

London care homes COVID-19 vaccine FAQs

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Contents

Introduction	4
Information about the vaccine programme	4
Care home preparation	5
Key resources.....	6
Key questions.....	6
How does the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine work?	6
Why should you have the vaccine?	6
What are the side effects?	7
Is the vaccine safe?	7
Other questions raised at the listening events	7
Questions about the process	7
Why are care homes and care home staff going first?.....	7
When is the vaccination programme proposed to start in older people's care homes? ...	7
Are mental health and learning disability homes included?	7
Will staff be vaccinated at the same time as care home residents?	8
Do we need to continue with testing once residents and staff have received the vaccine?	8
Will we still need to follow infection prevention control and wear PPE once a resident has received the vaccine?	8
If staff have had the vaccine can they work freely in different homes	8
Questions about the staff delivering the vaccine.....	8
Will district nurses be able to deliver the vaccine?	8
Can residents be vaccinated by a GP not a GP at the practice they registered to?	8
Will pharmacists be delivering the vaccine?	8
Will care home nurses be asked to administer the vaccine? Will this be done under patient group directives?	8
Do care homes need to access training prior to the vaccination programme starting? ...	9
Will staff delivering the vaccine have epi pens?	9
Will GPs make sure everyone is suitable for the vaccine, for example, the people giving the vaccine might not have their medical records?	9
Do we need to have anaphylaxis training?	9
Will the administration be staggered in care homes, so we don't have lots of residents or staff with side effects?	9
Questions about the vaccine	9
Will the vaccine be mandatory?	9
Does the vaccine contain animal products?	9
The flu vaccine is also available as a nasal spray will it be possible to have the COVID-19 vaccine as a nasal spray as well?	9

Do we need to have the vaccine if we have already had COVID-19 and if we have antibodies?	9
Will there be more antibody tests considered for people who already have antibodies, to find out when they will need the vaccine?	9
Will we be using the Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine?	9
What is an acceptable level of compliance for the vaccine to be successful?	10
How long will the vaccine last for, will we need another one in a year?	10
Can residents have the vaccine if they currently have COVID-19?	10
How long do you have to wait between the flu jab and COVID vaccine?	10
Is the vaccine a one off dose?	10
How do we know if the vaccine has worked, is there a test afterwards?	10
What happens if someone refuses the second jab?	10
Does the vaccine contain a microchip?	10
Does the vaccine alter your DNA?	10
Was the vaccine tested in Africa?	10
Questions about staff up take	11
What do I do if my staff won't don't want to take the vaccine?	11
How can we reduce fears when they are scared that the vaccine is new and has been developed quickly?	11
Are people going to get vaccine passports? So they can go to sporting events and travel abroad?	11
Will agency staff get the vaccine?	11
Can staff who are pregnant receive the vaccine?	11
Question about residents	11
Do residents need to consent before administering the vaccine?	11
What happens if a resident doesn't not have capacity?	11
If someone lacks capacity and their Power of Attorney refuses for them to have the vaccine, but the resident tends to accept these interventions and we think it is in their best interest what do we do?	12
What if a relative has Power of Attorney for finance only?	12
Will there be a consent form for residents?	12

Introduction

Two listening events were held with care home managers (26 November and 1 December 2020), around 300 people attended. The aim of the listening events was to understand what questions people had and what information would be useful going forward in relation to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Below is some information about the vaccine programme, and a list of questions raised at the event. We have answered the questions to the best of our ability. Things are developing quickly, and we will do our best to update you. This is the information we have on 9 December 2020.

Information about the vaccine programme

The NHS is preparing to roll out a safe, effective vaccine as soon as one becomes available. As you have probably heard, since the listening events, the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine has been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The MHRA has also been asked to review the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, we don't currently know when or if it will be approved.

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published advice on priority groups for the vaccine, this includes residents in care homes for older adults and frontline health and social care workers. The JCVI has said that implementation should involve local flexibility for example, due to vaccine storage and transport constraints. The latest information can be found [here](#).

The NHS has been planning hard to develop plans that can allow flexibility but also ensure that the vaccination programme can be delivered in a way that is safe for patients, and minimises the impact on other vital services. Strict approval processes mean that any approved vaccines will be safe and our best defence against the virus.

The NHS will offer a COVID-19 vaccination only when it has been approved by MHRA, the official UK regulator, like all other medicines and devices.

The NHS will be delivering the vaccine in three ways:

- In hospital hubs – vaccinating staff onsite, where we know the Pfizer vaccine can be stored safely
- Vaccination centres – large scale centers such as conference venues set up for high volumes of people
- Local vaccination services – community/primary care led. The structure of this will be based on local and logistical considerations. It is likely to include primary care (GP practices) and will include going out to people e.g. in care homes or people that are housebound. You might hear this model called roving teams

The NHS will begin vaccinating at hospital hubs on 8 December. Patients aged 80 and above who are already attending hospital as an outpatient, and those who are being discharged home after a hospital stay, will be among the first to receive the jab. Hospitals will also begin inviting over 80s in for a jab and work with care home providers to book their staff in to vaccination clinics.

GPs and other primary care staff are also being put on standby to start delivering the vaccine. A small number of GP-led primary care networks will begin doing so during the following week (week beginning 14 December) with more practices in more parts of the country joining in on a phased basis during December and in the coming months.

Vaccination centres treating large numbers of patients in sporting venues and conference centres will subsequently stand up when further supplies of vaccine come on stream.

The process of inviting staff and residents is being managed locally.

London hospital hubs:

- Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Croydon Health Services NHS Trust
- St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (Denmark Hill)
- King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (PRUH)

You can find more information here: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/12/hospitals-to-start-biggest-ever-nhs-vaccination-programme-this-week/>

Care home preparation

A letter outlining plans for getting the first vaccine to care home staff can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccinations-and-care-homes-programme-launch>

Care homes have been asked to prepare by:

- Put together staff lists, including basic details (name, gender, date of birth, NHS number-if known, GP details) for each staff member.
- Be ready to provide each staff member with a letter confirming their employment in the care sector
- Keep staff records of vaccinations and report via the Capacity Tracker (as you do with flu vaccination)

- 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
- 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

Key resources

- Public Health England COVID-19 vaccination [patient leaflet](#)
- Public Health England COVID-19 vaccine [health and social care worker leaflet](#)
- Leaflet what to expect [after your COVID-19 vaccinations](#)
- Leaflet on [why people might have to wait for the vaccine](#)
- Consent forms for [care home residents](#)
- Pfizer/BioNTech [patient information leaflet](#)

Key questions

How does the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine work?

- The vaccine is a messenger RNA (mRNA) which stands for messenger ribonucleic acid
- Scientist take part of the virus' genetic code or RNA, that tells the cells what to build, and coats them in a lipid so that they can enter the cells of the body
- This is what is in the injection that the person receives
- Once injected the vaccine is translated into a viral protein which our immune system detects
- This prompts the immune system to produce anti-bodies and T-cells
- If the person encounters coronavirus the anti-bodies and T-cells are triggered to fight it

Why should you have the vaccine?

The NHS is offering all care home staff, other social care staff and healthcare staff the vaccine. Having the vaccine offers immunity, to protect you from COVID-19. The more people that have the vaccine, the more it will help to protect those most vulnerable in our communities such as care home residents.

The JCVI advice states that the infection rates are higher in residential care home staff, than in those providing domiciliary care or in health care workers. Therefore, care home workers are considered a very high priority for the vaccine. You can find the JCVI report [here](#)

What are the side effects?

Most side effects are mild or moderate and go away within a few days of appearing. If side effects such as pain and/or fever are troublesome, they can be treated by medicines for pain and fever such as paracetamol. The common side effects are: pain at injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain and fever. Side effects are listed in the information leaflets:

- Public Health England COVID-19 vaccination [patient leaflet](#)
- Public Health England COVID-19 vaccine [health and social care worker leaflet](#)
- Leaflet on what to expect [after your COVID-19 vaccinations](#)

Is the vaccine safe?

The vaccine has been approved as safe by the MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency). The vaccine has been through 3 phases of clinical trials. In the third phase it was given to more than 21,000 volunteers with no serious safety concerns. As with any medicine, vaccines are highly regulated products. There are checks at every stage in the development and manufacturing process.

At your vaccine appointment you will speak to a clinician who will check that you are suitable to receive the vaccine and can answer any questions that you might have.

Other questions raised at the listening events

Questions about the process

Why are care homes and care home staff going first?

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advises that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccine should be prevention of people dying and the protection of health and social care staff. Older people living in care homes have been affected by COVID-19 more than other groups, therefore the JCVI has recommended that they are the highest priority.

When is the vaccination programme proposed to start in older people's care homes?

The NHS is preparing to roll out a safe, effective vaccine as soon as one becomes available. We do not have a specific date for vaccination to start in older people's care homes,

Are mental health and learning disability homes included?

The independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published advice on priority groups for the vaccine, this includes residents in care homes for **older adults** and frontline health and social care workers. The document specifies older adults care homes.

Will staff be vaccinated at the same time as care home residents?

Care home staff are likely to be offered to have the vaccine at hospital hubs this is because the currently available vaccine has very particular storage arrangements and cannot be transported anywhere else yet. This is why in the first instance care home workers are being invited to come to the vaccine. There will be local arrangements as to where else care home staff receive the vaccine, which might be at the care home.

As time goes on, we hope more vaccines will become available. The ability to transport vaccines will improve. This will increase the options available for care home staff. In the first instance though, we ask that care home staff come to a hospital hub so we can protect them as quickly as possible.

Do we need to continue with testing once residents and staff have received the vaccine?

Please continue with your current testing regime. We don't know when this might change

Will we still need to follow infection prevention control and wear PPE once a resident has received the vaccine?

Please do continue all your hard work in relation to infection prevention control and continue to wear PPE. We don't know when this might change. The vaccine is one tool in our toolbox against COVID-19,

If staff have had the vaccine can they work freely in different homes

Please continue to follow current guidance at present

Questions about the staff delivering the vaccine**Will district nurses be able to deliver the vaccine?**

There will be local decisions made on workforce (who is giving the vaccine). This could include district nurses. People giving the vaccine will have the training needed.

Can residents be vaccinated by a GP who is not a GP at the practice they registered to?

Yes, temporary registration with the GP practice delivering the vaccine at the care home enables this to happen.

Will pharmacists be delivering the vaccine?

National talks are well advanced with community pharmacists to take part in the vaccination programme

Will care home nurses be asked to administer the vaccine? Will this be done under patient group directives?

There will be local decisions made on workforce (who is giving the vaccine). People giving the vaccine will receive the training that they need. If nursing staff in the care home are giving the vaccine it is expected that this would be done under a patient group directive

Do care homes need to access training prior to the vaccination programme starting?

People delivering the vaccine will receive the training that they need to safely administer the vaccine.

Will staff delivering the vaccine have epi pens?

The staff delivering the vaccine will have the emergency drugs necessary.

Will GPs make sure everyone is suitable for the vaccine, for example, the people giving the vaccine might not have their medical records?

There are very few medical reasons which would make someone unsuitable for the vaccine. If you are concerned about an individual resident's suitability you could speak with their named GP

Do we need to have anaphylaxis training?

The staff administering the vaccine will have had anaphylaxis training. Please ensure staff have their mandatory training.

Will the administration be staggered in care homes, so we don't have lots of residents or staff with side effects?

Yes, where appropriate the vaccine can be given to a certain number of residents and staff at a time, so not everyone has it at once.

Questions about the vaccine

Will the vaccine be mandatory?

There are no plans at present for a COVID-19 vaccine to be compulsory.

Does the vaccine contain animal products?

The vaccine **does not** contain any animal products

The flu vaccine is also available as a nasal spray will it be possible to have the COVID-19 vaccine as a nasal spray as well?

The Pfizer/BioNtech COVID-19 vaccine is currently delivered by an injection.

Do we need to have the vaccine if we have already had COVID-19 and if we have antibodies?

Yes, we would recommend still getting the vaccine. The vaccine may offer longer protection than natural protection.

Will there be more antibody tests considered for people who already have antibodies, to find out when they will need the vaccine?

We are not aware of any further plans for antibody tests. We would recommend getting the vaccine whether or not someone has antibodies, as the vaccine may offer longer protection.

Will we be using the Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine?

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been approved by the MHRA and the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is being reviewed. Delivering the Pfizer/BioNTech

vaccine is complex as it needs to be stored at very cold temperatures and moved carefully, so at first it will be delivered from 'Hospital Hubs'.

What is an acceptable level of compliance for the vaccine to be successful?

We do not yet know exactly.

How long will the vaccine last for, will we need another one in a year?

Booster doses of COVID-19 vaccine are not yet recommended because the need for, and timing of, boosters has not yet been determined.

Can residents have the vaccine if they currently have COVID-19?

Provisional guidance from Public Health England says that vaccination should be delayed in those with confirmed infection to avoid confusing any symptoms. They recommend that vaccination should ideally be delayed until the person has recovered, and at least four weeks after symptoms or a positive test.

How long do you have to wait between the flu jab and COVID vaccine?

Provisional guidance from Public Health England recommends that there should be at least seven days between another vaccine and the COVID vaccine.

Is the vaccine a one-off dose?

Both the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine require 2 doses.

How do we know if the vaccine has worked, is there a test afterwards?

We are not aware of any tests for people to have afterwards to show the effectiveness. From trials, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is reported to be 95% effective

What happens if someone refuses the second jab?

The vaccine is not mandatory, so people could refuse the second jab. The vaccine is delivered in two doses, so it would not be as effective if someone only has one dose.

Does the vaccine contain a microchip?

The vaccine **does not** contain a microchip

Does the vaccine alter your DNA?

The vaccine **does not** alter your DNA

Was the vaccine tested in Africa?

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine trials were in the United States, Europe, Turkey, South Africa, and South America. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine trials were in the UK, Brazil and South Africa.

Questions about staff uptake

What do I do if my staff won't don't want to take the vaccine?

We would suggest talking to staff about their fears and share the information when it comes available. You might want to do this as a group and give people an opportunity to discuss individually. Do share the information in this FAQ with staff

There are some resources from Public Health England that you may find helpful:

- General vaccine fact sheets, which can be downloaded [here](#)
- Download a zip file which has short videos (designed for social media) about the JvCI, what vaccines are, and the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine [here](#)
- Video about the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine can be viewed [here](#)
- Covid-19 vaccination [patient leaflet](#)
- COVID-19 vaccine [health and social care worker leaflet](#)
- Leaflet on what to expect [after your COVID-19 vaccinations](#)

How can we reduce fears when they are scared that the vaccine is new and has been developed quickly?

You may find this video useful to explain how the vaccine trial moved so quickly:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddDiyIKUP0M>

Are people going to get vaccine passports, so they can go to sporting events and travel abroad?

The Government have said that there are no plans to introduce a vaccine passport to give people access to places such as pubs and restaurants.

Will agency staff get the vaccine?

Yes, agency staff are included as social care workers. Please do include agency staff in your local vaccine discussions.

Can staff who are pregnant receive the vaccine?

No, the vaccine should not be given in pregnancy, nor if someone is hoping to conceive in the next 2 months. It is also not to be given if someone is breastfeeding.

Question about residents

Do residents need to consent before administering the vaccine?

Yes, normal consent process will take place, the same for the flu jab and other interventions. Template forms are available at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-consent-forms-and-letters-for-care-home-residents>

What happens if a resident doesn't not have capacity?

Normal processes will take place including best interest decisions (the same for other interventions such as the flu jab)

If someone lacks capacity and their Power of Attorney refuses for them to have the vaccine, but the resident tends to accept these interventions and we think it is in their best interest what do we do?

The normal process should be followed which may include a discussion with the Power of Attorney and GP, asking for a second opinion and possibly involving an advocate.

What if a relative has Power of Attorney for finance only?

Power of Attorney for health and welfare is required to make decisions about healthcare interventions

Will there be a consent form for residents?

Yes, there will be a national consent form

Thank you and contacts

Thank you for taking the time to read this information, and we hope it was useful.

If you have any feedback of ideas for future communication please contact us at: england.londonehchprogramme@nhs.net