

Q&A – National Booking Service / Oxford AstraZeneca Vaccine

Not for publication – for use in briefings

Why is the National Booking System closing to social care workers and unpaid carers?

The UK Government has secured and purchased vaccines on behalf of the whole United Kingdom, and we are distributing them quickly, fairly and proportionately to all four nations.

Vaccine supplies have already been set aside to ensure that everyone who has already received their first dose will receive their second dose and this will be within 12 weeks of their first.

However, due to the level of vaccination supplies that will be available in April for people who have not already come forward to receive their first dose, the NHS is making temporary changes to the National Booking Service.

The National Booking Service will be temporarily closed to care home workers, social care workers, health workers and to unpaid carers (who are not already known to health and care services), who have not already received their first vaccine.

While people in these groups remain a priority for vaccination, they will instead be able to receive their first vaccination through more local routes – either at the care home in which they work, if they work in a care home, by contacting their local GP practice, or through their local authority .

This will be kept under review as supply levels change.

How can older adult care home workers in priority group 1 receive the vaccines?

Staff working in care homes for older adults are the highest priority for vaccination.

Local primary care networks (PCNs) are responsible for providing vaccination to residents in older persons care homes, and will ensure sufficient vaccination to offer all staff vaccination at the same time, including any member of staff who has not already received their first vaccine and would like to take up the offer.

If care home staff are not in work on the day that vaccinators visit their care home, they can contact their GP to access a vaccination.

Care home residents and staff might be vaccinated with either the BioNTech/Pfizer or Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, but their second dose will always be with the same vaccine as their first dose.

How can frontline social care workers in priority group 2 receive the vaccines?



All eligible frontline social care workers in priority group 2, who have not already taken up their vaccination are able to contact their own GP - or any GP practice in the area in which they work - to arrange a vaccination.

If they experience any problem in accessing a vaccination from their GP practice, they should immediately inform their employer and/or their local authority vaccination lead.

How will home care workers and people in JCVI groups 1-9 who are housebound receive the vaccine?

The NHS will be arranging for teams of experienced vaccinators to visit those who are housebound and unable to travel to a vaccination site, to vaccinate them in their own home. They will take additional supplies of the vaccine to be able to vaccinate home care staff at the same time should they wish to receive it.

Home care workers are also be able to contact their own GP – or any GP practice in the area in which they work – to arrange a vaccination.

What do care providers need to do to support their staff to receive the vaccine?

It is important that all care providers work proactively with their staff to reassure them about why it is safe and important for them to take up the vaccine and support them to access a vaccination either in the care home where they work or through their GP or any GP practice in the area in which they work.

Employers should provide each staff member with a letter confirming their eligibility and employment in the social care sector, and information on vaccination.

Care providers can access the Department of Health and Social Care's adult social care [communications toolkit](#) and [Google Drive](#) which contain resources to share through their channels and information to support conversations with staff. There are also lots of resources available on the [Public Health England's Campaign Resource Centre](#).

How can unpaid carers in priority group 6 receive the vaccines and who is eligible?

- Unpaid carers who are eligible under JCVI priority group 6 are now able to receive their first COVID-19 vaccination, providing they are either:
 - Eligible for a carer's allowance
 - Identified as a primary carer by their GP
 - Receiving support following a carer's assessment by their local council or from a local carer's organisation
 - The sole or primary carer who provides close personal care or face to face support for an elderly or disabled person who is clinically vulnerable to COVID-19
- If you are an unpaid carer in these groups, and you haven't yet had the vaccine, now is the time to come forward. You can do this via your GP practice.
- Due to the level of vaccination supplies that will be available in April for people who have not already come forward to receive their first dose, the National Booking Service



will be temporarily closed to unpaid carers who are not already known to health and care services.

- Instead carers who are not already identified as a carer will need to contact their GP practice to be assessed and registered as a carer and subsequently will be offered a vaccination.
- The NHS needs to ensure that supply is targeted in the right way at the right communities who need the vaccine now, including making sure we vaccinate carers who haven't yet come forward.
- If you are an unpaid carer but are not known to health and care services, now is the time to make yourself known to your local practice team. You will be able to get a vaccine and you will be eligible for wider support too.
- There are significant long-term benefits to this approach. By registering as a carer with their GP, it will make it easier for unpaid carers to access other seasonal vaccinations and ensure they have access to the help and support that GPs and their teams can offer.

If social care staff are vaccinated, will this mean there is no requirement to restrict staff movement between different care settings? Do social care staff who are vaccinated still need to wear PPE?

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](#).

Should older adult care homes 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. Care home managers should consider the Covid-secure logistics of releasing staff to receive their vaccine, while maintaining staffing levels within the home.

What should older adult care homes do if they have an outbreak of Covid-19 at the same time as the vaccinators are due to attend?

The Covid-19 vaccine should be offered to older adults in care homes and their carers, with the aim of achieving high uptake as rapidly as possible. This includes when other residents have been diagnosed as having Covid-19 infection. Several factors will need to be considered before a vaccination team attends a care home.

Guidance (published 31 December 2020) on vaccination in care homes that have cases and outbreaks, can be found [here](#).

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

All frontline social care staff should receive a letter of eligibility from their employer or the local authority in which they work. Staff will need to take a physical copy of this with their consent form, and a form of photo ID with them to their appointment.

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



At the moment vaccinations for social care workers are being offered and arranged directly with employers at a local level, to make it as easy as possible for staff to receive the vaccine and minimise the need for extensive travel.

The Adult Social Care Infection Control Fund states, however that all providers should ensure that staff who need to attend work or another location for the purposes of being vaccinated or tested for Covid are paid their usual wages to do so, and any costs associated with reaching a vaccination or testing facility.

As an employer, what should we do if a care worker refuses to have the vaccine?

Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic. They save millions of lives worldwide and are safer now than ever before. It is strongly recommended that all frontline social care workers who can receive a vaccine choose to take it. Getting vaccinated will help protect themselves from becoming seriously ill from Covid, so they can continue to be there for their family, friends and the people they care for.

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. All staff will still need to follow the guidance, including wearing the correct PPE and taking part in any testing programmes.

To continue to protect themselves, the people they care for, their family, friends and colleagues, staff should follow the general advice at work, at home and when they are out and about:

- practise social distancing
- wear a face mask
- wash their hands carefully and frequently

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

What information and resources will care providers have to distribute to staff and residents about the vaccination process?

The Department for Health and Social Care, NHS England and Public Health England have developed a suite of resources about the Covid vaccines, including information for patients and social care workers receiving the vaccine. This information is available to download [here](#).

You can also access our [Communications Toolkit](#) which provides information and resources to share on your channels and through your networks to encourage your staff to take up the vaccine.

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

Everyone who receives a vaccine will be required to have completed a consent form. A standardised consent form is available to download from the [Health Publications](#) website.

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 living 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.

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, or administer the flu vaccine to help protect them from illness over the winter. The principles of best interest decision-making under the MCA are the same for the Covid 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 the 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 the decision and how they arrived at it. Best interests' decisions must always be made on an individual basis.

All social care workers should plan 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.

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

No. The consent form is for both doses.

Will social care workers 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 people are vaccinated,



they will receive a vaccine record card that notes the date of their vaccination, their appointment for their second dose where that can be arranged at the same time as the first dose, and details of the vaccine type and batch. This vaccine record card is like those given for other NHS vaccinations as a note of when they received their vaccine. Staff can share this with their employer if they would like to, to show they have had the vaccine.

Will the AstraZeneca vaccine be offered to younger women?

We follow the advice of the independent MHRA and JCVI which advises that the benefits of the AstraZeneca jab far outweigh the risks for most adults.

The JCVI advises that, as a precaution, it is preferable to offer people under the age of 30, with no underlying health conditions, an alternative vaccine, if available. The advice is the same for men.

JCVI is currently finalising its advice on Phase 2 of the programme and this will be published in due course.

Should people still get their second doses of AZ?

The JCVI and MHRA advises everybody who has had the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine to get the second dose, irrespective of age, except for people who experienced blood clots, with low platelet counts, from their first vaccination.

What do under 30s getting vaccinated do today? Will they be offered another vaccine?

NHS England will be contacting those under 30, who already have a booking in the next couple of weeks. The NHS will give the vaccine that is most appropriate for you.

What is the recommendation if an individual turns 30, between receiving their first and second dose?

If someone was 29 when they received their first dose of Astra Zeneca, but becomes 30 before the second, they should come forward for their second dose when invited. As everyone who has had a first dose of AZ should come forward for a second dose.

Everybody who has already had a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine should receive a second dose of the same brand, irrespective of age, except for the very small number of people who experienced blood clots, with low platelet counts, from their first vaccination.