

Winter Planning 2021

Useful information for Care Providers and Workers

15 January 2021

A weekly series of newsletters giving information on key aspects of our plans for adult social care this winter and actions for care providers and workers.

Message from Jane and Amanda

Welcome to this week's winter newsletter which is focussed on vaccination as the NHS progresses with the roll-out. We want to make sure we keep you up to date with latest developments and available support.

We are aware that some people are still hesitant about being vaccinated and this is one of the issues we address this week, along with the importance of continuing with infection prevention control measures after being vaccinated.

As we near the end of the second week of the latest national lockdown we have seen a rise in infection rates in some services over the last few days, which was anticipated given the growth in the wider population. We continue to offer support where required.

On a positive note, we're pleased to report that the vaccination of care home residents is progressing well in the early stages of the roll-out. The exact timing of NHS vaccinations may be affected by deliveries of vaccine stock and the numbers of people in the community to cover as a priority, in line with national guidance, so please remain patient if you have not yet had confirmation of your date and wait to be contacted.

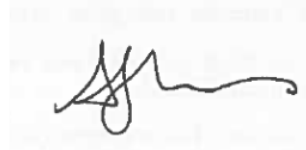
We continue to support our colleagues in the NHS by compiling information on care home and, more recently, domiciliary and supported living staff to be vaccinated. We're also ensuring that agency staff are aware of opportunities for vaccination too – further details of which can be found in this week's update. We expect to move on to assisting other social care services to access vaccinations in the near future, in line with national priorities.

This week's updates

- Vaccination and vaccine hesitancy
- Importance of IPC following vaccination
- Vaccination of agency staff
- Latest guidance on visiting



Jane Robinson
Corporate Director Adult and Health Services



Amanda Healy
Director of Public Health

Vaccination and vaccine hesitancy

As we outlined in our last newsletter, the vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness set out by the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Any coronavirus vaccine that is approved must go through all the clinical trials and safety checks all other licensed medicines go through. So far, over 2 million people have been given a COVID-19 vaccine and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, have been very rare. No long-term complications have been reported.

This pandemic has tested all of us like never before. We have all been required to think and act collectively, and we must continue to do so to ensure that those within our communities and workplaces embrace the COVID-19 vaccination as an effective intervention against the virus. Uptake of the vaccination has been high among those offered it. However, recent research (University of Oxford, 2020) has shown that whilst most people are willing to be vaccinated, others remain unsure or may delay or avoid getting it.

To address this, we must work together to ensure that our messages are clear: for the benefit of everyone, each of us should be vaccinated when it is made available, particularly given the vulnerable people we care for.

We have provided information to you and your staff about vaccine development, its benefits and potential side-effects. The Department of Health and Social Care has also launched a short video that will help to answer some questions that may be posed by staff, residents and their families. This can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/e6UHLcmC1vo>. We urge you to circulate this as widely as possible.

The research tells us that most people who are vaccine hesitant have thought long and hard about whether to take the COVID-19 vaccine. We must all continue to listen to concerns of those who may be reluctant to take the vaccine or those who are undecided to make sure they are fully informed. Please continue to engage those staff who are yet to receive the vaccine. Public Health England has published a COVID-19 vaccination guide for social care staff that answers many of the questions that you or your staff may have. This can be accessed at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-social-care-staff/covid-19-vaccination-a-guide-for-social-care-staff>. In the meantime, if you require any further information to help you regarding any issues relating to COVID-19 vaccination, please do not hesitate to contact us and we will do all we can to help. We may also be able to arrange for a clinician to talk to hesitant staff, as per our previous communication to care homes.

Finally, you can access a range of leaflets that provide clear information about the vaccine and the vaccination programme at: <https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/ArticleSearch.html?sp=St-1310&sp=Sreset>.

These resources can be printed and displayed across your setting and circulated amongst staff and residents.

Importance of IPC following vaccination

It is crucially important that you and your staff continue to implement and adhere to all infection prevention and control (IPC) advice following vaccination. Whilst two doses will reduce the chance of becoming seriously ill, it will take a few weeks for a person to build up protection. It's not known yet if someone who has had the vaccine can still transmit the virus to others even though they are protected.

To continue to protect themselves, service users, families, friends and each other, vaccinated staff will still need to follow IPC guidance in the workplace:

- all required COVID-19 control measures must continue to be in place and followed by everyone, in line with national guidance and your risk assessments
- regular service testing and staff screening (where applicable) must continue for everyone in accordance with current guidance and arrangements
- any staff who develop symptoms must stay off work, self-isolate and access testing
- symptomatic care home residents and those who have positive tests should be isolated as per current practice (advised to isolate for 14 days)
- any person (service user or staff member) who is a close contact of a confirmed case must still isolate for the required length of time (10 days for staff and 14 days for care home residents)
- Maintaining robust infection prevention and control measures is essential and remains one of the best defences we have against coronavirus.

Key Message of the Week

Combating vaccine concerns - Social Care Workers COVID-19 vaccination Q&A video

Social Care Workers put their questions about the COVID-19 vaccine to David Pearson, Chair of the Social Care Sector COVID-19 Support Taskforce, Dr Nikki Kanani, Medical Director of Primary Care for NHS England and NHS Improvement, and Prof Jonathan Van-Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England in a Q&A video clip that can be used to counter common reasons for vaccine refusal:

<https://youtu.be/e6UHLcM1vo>



Please encourage your staff to watch this YouTube video, especially those with vaccination doubts

Vaccination of agency staff

We are continuing the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccinations for staff and residents in Older People Care Homes. We wanted to take this opportunity to remind you that any agency staff you use in your care home (whether this is a regular arrangement or just now and again) are also able to be vaccinated along with your own staff and it is important that this group is also included wherever possible.

The options for the agency staff you use are:

- **Vaccination onsite at your Care Home** when they are working there on shift or can come into the home (obviously provided that risk mitigation is in place, i.e. the individuals do not have symptoms of COVID-19, have not worked at a different home in last 14 days etc)
- **Adding agency staff you use to your list of staff you are sending DCC Commissioning** – if you have already sent your list in and want to add agency staff please do a new list just for your agency staff and send this to AHSCovidCommissioning@durham.gov.uk, clearly marked as a supplemental list for your agency workers
- **Booking a slot at the Centre for Life** by using the link <http://links.inhealthcare.co.uk/nuthcovidvaccination2>. Full details of how to book were circulated in an email to all care homes on 12 January. You will be required to fill out a pre-registration questionnaire and will need your NHS number to register for a vaccination appointment.

Latest guidance on visiting

The government has recently updated its guidance on visiting care homes during COVID-19. Please ensure that you have access to this most current version by accessing it at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visiting-care-homes-during-coronavirus/update-on-policies-for-visiting-arrangements-in-care-homes#outbreak>

We are continually thankful for the dedication, hard work and support that you and your staff have shown in both caring for our most vulnerable residents and reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

We are here to support providers during the especially difficult times and if you do need assistance your first contact should be

AHSCovidcommissioning@durham.gov.uk