



COVID-19 VACCINATION POLICY

1. Introduction

We are committed to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace and are taking additional measures to protect you from contracting and spreading COVID-19 in accordance with legal requirements and government guidelines. COVID-19 vaccines have been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and are being offered to members of the general public by order of priority within Social Care. Our vaccination policy is part of our overall COVID-secure steps to ensure a safe working environment, but is not a substitute for other health and safety measures. More information is available on the GOV.UK site.

The purpose of this policy is to provide information about COVID-19 vaccination and to encourage our workforce to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy covers all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, casual workers and agency workers.

3. Who is responsible for this policy?

The Board of Directors has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Chief Executive and Head of Finance. Suggestions for change should be reported to the Head of Finance.

The Senior Management Team has day-to-day responsibility for this policy and you should refer any questions about this policy to them in the first instance.

This policy is reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team.

Voluntary Policy

Vaccination against COVID-19 is an important tool in helping to prevent infection and reduce hospitalisation and mortality. In accordance with public health advice and as an integral part of our health and safety measures, we strongly encourage all eligible staff to participate in ongoing vaccination programmes where it is safe to do so in individual circumstances.

While we strongly urge you to get vaccinated, this is a voluntary policy and it is your personal decision whether or not to receive the vaccine. We respect the wishes of those who choose not to be vaccinated, whether this be for health or other reasons. You will not be treated unfairly or in a discriminatory way because of your vaccination status. However, it may be necessary to modify roles and testing requirements where employees are non vaccinated to keep service users safe. Particularly in those roles where there is a requirement for direct physical contact.

4. Information about COVID-19 vaccination

COVID-19 vaccination is currently only available through the NHS to eligible groups and is a free vaccination. It is given as two doses as an injection into your upper arm. Public health authorities advise that:

- (a) COVID-19 vaccination is safe and effective and gives the best protection against COVID-19. There is information about vaccine safety on the World Health Organisation website.
- (b) 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).
- (c) You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine. However, after receiving the vaccine, it may be possible for you to still carry and transmit the virus. Therefore, it is important to still follow all local public health recommendations on mask wearing, hand washing and social distancing.
- (d) The vaccine does not contain living organisms.
- (e) The approved COVID-19 vaccines do not currently contain any animal products or egg.
- (f) Like all medicines, no vaccine is completely effective; some people may still get COVID-19 despite having a vaccination, but this should be less severe.
- (g) No long-term complications of COVID-19 vaccinations have been reported and reports of serious side effects, such as allergic reactions, are rare.



- (h) In the long-term, revaccination, possibly on an annual basis, is likely to be a regular part of managing COVID-19. Further research is awaited on this issue.

We cannot provide medical or scientific advice on the vaccine. You can find further information on the NHS website in Scotland.

Before being vaccinated against COVID-19 you should discuss with a healthcare professional whether any particular risks apply in your personal circumstances. Vaccination against COVID-19 may not be suitable in all cases.

More information is available on the GOV.UK site.

If you have any additional questions or non-medical concerns, please raise them with your line manager who will deal with them confidentially.

Social Care workers including front line staff in Deafblind Scotland were prioritised for the initial 2 doses of the vaccine. It is anticipated that any top up or booster may also be expedited but await further information.

5. Maintaining a COVID-19 secure workplace

This voluntary vaccination policy is a key part of our overall strategy and commitment to maintaining a COVID-19 secure workplace in accordance with government guidance. This policy is designed for use together with, and not as a substitute for, other COVID-19 measures, including our Health and Safety Policy.

In particular, all staff must adhere to the following health and safety rules to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace, whether or not they have been vaccinated:

- (a) Practice social distancing.
- (b) Wear a face mask in common spaces and when supporting service users in face to face settings.
- (c) Wash your hands carefully and frequently.
- (d) Follow current government COVID-19 guidance on the site.



In addition to the above preventative measures, we will be carrying out regular testing in the workplace to help protect staff and service users from infection.

6. Time off for vaccination

We will allow reasonable paid time off for you to attend any vaccination appointment during your working hours. You will be paid your normal rate of pay for the time spent getting vaccinated during working hours.

If you are prevented from working due to any side effects of being vaccinated against COVID-19, you will be paid in accordance with Deafblind Scotland's Absence and Attendance Policy.

Any vaccine-related absence will not be recorded as sickness absence or count towards your absence levels for the purposes of triggering our sickness absence meetings procedure.

7. Proof of vaccination

Please notify your line manager of your up-to-date COVID-19 vaccinations, including the vaccination date and vaccine name.

Your vaccination details will be kept confidential and only shared with your line manager and the HR Department. We will retain these records for 5 years, in accordance with our Data Retention Policy, which is available from your line manager.

We will use this information to ensure your health and safety in the workplace, assess your fitness to work, provide appropriate workplace adjustments, and to monitor and to manage sickness absence. Any information provided will be handled in accordance with our Data Protection Policy, which is available from your line manager. For more information about how we use your personal data and special categories of personal data, please also refer to our Privacy notice, which is available from your line manager.



8. Changes to this policy

Government and public health guidelines and restrictions and business and industry best practice regarding COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccines are changing rapidly as new information becomes available, further research is conducted, and additional vaccines are approved and distributed. We reserve the right to modify this policy at any time in our sole discretion to adapt to changing circumstances and business needs, consistent with our commitment to maintain a safe and healthy workplace. This may include introducing a requirement for mandatory vaccination in certain roles where the need arises.