work with NHS colleagues and local care homes to ensure that we fill up the available vaccination slots, including by assisting providers, where needed, with their transport plans.

What can be done now by care homes or providers of home care to prepare for the vaccine?

The people you care for and your staff are the priority for the vaccine, and we want to work with you to get it to them as rapidly as possible to save lives.

The steps here are for two purposes. Firstly, so that your staff can be part of the early wave to be vaccinated in Hospital Hubs, but secondly so that when we can get a vaccine to homes, you'll be ready for it.

In preparation care home managers should:

- (i) put together staff lists, including basic details (name, gender, date of birth, NHS number, GP details) for each staff member;
- (ii) be ready to provide each staff member with a letter confirming their employment in the care sector;
- (iii) keep staff records of vaccinations and report via the Capacity Tracker (as you do with flu vaccination);
- (iv) consider the covid-secure logistics of releasing staff to receive their vaccine, while maintaining staffing levels within their home. Practical and implementable plans should be in place from early next week; and
- (v) take steps now to ensure that staff understand need for obtaining consent, so that they in turn can help residents and families to complete the necessary forms when a vaccine is ready to be delivered within a care home. Once issued, these forms will provide additional information about the vaccine they are receiving.

We have worked on a standardised consent form for you to use, as you will need to gain consent to vaccinate as and when we get it to care homes. This form is available to download from the [Health Publications](#) website, please use it to gain consent. You may want to start talking to residents and their families now about the vaccination.

These arrangements are to cover the initial period in which vaccines are available and will be developed and modified when the National Booking System for vaccination becomes available. Initially, local booking systems will be in place with Hospital Hubs.

What information and resources will be available to care providers about the vaccine, to give to staff and residents?

The Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), National Health Service England (NHSE) and Public Health England (PHE) have developed a suite of resources about the COVID-19 vaccine including information for patients and social care workers receiving the vaccine.

This information is available to download via the [Health Publications](#) website.

While you should encourage all residents and staff to take up the vaccine, using these resources, it is not mandatory for anyone. We would expect all providers to be open and honest in response to queries on this subject.

What should I do if I, or any of my staff or residents experience any side effects from the vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Even if you do have symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. Although you may get some protection from the first dose, having the second dose will give you the best protection against the virus.

These symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS 111.

How will consent be gained for the vaccine to be administered to people with reduced capacity to make independent decisions about their healthcare?

Everyone who receives a vaccine will be required to have completed a consent form.

We have worked on a standardised consent form for you to use, as you will need to gain consent to vaccinate as and when we get it to care homes. This form is available to download from the [Health Publications](#) website, please use it to gain consent.

Some people who will be offered the vaccine may lack mental capacity to make decisions about vaccination. This will include some (but not all) people with dementia, learning disabled and autistic people, people with mental health difficulties and people with acquired brain injury. These people, if they are aged 16 or over, are protected by the empowering, decision-making framework set out under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA).

These legal requirements will be familiar to everyone involved in the care and treatment of these people, as they will be used to considering them for other, similar decisions, including a decision to test a person for COVID-19, or administer the flu vaccine to help protect them from illness over the winter. The principles of best interests decision making under the MCA are the same for the COVID-19 vaccination.

Health care professionals offering the vaccine to someone who may lack the mental capacity to consent should take all practicable steps to support the person to make the decision for themselves.

Where it has been established that the person lacks capacity to consent, a best interests decision should be taken in line with best interest checklist in section 4 of the MCA. This means that the decision-maker must consider all the relevant circumstances, including the person's wishes, beliefs and values, the views of their family where appropriate and what the person would have wanted if they had the capacity to make the decision themselves.

The decision maker should make a record of their best interests decision. Best interests decisions must always be made on an individual basis.

Care home staff or other types of carers should plan in advance to ensure that the health care professional administering the vaccine has the information they need to make an appropriate best interests decision about consent, at the right time.

Where appropriate, the person's advocate or those with power of attorney for Health and Welfare should be consulted. If there is a deputy or attorney with relevant authority, then the health care professional can only give the vaccination if the deputy or attorney has first given their consent.

If best interests meetings are required, would they need to be done individually or in a group process?

Best interests decisions must always be made on an individual basis. A best interests decision should be taken in line with best interest checklist in section 4 of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. This means that the decision-maker must consider all the relevant circumstances, including the person's wishes, beliefs and values, the views of their family where appropriate and what the person would have wanted if they had the capacity to make the decision themselves.

If 2 doses are needed will you need to obtain consent twice?

No. The consent form is for both doses.

Once Residents / Staff have had two doses of a vaccine, do they still need to be tested regularly?

Yes. Testing will continue as normal until further notice.

Will you be given proof of having the vaccine to show an employer for example?

We are asking care providers to keep staff records of vaccinations and report this back through the Capacity Tracker – as they do for flu vaccinations.

When patients are vaccinated, they are likely to receive a vaccine record card that notes the date of their vaccination, the suggested date for their second dose and details of the vaccine type and batch.

This is a vaccine record card, similar to those given to patients for other NHS vaccinations as a note of when they received their vaccine. You can share this with your employer if you would like to, to show you have had the vaccine.

It is not intended to be used for any other purpose, or as an immunity certificate.

All vaccinations are recorded on the patient's record with their GP.

Will care providers be advised to stagger their staff getting the vaccine should they experience side effects?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. These symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week.

In preparation care home managers should consider the covid-secure logistics of releasing staff to receive their vaccine, while maintaining staffing levels within their home.

How will private hospitals be treated – will their residents and staff be vaccinated alongside NHS Hospitals and Care Homes in the first wave of vaccinations?

We are following the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to prioritise care workers and as such we are initially encouraging care workers in CQC registered settings to receive a vaccine but will quickly move on to other priority recipients.

Getting the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine to care home residents is challenging because of the requirements for transporting it and the temperature at which it is stored. So our focus, initially, is on vaccinating care home workers and the over 80s initially in 70 Hospital Hubs across the UK. We are working hard to bring a vaccine to those who need it, and over the coming weeks, more Hospital Hubs and other vaccination locations will be operational.

We are working hard to bring a vaccine to those who need it. We are working with the NHS on how we may be able to vaccinate care home residents with the Pfizer-bioNTech vaccine at their care home but given the practical challenges we cannot set out the details for this yet.

Staff of private hospitals will also be invited for NHS vaccination in time.

About the COVID Vaccine

Will I have to pay to get the vaccine?

No. The vaccine will be available across the UK, free at the point of delivery, according to need, not ability to pay.

Are there any side effects to having the vaccine?

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause side effects. Most of these are mild and short-term, and not everyone gets them. Even if you do have symptoms after the first dose, you still need to have the second dose. Although you may get some protection from the first dose, having the second dose will give you the best protection against the virus.

Very common side effects include:

- having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1-2 days after the vaccine
- feeling tired
- headache
- general aches, or mild flu like symptoms

These symptoms following vaccination normally last less than a week. If your symptoms seem to get worse or if you are concerned, call NHS 111.

Can I catch COVID-19 from the vaccine?

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine. But it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination appointment.

Please continue to have the regular screening tests that your employer arranges.

If you have any of the symptoms of COVID-19, stay at home and arrange to have a test.

If you need more information on symptoms visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-COVID-19/symptoms/

Can I go back to work after having my vaccine?

Yes, you should be able to work as long as you feel well. If your arm is particularly sore, you may find heavy lifting difficult. If you feel unwell or very tired you should rest and avoid operating machinery or driving.

Will the vaccine protect those I care for?

The evidence on whether COVID-19 vaccination reduces the chance of you passing on the virus is less clear. Most vaccines reduce the overall risk of infection, but some vaccinated people may get mild or asymptomatic infection and therefore be able to pass the virus on.

It is highly likely that any infection in a vaccinated person will be less severe and that viral shedding will be shortened. We therefore expect that vaccinated health and care staff will be less likely to pass infection to their friends and family and to the vulnerable people that they care for.

Can I get my COVID-19 vaccine around the same time or on the same day as I have my flu vaccine?

Based on current information about the first COVID-19 vaccines being deployed, they should ideally be spaced out and separated by an interval of at least 7 days should you experience any side effects.

After I have had the vaccine will I still need to follow all the infection control advice?

The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 infection, and two doses will reduce your chance of becoming seriously ill. No vaccine is completely effective and it will take a few weeks for your body to build up protection.

So, you will still need to follow the guidance in your workplace, including wearing the correct personal protection equipment and taking part in any screening programmes.

To continue to protect yourself, your residents, your family, friends and colleagues you should follow the general advice at work, at home and when you are out and about:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands carefully and frequently
- follow the current guidance

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Can you still infect others once you have been vaccinated?

Yes, you can still carry the virus on your body and clothes if you come into contact with it. You will still need to follow the guidance in your workplace, including wearing the correct personal protection equipment and taking part in any screening programmes.

To continue to protect yourself, your residents, your family, friends and colleagues you should follow the general advice at work, at home and when you are out and about:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash your hands carefully and frequently
- follow the current guidance

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Can you take more than one type of vaccine?

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is being rolled out as fast as possible by the NHS across the UK. If authorised, the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine and other candidates will be deployed alongside the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to increase the pace and volume of the UK programme. There are no current plans to mix these vaccines.

The Government's Vaccine Taskforce keeps its approach under review, ensuring the UK is in the strongest position to protect people. The science is uncertain about how mixing vaccines could produce a better immune response, so trials and testing will continue to assess and test vaccine responses

How does the vaccine react to any existing health condition or medication?

The trials have involved people with chronic underlying conditions deliberately, and they have involved people from very broad age ranges and quite a lot of people in the elderly bracket. The JCVI have looked at this, there's no indication that there should be any difficulty in giving it to people with chronic underlying conditions.

However, as is common with new vaccines the MHRA has advised on a precautionary basis that people with a significant history of allergic reactions do not receive this vaccination.

These vaccines have not yet been tested in pregnant women and so we are taking a highly precautionary approach. Women should not be vaccinated if they may be pregnant or are planning a pregnancy within three months of the first dose.

Data is anticipated which will inform discussions on vaccination in pregnancy. JCVI will review these as soon as they become available.

For more information about the COVID vaccine visit <https://www.nhs.uk/covidvaccine>

Are there any resources for adults with a learning disability and getting the Covid vaccine?

Information and resources will be made available to order and download from the [Health Publications website](#) in Braille, BSL video, Large print, simple text, and Easy read versions.