



Department
of Health &
Social Care

CARE

To
Care Homes [for older adults]
Local Authority Chief Executives
& Directors of Adult Social Services

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Dear Care Colleague

COVID-19 vaccinations and Care Homes: Programme Launch

You will have seen the excellent news that a vaccine has been authorised and care home residents and care home staff are the top priority to get it. This will save lives.

This letter outlines our plans for getting the first vaccine (Pfizer-BioNTech) to care home staff from the first day that vaccinations are available. It sets out the actions that local authorities and care providers should take in the coming days.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisations (JCVI) confirmed on Wednesday, in its advice on priority groups for vaccination¹, 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.

Vaccines will be available from Tuesday 8 December, initially in up to 50 Hospital Hubs across England. 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.

Local Authorities

Local Authorities will play a vital role, working together with the NHS and local care providers to make sure we make the best possible use of initial supplies of the vaccine.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi-2-december-2020>



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. I know that through local resilience forums and integrated care systems/STPs, many of you have been planning for this roll-out and that some local authorities will already be linked to the planned Hospital Hubs and Vaccine Centres within their local areas.

The NHS has identified Senior Responsible Officers (SROs) to link local authorities and the social care system. Please notify the Department² of a lead contact within your local authority (or the relevant LRF, as most appropriate) who will be able to liaise directly with NHS colleagues in the Hospital Hubs and other vaccination sites.

Care Homes

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.

² Contact covidvaccineASC@dhsc.gov.uk



We are working on a standardised consent form, as you will need to gain consent to vaccinate as and when we get it to care homes. When we release this form and guidance, 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.

Looking beyond week one

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.

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.

For queries, Stuart Miller, our Director of Delivery for Adult Social Care, can be contacted via covidvaccineASC@dhsc.gov.uk.

We recognise the scale and the complexity to deliver this vaccination programme is one of the greatest challenges we have ever faced. I want to thank you in advance for the crucial part you will play in the vaccination programme, while at the same time continuing all the work you do caring for people and supporting those who care for them.

HELEN WHATELY

Minister for Social Care