

Delivering an NHS COVID-19 vaccination programme

Stakeholder update from NHS England and NHS Improvement – w/c 9 November 2020

Summary

While we don't expect a COVID-19 vaccine to be widely available until 2021, the Government has asked the NHS to be ready to deliver a vaccination programme for England from December, so that those who need it most will be able to access vaccinations as soon as they are available.

Detailed planning has been underway, building on the expertise and strong track record the NHS already has in delivering immunisations like the annual flu vaccination programme, to ensure that a COVID-19 vaccination programme does not impact on other vital services.

The NHS is working closely with a number of partners across Government, each with their own roles and responsibilities. Our plans will be finalised based on decisions made by those bodies, including when and what vaccines are approved and who should receive them.

What vaccine will be available when?

While there are a number of different candidate vaccines being developed and trialled, with support and oversight from the **Office for Life Sciences** and **National Institute for Health Research**, we don't yet know which will be approved for use by the **Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)**, or when this might happen for each.

As clinical trials progress and we understand more about the requirements of different vaccines – such as storage, transportation and how it is administered – we will continue to refine our plans to ensure we have the right resources in the right place.

The NHS has played a major role in supporting clinical trials of potential vaccines, and will continue to do so alongside rolling out those which are the first to be approved for routine use.

Who will get the vaccine?

The **Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI)** have recently published [updated advice](#) on the priority groups to receive COVID-19 vaccine, advising that vaccines should first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people aged over 80 and health and social workers, before being rolled out to the rest of the population in order of age and risk.

The JCVI will continue to update this advice as more information becomes available on vaccine effectiveness, safety and clinical characteristics. This will in turn be reflected in the NHS's plans.

How will the NHS deliver the vaccine when it is available?

The NHS has well-established routes for delivering vaccinations across the country, for example the annual flu jab and routine immunisations for children and pregnant women, which are primarily led by GPs and community pharmacies, and plans for COVID-19 vaccination will build on these.

As we are expecting the JCVI advice will remain that care home residents and staff and older people will be among the first who should receive it, the NHS will establish roving vaccine delivery services in people's homes or care homes, working with local councils and social care providers.

When eligibility is extended to wider groups, given the current requirements for social distancing and the number of people covered, this will be supplemented by specific 'mass' COVID-19 vaccination sites, which could be within existing NHS estates or temporary standalone services.

How will vaccine services be staffed?

Vaccinating millions of people as quickly as possible will require lots of staff, and depending on when vaccines arrive this could be at the same time as both a second peak in Covid-19 hospitalisations, and usual winter pressures. While it is crucial for the safety and confidence of those who will be eligible that staff giving vaccinations are appropriately trained, we are clear that the vaccination programme should not have a negative effect on other important NHS services.

The NHS will therefore be working with local employers as well as national partners to initially recruit as many trained and experienced vaccinators as possible, including those working in primary care, and we have recently set out details of a new contractual agreement for GP and their teams through which they can support this programme. Experienced vaccinators working for NHS trusts and other employers will also be among the first asked to help deliver the vaccine.

More vaccinators will be needed in the longer term. That's why the **Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC)** recently consulted on temporary changes to legislation allowing a wider group of clinical staff, including physiotherapists and paramedics, to become vaccinators, and **Public Health England (PHE)** and **Health Education England** will be developing training courses, including supervision from experienced staff, in order to upskill those groups.

We are also looking at recruiting from the pool of former staff who signed up to help the NHS during the first wave, bank staff and third sector partners, led by **St John Ambulance**, who will also help recruit the important non-clinical support roles we will need to ensure clinics run safely and smoothly.

How will people know if they're eligible for a vaccine and how to get it?

Public-facing communications will be led by **DHSC**, working with the NHS, PHE and other Government departments, and they will be beginning initial communications on the safety and effectiveness of vaccines in general shortly. As is currently the case with flu and other vaccination campaigns, local organisations and their partners will also play an important part in amplifying these messages in their particular local communities.

Also in common with this year's flu campaign, the NHS nationally has commissioned **NHS Digital** and **NHSX** to provide a national system which will send invitations and reminders to eligible people at the right time, as well as to provide an online and telephone booking system so that people can choose the right time and location for them to attend.

How will staff get the vaccine?

We will be working with employers and staff representatives to establish the best way to ensure that both health and social care staff can get vaccinated as soon as possible. As is currently the case with the seasonal flu staff vaccination campaign, this is likely to be mainly led by individual employers, with additional arrangements in place for social care staff such as home carers.

What happens next?

We are keen to work with organisations to ensure that everyone that is most at risk, including front line health and social care workers and people that are most vulnerable to Covid-19, can get vaccinated once a vaccine becomes available, and have all the information they need.

Some conversations have already taken place and we are keen to open up further discussions to ensure we hear from as many groups, representing a wide range of interests, so we can take concerns on board and adapt our plans as necessary. This will include holding a range of briefings with clinical and staff groups, patient groups and charities, local council and social care leaders, and others whose support will be important over the coming months.

In the meantime, please contact nhs.stakeholderengagement@nhs.net if you have any questions.