



Department
of Health &
Social Care



39 Victoria Street
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To:
Local authority chief executives
Directors of adult social services

24 January 2022

Dear colleagues

Operational guidance for COVID-19 vaccination of people delivering CQC-regulated, direct and face to face care in social care settings other than care homes

I am writing to you to share key information on the regulations relating to the extension of Vaccination as a Condition of Deployment (VCOD) to wider care settings. From 1 April 2022, these regulations will apply to all those providing CQC-regulated, direct and face to face care in wider social care settings.

Further detail is set out in the operational guidance, which can be found [here](#).

Who the regulations will apply to:

The regulations will require registered persons of CQC-regulated care providers (such as domiciliary care, extra care housing and supported living), to ensure that from 1 April 2022, any staff they deploy to provide CQC-regulated, direct and face to face care, meet the vaccination requirements under the regulations, unless medically exempt or covered by certain other exceptions.

The regulations will not apply to:

- Anyone not providing CQC-regulated, direct and face to face care on behalf of a CQC-registered person
- Anyone who provides evidence of a medical exemption, including pregnant women
- Anyone under the age of 18
- Those who can provide evidence of participating in specific clinical trials (more detail on this is provided in the regulations and will be set out in the Code of Practice, due to be published as soon as possible).
- Family and friends visiting those receiving care and support in their own homes
- Any visiting professionals (i.e., tradespeople), if they are not providing direct, face to face CQC-regulated care.

We recognise that local authorities may employ or engage staff who work across multiple settings, for example social workers and occupational therapists. These individuals may be in scope if they are carrying out CQC-regulated activities on behalf of a registered person (which may be the local authority). Please see [the guidance](#) for more details.

The vast majority of staff in scope must receive two doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine before **1 April 2022** in order to be deployed from this date onwards. The latest date these staff members can receive their first dose, in order to receive the second dose in time for 1 April, is **3 February 2022**.



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Important next steps for Local Authorities

Support from the sector has been vital in encouraging those who work in social care to take up the COVID-19 vaccine. National support is available (see below), but we understand the importance of local solutions, communications and conversations. You have an essential part to play to secure effective delivery of this policy, and I would be grateful if you could continue to:

- Work closely with your ICS, NHS vaccination leads and local providers to maximise vaccine delivery and uptake, adopting a 'hyper-local' approach to vaccination so that staff can receive their vaccine closer to home and at a convenient time.
- Co-ordinate communications with your ICS and NHS vaccination leads to ensure evidence-based, tailored, clear, and simplified messaging is reaching care staff and managers via well-established communications channels.
- Widely advertise up-to-date information about the location and opening times of local / mobile / pop-up vaccination sites.
- Encourage staff working in the sector to receive their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccination before the 3rd February deadline, working with local systems to provide personalised, in-person or interactive support where possible. For example, helping organise conversations between staff and GPs if they have concerns about receiving the vaccine, or engaging faith and community leaders to develop culturally-informed resources and approaches to support vaccine uptake among all communities.
- Use DHSC's communications toolkit, which contains information and resources on VCOD, as well as a separate [dedicated toolkit](#) to help encourage vaccination among care staff. Staff can book their COVID-19 vaccinations through the [National Booking Service](#) or by calling 119 free of charge.
- Encourage Capacity Tracker data to be regularly updated by care providers, for both directly employed staff and agency workers. For both national and local oversight, this is essential data to inform if and where further action might be needed.
- To plan for how you might best support providers to manage any impact on workforce after the regulations come into force from 1 April 2022.

The ASC Regional leads will be contacting local authorities ahead of the 3rd February deadline to discuss your plans to increase uptake and planned mitigations.

Relation to VCOD in care homes:

These new regulations and associated guidance do not replace the regulations for care homes but are intended to complement the care homes guidance, although they differ in some respects. The [operational guidance](#) sets out these differences, and updated care homes guidance can be found [here](#).

The regulations that introduce VCOD across health and wider social care also include some amendments to the care home regulations to align the two policies. This includes changes regarding new starters. In care homes, this amendment allows new starters to start work following vaccination sooner than was possible under the original care home regulations. This change means that new people can be recruited more quickly, while continuing to support the public health objectives of the policy overall.



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Information and resources:

- We will be hosting webinars in the upcoming weeks to provide information and answer questions providers and registered managers may have.
- A range of resources have been made available on the Skills for Care website including materials to support workforce capacity planning, recruitment, and retention - <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Recruitment-retention/COVID-19/COVID-19-Vaccination.aspx>
- Communications resources outlining key information relevant to the regulations are available to download here: [VCOD -Google Drive](#)
- Updated Q&A document, including questions related to the new regulations is available [here](#):

We are grateful for all the support you have provided and would like to thank you for continuing to work with us on this policy.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Armstrong

Director of Adult Social Care Delivery