



Industry endorsed Q&A regarding Covid-19 Vaccinations

This Q&A has been put together to support employers, colleagues and trade union representatives to understand the people issues associated with the roll out of the vaccine to combat Covid-19.

1. What is the priority that people are being vaccinated?

The government currently have 9 priority levels and they are based on the need to protect life, so the most vulnerable have or will be vaccinated first. They are:-

1. residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
2. all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
3. all those 75 years of age and over
4. all those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
5. all those 65 years of age and over
6. all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
7. all those 60 years of age and over
8. all those 55 years of age and over
9. all those 50 years of age and over

More information about the priority listing can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-30-december-2020/joint-committee-on-vaccination-and-immunisation-advice-on-priority-groups-for-covid-19-vaccination-30-december-2020>

2. What is the benefit of having a vaccine if it doesn't necessarily stop you getting Covid-19 but just makes you less ill if you do?

The main aim of a vaccine is to protect the person who receives it, and it is designed to make the effects of Covid-19 less severe. Given the scale and impact of this pandemic, the urgent focus is on vaccinating those who would be most at risk of severe complications from Covid-19. By doing this, it should be possible to reduce the number of deaths and hospital admissions.

As these are new vaccines, scientists are monitoring how well they reduce someone's level



of infection if they get Covid-19, as well as their ability to pass on Covid after they have been vaccinated.

If that is working as intended, it reduces the risk of unvaccinated people being exposed to infections. This would mean individuals who have not yet been or cannot be vaccinated will still benefit from the routine vaccination programme too.

So, in essence, the more people that take up the offer of the vaccination the greater the protection to all of the population. For more information on the vaccination visit:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination/what-to-expect-after-your-covid-19-vaccination>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

3. It's been noted that there is information about ingredients of the vaccine, things like whether it contains animal products or alcohol but where can I find out more information?

There are often questions about what products are in vaccines as it's an important factor for certain religious and cultural groups and can help to make an informed choice.

Any individual would need to take a considered view on whether the risk(s) of disease / illness would outweigh a decision not to take up the vaccine and / or how this is affected by their cultural, religious or ethical views.

We know there are instances all over the UK where faith leaders are coming together to encourage everyone regardless of ethnicity, religion or background to have the vaccination so if you have any concerns you are urged to seek advice from your cultural, religious or community leaders as well as advice from a health care professional.

If you want to find out more about the vaccination there are lots of sources of information, so you could try:-

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/london/our-work/covid-19-vaccine-communication-materials/>

4. Do I have to have the COVID vaccine? Will my employer make it mandatory?



No. Whilst both employers and trade unions are very supportive of colleagues having the vaccine, this is an individual's choice, and your employer cannot force you to have the vaccine. So whilst it is not mandatory you are being encouraged to take up the vaccine when it is offered to you.

The more people get vaccinated against COVID, the more likely it is that the impact of the pandemic can be reduced, and the sooner restrictions can be eased.

5. If I refuse to have the vaccine, will anything happen to me in terms of my employment?

In line with government guidance, having the vaccine is voluntary and an individual's choice. You will not need to advise your employer if you have had a COVID vaccine, in the same way you would not tell them, for instance, if you had had the flu vaccine.

6. How quick is the vaccination process?

The vaccination process is relatively quick, but as with any vaccination, you may be monitored for 15 minutes in case you have a severe allergic reaction (although this is extremely unlikely to happen). Your appointment should last for around 30 to 45 minutes, which will account for booking in, administration of the dose and any required monitoring time afterwards.

7. Do I need time away from work to get the vaccine?

The government is rolling out vaccination centres across the whole of the U.K. and the aim is that everyone should live within a reasonable distance of a vaccination centre, or a mobile centre for those living in some of the more rural areas.

Most employees will be invited to attend one of the centres for their vaccination and linked to these are an online booking system which enables an appointment to be arranged around an individual's working hours and shift pattern, as you would a flu jab.

This means that you should have the vaccination outside of work hours.

If you are contacted directly by your GP / local health authority to book the appointment, then you should arrange the appointment outside of work hours.

In the situation where you are provided with a set appointment and you are due to be in work and it is absolutely unavoidable, in that you are unable to change the date or time of the appointment, then the employee must advise their employer as soon as possible. The employer will work with the employee to see if attendance at the appointment can be undertaken with no operational impact on the business (swapping rest days or changing shifts for instance).

Where it is not possible to change the vaccination appointment or your shift cannot be amended to accommodate it, the employee will be granted reasonable time off from work



to attend their appointment and will be paid in accordance with their contractual terms.

8. How quickly can I return to work after having the vaccine?

Attendees having a vaccine must be given information by the vaccination team before and after having a vaccine, how to monitor for side effects and post vaccination treatment such as a use of paracetamol for any mild temperature, how and when to report more significant effects.

If you follow the guidance given, then under normal circumstances you should be able to attend work any time after leaving the vaccination centre. In the very unlikely event of any adverse reactions, please report this as you would do with any other health issue affecting your role.

9. Will the vaccine affect my ability to undertake safety critical tasks?

There should be no reason that you cannot undertake safety critical tasks after having the vaccination. If you are required to have the 15-minute monitoring time after the vaccination you should ensure you do this and read the information given by the vaccination team. If you have any concerns about your ability to undertake safety critical work, in the very unlikely event of any adverse reactions, please report this as you would do with any other health or medication issue affecting your safety critical role.

10. If I have a reaction to the vaccination what do I do?

As with any vaccination you may be monitored for about 15 minutes after the injection in case of an immediate severe reaction, which is very rare.

Information will be given to you which tells you about the common, normal responses to a vaccine that might happen and how to manage these. Each different vaccine has different information so what you are given to take away is dependent on which vaccine you receive.

More information about what happens after your vaccine can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination>

11. Do I still need to follow the guideline of hands, face and space after I have had the vaccination?

Yes, the government advice is that regardless of whether you have had the vaccination or not you must continue to follow the social distancing, hand hygiene and face covering guidance.



Covid-19 vaccines cannot give you Covid-19 so if you develop Covid-19 in the days after a vaccine, it's likely that you will have contracted or have been developing it just before getting the vaccine.

Remember you could still become infected and still pass it on to others and it takes a few weeks for immunity to develop after a vaccine so make sure you continue with recommended government health advice, currently HANDS, FACE SPACE to protect yourself and others.

12. I am a clinically extremely vulnerable employee (CEV), do I still need to shield after I have had the vaccination?

The shielding guidance remains as is, even after 2 vaccines CEV employees should continue to shield until more information is known about the impact of the vaccination and any subsequent review of guidance.

13. I know that a colleague I work with has not had the vaccine or is refusing to have the vaccine, can I refuse to work with them?

No, you cannot refuse to work with them. The NHS Covid 19 vaccination programme is there to ensure that those who are eligible to receive the vaccine are offered one.

Remember, there may be many different reasons why a colleague may choose not to have the vaccination, which is a personal choice for them, or they may have a medical reason which means they are unable to be vaccinated.

All parties who have endorsed this guidance have worked closely to ensure that a number of measures are in place to enable you to work safely and this will continue to be dynamically risk assessed by employers and trade union representatives to maintain your personal safety at work.

14. If I have to take time off work due to a reaction to the vaccination will it be counted under my Company's Managing Attendance policy?

In the very unlikely event that you have any on-going side effects which prevent you from attending work you should report this illness to your employer in the normal way, and you must provide your employer with evidence that you have had the vaccination and you must seek advice from your GP / NHS care provider that you are suffering with symptoms that are a side effects of the vaccination.

Your absence will be categorised as sickness absence and the appropriate contractual sick pay will apply, however, as your absence is directly related to Covid-19 it will not count towards your Company's Managing Attendance policy.



15. I am thinking about volunteering to become a vaccinator / volunteer – would I get paid time off for doing this?

The first thing to do in this situation is speak to your line manager to understand if this commitment can be worked around your voluntary role as this should not affect your ability to attend work.