

Coronavirus vaccine and testing policy

Policy Date	June 2021
Review Date <i>when under review, this policy should continue to be used</i>	June 2022 or earlier depending on government and NHS advice
This policy is non-contractual.	
Author	HR Dept
Version This policy may be amended prior to the review date to comply with any new, relevant legislation or organisational change that affects how this policy is used	1
Related Policies	Managing Sickness Absence Other Leave Health & Safety

CORONAVIRUS VACCINE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Vaccines to prevent serious health effects from coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have been developed and made available to the public. The purpose of this policy is to set out our organisation's stance on the vaccine as it affects everyone and the related rights of individual employees.

2. VACCINE STATUS

- 2.1 Individual opinions on vaccines can vary greatly and it is appreciated that having a vaccine is generally a personal choice, sometimes dictated by personal circumstances such as health or religion. The Government has not made the taking of the vaccine mandatory and therefore it remains a voluntary exercise for all our employees.

3. OUR STANCE

- 3.1 As an employer, we have a duty to ensure the safety of our employees. In addition, the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all their workers. Despite the extensive measures taken to ensure that the workplace and all working arrangements are, and continue to be, COVID secure, the vaccine provides a greater level of personal safety against serious illness. Because of this, employees are encouraged to take up the opportunity to have the vaccine when it is offered to them.
- 3.2 Employees are reminded that whether or not they or their colleagues have been vaccinated is a private matter, unless an individual chooses to share this information. As always, employees will be treated with dignity and respect by their colleagues in relation to their decision over the vaccine. The organisation will not accept any bullying or harassment, or other unwanted behaviour, against an employee because of their decision.

4. MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION

- 4.1 It is normal that some of our employees may have concerns about having the vaccine. The councils encourage everyone to make an informed decision by paying attention to official information sources such as the NHS. The vaccines have been extensively tested and are regarded as safe by medical and scientific bodies around the world. We would ask our employees to check the source of any information they read about the vaccine as we are aware that there is a certain amount of uncertified information available.

5. HAVING THE VACCINE

- 5.1 The current Government strategy for vaccinating the UK population is formulated on a priority basis according to age, industry sector and vulnerable status. Employees will receive notification of their vaccine appointment which may be at their normal GP

surgery or at one of the vaccination centres set up specifically for this purpose. The vaccine is offered free of charge. It is currently administered in two doses, to be provided at separate appointments. We encourage employees to verify a notification purporting to provide vaccine appointment details if this appears suspicious due to several scams attempting to gain bank details. Employees should notify their manager of their appointment time on each occasion, giving as much notice as possible if time off work is needed. Employees are entitled to paid time off to attend a vaccine appointment.

5.2 Currently the Health & safety team are occasionally notified of the availability of excess vaccines that need to be used up rapidly and so staff may be contacted with details of appointments at short notice and can take advantage of this. There is no requirement to do so.

5.3 Information on the vaccine programme is currently available on the NHS website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

6. VACCINE SIDE EFFECTS

6.1 Occasionally individuals experience side effects from the vaccine. In the vast majority of cases these are minimal, and further information is available on the NHS website mentioned above. If an individual is unable to come to work due to side effects, absence should be reported in the usual way.

7. LATERAL FLOW TESTS

7.1 The number one priority is safety and support to all staff working, knowing that another peak is expected later in the year. It is vital to make sure everyone is safe and well.

7.2 Staff are therefore actively encouraged (whether or not they have had a vaccine) to take lateral flow tests to mitigate any risk of transmission, amongst staff and the general public. These tests should be carried out twice weekly (every 3 to 4 days) for those attending the office or carrying out site visits.

7.3 Lateral Flow Test kits can be ordered online or by telephone or collected from participating Pharmacies, further information at the following link.

<https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>

NB. Anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus should arrange a PCR test as soon as possible:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>