



Homelessness and COVID-19 Vaccination

This document provides a summary of current information relating to homelessness and the COVID-19 vaccination programme. The policies, external links and guidance outlined in this document are subject to change, will be updated with any relevant additions or amendments as they become available. This can be shared with your networks and stakeholders.

Summary

On 8 January, the Housing Secretary announced further support to bring people sleeping rough in off the street during the national lockdown backed by £10 million of funding. As part of this, MHCLG have asked all local authorities to ensure that even more rough sleepers are safely accommodated, and are asking that this opportunity is actively used to make sure that all those accommodated are registered with a GP where they are not already and are factored into local area vaccination plans, in line with the prioritisation approach set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. Local authorities should work with their local health partners to ensure individuals experiencing homelessness are able to access the vaccine by other means if mainstream provision is unsuitable.

GP Registrations

Everyone in England is entitled to register with a GP. Many people that experience health inequalities can face barriers when trying to register. Practices should not turn people away because they do not have proof of ID, address, or immigration status. People can also register if they do not know their NHS number or where they have not been issued with one.

Being registered with a GP has many benefits, the most important one now is so that GPs can easily identify those people who are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and ensure that they are invited to get a vaccination as soon as they become eligible. In addition to facilitating COVID-19 vaccination, GP registration will help ensure that the wider health needs of people who sleep rough are able to be addressed, supporting them now and for the future.

It is important that local authorities ensure that individuals are supported to continue to engage with their GP and other health services, as they move on to more stable accommodation, to support them receiving both doses of the vaccine, and so that their health needs are able to be met over the longer term.

We want to support all people, particularly those in inclusion health groups, to register with GPs. We want to work together with colleagues in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector to ensure that this message comes from people trusted in/by these communities.

NHS GP Registration Campaign

Access cards

In partnership with a number of organisations NHS England are distributing 'access cards', both physical and digital, which support the message that everyone is entitled to register with a GP. On the back of the card is the NHS England and NHS Improvement Customer Contact Centre number, for people to use if they have been refused registration.



VCSE organisations can get physical copies of the access card from their local Healthwatch, to share with the communities they work with, or [download a digital copy of the access card](#) from the FutureNHS platform. Some VCSE partners will be receiving batches of the cards to distribute directly to their service users.

Posters

There are two posters that give clear information about how to register with a GP, which you can download and print.

- The [‘Welcome to General Practice’ poster](#) can be personalised with practice-specific information.
- The [‘Please come and register with your local GP’ poster](#) can be displayed in any prominent places where people go for advice and support.

Should you have a **query for the NHS** please email england.covid-homeless@nhs.net

Local Flexibility

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) are the independent experts who provide advice to Government on which vaccine(s) the UK should use, and which groups to prioritise - [JCVI priority groups](#).

The JCVI recognises that health inequalities do exist, including for people experiencing homelessness. JCVI state that vaccine ‘implementation should also involve flexibility in vaccine deployment at a local level with due attention to mitigating health inequalities, such as might occur in relation to access to healthcare and ethnicity’.

Local authorities should work with their local NHS partners in order to factor people experiencing homelessness, and other inclusion health groups, into local vaccination plans – in line with JCVI guidance.

Additional Funding for Vaccination in Residential Settings

In the coming weeks, Primary Care Network (PCN) groupings, and in some cases community pharmacies when requested by NHS England, will need to deliver vaccinations in residential settings, such as care homes for people with learning disabilities or mental health problems, or hostel/hotel accommodation for the homeless, where it would not be possible for these patients to attend vaccination sites.

In such cases from a PCN grouping or community pharmacy contractor will be able to claim an additional supplement of £10 for each vaccination administered to eligible residents and staff in these settings, on top of the £12.58 Item of Service fee.

PCN groupings should work with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), Integrated Care Systems (ICS), local authority and other partners to establish the most effective ways to serve all of these residential settings and specific groups and determine the most appropriate vaccination delivery model for them.

This of course only at present applies to those who are in cohorts 1-6 (including all those who are clinically at risk or 65+). It would therefore include anyone aged 16 – 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality.

[Vaccination of JCVI cohorts 5-6 and additional funding for vaccination in residential settings](#)

No NHS Number?



If a person does not have an NHS number, they can still book an appointment to be vaccinated. People do not require an NHS number to receive a vaccination, and should never be denied one on this basis, either when attending for a vaccine in person, or through the design of booking systems.

If someone does not have an NHS number but is within an eligible group, services should vaccinate now, record locally via a paper-based system, and ensure vaccination is formally documented as soon as possible after the vaccination has been administered.

At their appointment an individual will be asked some questions about their medical history, including if they have ever had a severe allergic reaction. They will also be asked for their booking reference number. However, because there is no charge for the vaccine for people living in the UK, the immigration status of a patient is not relevant and therefore no proof of residence is required, and there is no requirement to report anyone to the Home Office.

The General Practice COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21 Enhanced Service Specification (the contract that general practices will deliver COVID-19 Vaccination under) enables practices working within their Primary Care Network (PCN) groupings from shared vaccination sites to vaccinate unregistered patients provided they are eligible for a vaccination e.g. within an eligible cohort, and the PCN grouping will receive payment for this.

Homelessness Workforce

The JCVI have advised that the first priorities for any COVID-19 vaccination programme should be for the prevention of COVID-19 hospitalisation and mortality; and the protection of health and social care staff that work with people who are particularly vulnerable to poor outcomes if they acquire COVID-19 infection.

Frontline social care workers providing direct care to clients who are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 infection are eligible for vaccination as part of Cohort 2. We continue to encourage local authorities to consider whether any of those staff working in homeless settings meet these criteria, referring to NHS guidance on the vaccine deployment in social care workers.

However, this will require consistent interpretation of which social care workers provide care closely and regularly to those who are clinically vulnerable to COVID-19. Those clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 are defined by the JCVI priority groups:

- a) the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)
- b) those who have underlying health conditions leading to greater risk of disease or mortality as defined in the Green Book (Government guidance on immunisation against infectious diseases), and
- c) those of advanced age. Local authorities should refer to NHS guidance on the vaccine deployment in social care workers to support this.

Local authorities should refer to NHS guidance on the vaccine deployment in social care workers to support this interpretation.

Where local areas do identify frontline homelessness staff who fit these criteria, then they should receive their vaccination alongside other frontline social care workers which are one of the priority groups the Government has committed to have vaccinated.



Further Information

- [GOV.UK COVID-19 vaccines delivery plan](#)
- [NHS COVID-19 vaccine page](#)
- [Green Book \(Immunisation against infectious disease\) - COVID-19 chapter](#)
- [PHE/NHS resources for local communications](#)

Should you have any further queries, please contact your MHCLG Homelessness or Rough Sleeping Adviser.

For any communications enquiries you can also contact MHCLG Central Comms at MHCLGExternalAffairs@communities.gov.uk