

All Social Care Noticeboard

Last update: 13 May 2025

Latest Update

Care Workers Betrayed – GMB Bulletin On Health & Care Visas – 12/05/25

Posted on: 13 May 2025

Dear Colleagues,

You may be aware of a recent announcement of a government plan to scrap care visas which may be potentially catastrophic for the sector.

Last month the Home Office increased the earnings threshold care workers would need to earn to be eligible for a work sponsored Health & Social Care Skilled Work Visa to £25,000 a year, £12.82 per hour.

Today, the Government has announced plans to scrap the Health and Social Care Visa altogether, insultingly calling Care Work “low skilled work”.

Scrapping this visa will be deeply damaging. Even with our migrant workers, we still have more than 130,000 vacancies across the sector.

Care work is difficult, often dangerous yet very badly paid. The GMB is one of the leaders in a consultation with the government to establish a fair pay deal for carers and we will continue to push the government to make sure Care Work is paid fairly, funded and staffed to the required levels.

The GMB Union has met with government officials and voiced our concerns over their disregard towards colleagues who have come here and supported our industry, their ignorance of the impact this decision will have on already strained staffing levels and the disrespect shown in their repeated description of care as “low skilled”.



The GMB will continue to stand up to the government on this issue and fight for your rights. Please encourage your colleagues that are not in a union to join the GMB and stand together so that we can best improve the working conditions for all carers.

In Solidarity,

Will Dalton – GMB National Officer for Care

If you would like to join the GMB please visit gmb.org.uk/join-gmb

If you are interested in getting involved with the GMB and being active in your workplace please contact your local GMB Office.

The Government Wants To Hear Your Opinion – Speak Through Your Union



Posted on: 7 November 2024

Your voice matters – help us shape from the ground up what the future of social care should look like – this week – you have 3 opportunities

- 1. Experiences in care of a Zero Hour Contract**
- 2. Sick Pay in the Care Sector**
- 3. What would you change?**

Can you help us get the message to Government?

1. Are you on a Zero Hour contract? Have you ever been on a ZHC in Social Care?

GMB Union is consulting members on Zero Hours Contracts in Care.

The Government is looking to change the law under the recently announced Employment Rights Bill to give better protections for workers who are on Zero Hours Contracts. GMB Union makes sure your voices are heard, and our consultation will be built on your feedback based on your experiences.





“As a care worker on an agency contract – the amount of times I get my shift cancelled just a few hours before is a really difficult way to live my life, especially as a single mum with a wee one to look after. I know so many care workers who are in this situation – we need to make sure our voices are heard so we can get the changes we need”

Tamara – Agency Care Worker – National Care Committee (NCC) member Scotland

If you are on, or ever have been on a Zero Hours Contract – tell us about your experiences here

<https://forms.office.com/e/TAErSYAYW5>

Survey closes on Monday 18th November

2. Sick Pay

“The pandemic exposed just how precarious work and life is for those on acute low incomes. No one should be forced to choose between their health and financial hardship, which is why we plan to strengthen Statutory Sick Pay, so it provides a safety net for those who need it most.” – Labour party Sick pay consultation

The GMB’s Sick of SSP campaign continues in the social care sector – the government’s plans for sick pay reform are national and welcome – they will impact every worker – but GMB knows care sector workers deserve for sick pay to go further.





“Last year, GMB started the Sick of SSP campaign in HC-One – my workplace. We won SSP from day one – a huge win, and because of our campaign win, the Government is looking at putting SSP from day one as a right for all workers.

For the care sector, we need proper sick pay from day one and we need to government to hear that, so when we negotiate national terms and conditions under a Fair Pay Agreement we can get it – but we need your help – starting now.”

Jakky – Care Home Assistant Chef – North East Yorkshire & Humber NCC Rep

For our initial feedback into the Government consultation, we want them to know what care sector workers feel about sick pay – in your own words.

Complete the survey through the link below

<https://forms.office.com/e/abVA1vW9t2>

3. What would you change?

Last week we asked you

What 3 things would you change about working in the care sector?

We’ve had some amazing responses come through already – keep them coming! Click the link >>

<https://forms.office.com/e/H6tdb36ytd>

Adult Social Care Newsletter – October 2024



Posted on: 1 November 2024



GMB heads into talks with Government and employers for a Fair Pay Agreement in Adult Social Care

Natalie Grayson, GMB National Care Officer, said the inclusion of the fair pay agreement details had the “potential to make an overwhelming difference to the care sector”.

So what is a Fair Pay Agreement?

The FPA will be a floor, for all care sector workers in Adult Social Care to drive up standards of Pay in the sector – moving people away from yearly minimum wage increases – to pay levels which reflect the real value you all provide.

It won't stop at Pay.

GMB want to ensure that we can set real standards on the things which impact you the most at work. Implementing sick pay as a standard in the industry. Reducing violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. Improving access and quality of qualifications, improving staffing levels to minimum ratios, access to flexible working – not the take it or leave it 12-hour shifts without a break. Access to respite if you care for someone in your own home and if you have to work a sleep-in or you have to travel between shifts – that you are properly paid for that.

The possibilities are endless, but the choices are many.

We want to make sure we are fighting for the changes you want to see

What 3 things would you change about working in the care sector?

Tell us here <https://forms.office.com/e/H6tdb36ytd>



“In Scotland, the National Care Service plans are in a dire place because the government has not listened to the trade unions. Now England has committed to a Fair Pay Agreement, we need to make sure we, the workforce are leading our union through that process – which starts with you telling us what changes would make the biggest difference to



your lives at work. It's also important that devolved nations are represented in the process so that we do not get left behind. We are one union and all care workers across the UK should be treated fairly, kept safe and get paid what we are worth."

Shona Thomson – Glasgow Local Authority Domiciliary care worker and NCC member for Scotland

How will it work?

Fair Pay would be negotiated, yearly between unions, (with GMB having a prominent spot at the table), employer bodies and the Government.

It will also be legally enforced – employers will have to pay whatever is negotiated. For the first time, care sector workers will have a national voice and we will finally see the industry begin to improve in favour of the workers and those you care for.

We have a long way to go, it is not likely that we will talk about pay until the end of 2026, the law has to be created first and we have to make sure employers comply- but that doesn't mean we can't start to achieve higher standards.

The first meeting with the Government is 4th November 2024 – GMB will be sitting at the table with Government and Employer representatives and we will keep you informed about how talks progress.

Are you on a Visa? Do you have leave to remain?

Visas are changing – here is what you need to know AND do – before 31st December 2024.

Everyone with a visa, stamp in their passport or leave to remain needs to apply for an e-visa before the 31st December 2024. This change affects 4 million people in the UK.

More than 200,000 international workers have started working in the UK in the last 2 years. Many care facilities now have an international workforce – if you do not need a visa – you probably know someone who does.

Can you help us spread the word to your colleagues, friends, clients and neighbours?





“The GMB’s National Care Committee recommends everyone who needs to apply for their e-visa – do it now. You may experience problems or delays in the application which might impact your right to work, rent a house or remain in the UK.”

Pappy – Children’s social care worker – North West & Irish Region NCC member

Check out our step-by-step guide through the link below, with videos and tips for applying for your e-visa.
There are also posters and flyers for you to download to share with your colleagues and friends.

[International Care Workers | GMB Union](#)

Coveberry 2024 Pay Ballot – Results



Posted on: 1 October 2024

The results are in from the Coveberry 2024 Pay ballot, which closed on 27th September 2024

50% Accepted the offer

50% Rejected the offer

Coveberry is a JOINTLY Recognised company, with Unison and RCN. Both their union members voted to accept the company offer, therefore, with no preference through a majority vote, nor a turnout to challenge the offer from GMB members, the company has been informed of an acceptance by all the trade unions.

Your pay will start in the next pay cycle and be backdated to 1st April 2024.



From our visits throughout the ballot, you told us that Sick Pay was a top priority for you and you, like us, an unfairness for rates of pay between facilities.

It's time to become organised

If you don't feel like things are fair, you have to work together to make your workplace better.

Low engagement in pay ballots doesn't show the company you are serious about the changes you want to see. Your GMB Representatives are here to help you do that.

Join our Care Sector Army and become a GMB Union Activist

A great start to making changes in the workplace, your help will make all the difference. You can help us make sure people attend a meeting with us when we are in your workplace, fill in petitions, join the union and complete our surveys. Easy small things, which when done on mass, help us to achieve huge wins!

Become a full Representative.

One step further than an activist – you can start your journey here or work your way up to it from being an activist. Join the conversation, learn how to negotiate and represent your members in disciplinarys and grievances, represent your area nationally and be the voice for GMB members in your workplace.

Register your interest here: <https://forms.office.com/e/FpzzuJE2pi>

Become active and we can win more changes in the coming months and years.

Joint Statement From GMB, Unison And RCN Coveberry Pay Offer For Members For 2024



Posted on: 5 September 2024

Dear Members,

Thank you for your patience relating to the 2024 pay negotiations between the joint trade unions and Coveberry.

The company has put forward an improved offer for pay for the lowest banding, however have rejected any further improvements to terms and conditions, mainly sick pay, annual leave, bank holiday pay which the joint trade unions argued for in negotiations.



This offer falls short of what we would hope to be able to achieve and we requested a further conversation with the company in light of the change in Government, and their manifesto pledge to ensure sick pay for care sector workers, seeking to ensure occupational sick pay as a benefit for Coveberry members.

However, the company have made it clear to us, that this is their full and final offer,

it is now for the union members to have your say on pay.

- The offer includes a lump sum for back pay to April 2024, if members choose to accept the offer.
- The joint trade unions are therefore not putting a recommendation on this offer, instead advise members that this is the best possible offer achieved through negotiation.

Electronic ballots have been sent to members through your email or by text message.

You can see your offer through the link below. Your pay points increase through years of service, which is why there are variances with pay.

If you have not received a ballot paper, please contact natalie.grayson@gmb.org.uk

Ballot closes Friday 27th September.

See Joint Union pay claim here: [coveberry-jtu-claim-2024.pdf](#)

See the employers written offer here: [employers-written-offer-here.pdf](#)

See pay rates here: [coveberry-pay-tables-all-homes.pdf](#)

GMB Meets Stephen Kinnock – Labour Minister For Social Care 30/7/24



Posted on: 31 July 2024



Yesterday, the Social Care Minister, Stephen Kinnock met with the GMB Union where we were consulted on changes being made to the training and development scheme, in light of the £20 billion black hole announced on Monday.

In 2023, the Conservatives rolled out a training and development scheme, when the policy was initially rolled out by the last government, the GMB wrote to the former minister and consultation as we didn't recognise their plans going far enough and more pressure would be put on members to undertake 'Delegated Duties' to fill out the community nursing shortage. Only qualifying staff to a level 2 qualification, which is equivalent to a GCSE grade was unimaginative and dysfunctional from the beginning.

We know that care sector work is varied and often specialist, care workers should have in-depth, valuable and meaningful training leading to worthwhile qualifications, reflective of the required knowledge and skill a care worker is required to have based on accountability. Most importantly, training should be allocated to pay progression, as it is in the NHS and Local Government.

GMB want good qualifications, which aren't insulting to members.

GMB outlined this to Minister Kinnock and the DHSC in our meeting yesterday and the Minister reiterated the Labour Commitment to a Fair Pay Agreement in Adult Social Care.

This announcement means that GMB National Care Committee and our care branches have the chance to work with and influence the Labour Government and the DHSC in building training into Fair Pay Agreements so your skills are recognised relating to job roles, therefore, your pay will reflect your qualifications into the future, and we are pleased of the pledge from him to work with us.

This announcement means that the level 2 qualification will still be rolled out and members will still have access to this training and funding through their employers, but further development will be paused.

In the coming weeks, a survey will be sent out to GMB members in Adult Social Care for you to let us know what you think a good care qualification should look like – keep an eye out and help us develop a training plan fit for the future of social care.

Coveberry – Have Your Say On Pay 2024



Posted on: 30 May 2024

Dear Members,



This month, in preparation for your pay negotiations for 2024 the GMB is asking you about your pay aspirations

At this moment, care is high on the news agenda, with media stories everyday about staffing shortages and the reasons – low pay, lack of work life balance, stress and anxiety and the impact of workers in care in a cost of living crisis’.

GMB Union is one of the recognised unions at Coveberry and it is important for you to use your voice to tell your union what are the things which you want us to focus on. HAVE YOUR SAY ON PAY HERE

<https://forms.office.com/e/dUfE58ftLJ>

We want to negotiate on the things that matter to you the most – which isn’t always just about your hourly rate this could include sick pay, breaks, overtime pay or bank holiday pay – but it could also be something else we haven’t thought of yet – it’s your opportunity to tell us.

A survey is a great way to do that, but your involvement and activism is too. If you want to make working in care better, then becoming a GMB Representative is your way to have an influence on that. **Become a workplace representative | GMB**

Update your details – Complete your survey – Step forward and become a GMB Union Rep.

If you have received this notice by text or email, we have your up-to-date contact details. However, if you have not received anything and are looking at this notice in the workplace or online – you need to update your contact details with GMB Union directly.

Please contact your region **GMB Regions | GMB** with your name, postcode, workplace and contact details as soon as possible.

Madatory Covid-19 Vaccinations For Social Care Workers In England



Posted on: 2 March 2022

Legislation to be Revoked

Government in England have now responded to their most recent consultation on mandatory vaccinations for health and social care workers. This consultation was specifically with regards revoking the legislation that had mandated Covid-19 vaccinations for adult residential social care workers in November 2021 and the legislation to extend the mandate to wider social care and health care services.



It has now been confirmed that **'it is no longer proportionate to require vaccination as a condition of deployment through statute in health, care homes and other social care settings'**.

However, despite the fact that legislation will be revoked, Government remain clear that **'the vaccine is of the utmost importance and that everyone working in health and social care has a professional duty to be vaccinated against Covid-19.'**

Therefore, Government have advised that:

1. The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has written to the professional regulators operating across health to review current guidance to registrants on vaccinations, including COVID-19, and to emphasise their professional responsibilities in this area.
2. They are engaging with the NHS to review its policies on the hiring of new staff and the deployment of existing staff, taking into account their vaccination status.
3. Reviewing the Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infections with a view to strengthening the obligations providers must satisfy in meeting the required standard set out in the [Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(Regulated Activities\) Regulations 2014](#). The Department of Health and Social Care will seek views on this in a separate consultation.

GMB, whilst being supportive of the vaccination programme, does not support the mandating of vaccines for workers and welcomes the revoking of this legislation. However, it is clear that employers may now still be looking into incorporating vaccine policies into their employment contracts.

GMB will continue to support our members who are affected by this.

Not a GMB Member? [Join Today!](#)

Want information on being a GMB Representative your Workplace?

Email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

Past Bulletins



GMB Evidence Submission: Revoking Mandatory COVID Vaccination In Health & Social Care



Posted on: 17 February 2022

GMB, whilst being supportive of the vaccination programme, does not support the mandating of vaccines for workers. This was made clear to Government in two consultations on this issue previously and also in numerous meetings with Department of Health Representatives, NHS Employers and Social Care Providers.

We therefore welcomed the Government U-Turn on this policy which has exacerbated the staffing crisis across health and social care and caused a great deal of distress to many key workers. However, it is coming too late for thousands of workers who have already lost their jobs as a result, specifically in social care where this has been mandatory since November 2021.

GMB is urging employers to be proactive and contact all workers who left due to this policy and offer them their jobs back with appropriate compensatory payments.

You can read GMB's submission into the consultation on whether Government should revoke this legislation: gmb.org.uk/research-policy/evidence-submissions

GMB CALLS ON THE BOSS OF BANK OF ENGLAND TO WORK AS A CARER FOR THE DAY – AND THEN TALK ABOUT WAGE RESTRAINT



Posted on: 9 February 2022

Tell low-paid workers to show 'restraint' after covering a minimum wage shift, says GMB boss

GMB Union has written to Andrew Bailey, Governor of the Bank of England, inviting him to work as a carer for the day before he talks about "wage restraint."

Mr Bailey came under intense criticism for suggesting workers should not ask for big pay rises to help curb inflation.

The Bank of England boss was paid £575,000 last year.



In the letter, GMB General Secretary Gary Smith invites Mr Bailey to spend a day shadowing low-paid care workers “upon whom ‘restraint’ has been imposed for too long.” [1]

“You do not appear to have called for restraint in price setting, or dividend payments,” the letter adds.

Gary Smith, GMB General Secretary, said:

“Andrew Bailey should spend a day shadowing the low-paid workers in the care sector upon whom ‘restraint’ has been imposed for too long.

“These are the predominately women workers at the front line of the pandemic, who are putting their own lives at risk to care for some of the most vulnerable members of society.

“The majority of those workers earn pennies more than the National Minimum Wage.

“After working a shift, I would be interested to know whether those workers should show ‘restraint’ against the mounting cost of living crisis.

“I hope that Mr Bailey will be prepared to explain his reasoning to the people his apparent policy would affect.”

You can read the letter [here](#).

You see further coverage at [The Guardian](#)

Noticeboard Bulletin – 01-02-2022



Posted on: 1 February 2022

England

After months of campaigning by GMB and other unions and organisations, yesterday (31st January 2022) the Government in England announced that they would no longer be pursuing their policy mandating the health and social care workforce to have the Covid-19 vaccine.



GMBs position on mandatory vaccines has been consistent throughout – whilst we support the vaccine programme, we oppose legally enforced medical procedures as a condition of employment – it is heavy handed and will deepen the staffing crisis in health and social care.

Unfortunately, this Government U-Turn has come too late in the day for thousands of workers in our care homes who were subjected to this legislative change in November 2021. Many care workers chose to leave employment rather than face dismissal and we have already seen the same happening across wider social care and the health service.

This policy was just another reflection of Ministers failure to deal with the staffing crisis in social care, caused by low pay and poor treatment. Care workers voted with their feet and chose to work in supermarkets, hospitality and warehouses instead. A national plan is urgently needed for social care that awards a minimum of £15 per hour.

The Government have announced that they will now launch a consultation to consider whether they should revoke this legislation. More details will follow as it becomes available and we understand how this will impact workers in adult residential care homes and the wider care sector.

Any care worker who was set to face dismissal on 1st April 2022 as a result of not being vaccinated, should no longer be facing formal procedures at work. If you need any advice or support regarding this please contact [your local GMB Representative](#).

MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



Posted on: 8 December 2021

As of 11th November 2021, it became a legal requirement that anyone working in an adult residential social care home has to be vaccinated with both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination, unless medically exempt, if they want to continue working in care homes. This legal requirement also extends to those entering the care home for other work-related matters (except for emergencies). GMB opposed the Government proposals regarding this but the Conservative Government majority in Parliament made it law.

Further legislation is now passing through Parliament which the Government have laid. If this passes, it will become law that all those working in patient facing or service user roles in healthcare and wider social care will also have to be double Covid-19 vaccinated. This covers all those performing CQC regulated activities. GMB opposed these proposals again in the most recent consultation.



GMB Position on Mandatory Vaccinations for Workers

GMB is opposed to forced vaccinations of any worker and made this clear in both evidence submissions we made into the Government consultations on this issue. Both submissions were written following member surveys. You can access the full submissions at:

Making vaccination a condition of deployment in older adult care homes, May 2021.

[DHSCmandatoryvaccinations140521.pdf](#)

GMB Union response to Department for Health & Social Care Consultation on making vaccination a condition of deployment in the health and wider social care sector. October 2021.

[DHSCmandatoryNHSvaccinations22102021.pdf](#)

What's Next?

The proposed legislation laid down by the Conservative Government continues to work through Parliament.

The House of Lords recently criticised the lack of evidence presented by Government as to whether the benefits of vaccinating the remaining 8% of NHS workers were proportionate and how the NHS would cope with losing the 5.4% who do not want to be vaccinated. They felt unable to scrutinise the legislation sufficiently.

You can read more about this at: [Evidence is insufficient to back mandatory NHS staff vaccination, says House of Lords committee | The BMJ](#)

However, despite this, it is expected that the legislation will still pass-through Parliament and become law, effective 1st April 2022. If this timeline is adhered to it means that affected individuals will need to be in receipt of their first dose of the vaccine, no later than 3rd February 2022, to enable to second dose to be administered no later than 31st March 2022.

What We Know?

We are still waiting for more clarity on key areas. We expect more information to be published in the coming weeks and months. Below is a [summary of what we know so far](#):



- Providers of CQC regulated activities in health and social care will have to ensure certain categories of workers are in receipt of both doses of the Covid-19 Vaccination.
- Affected workers will be those who have 'direct, face-to-face contact with service users'.
- These include front line workers, as well as non-clinical workers not directly involved in patient care but who nevertheless may have direct, face to face contact with patients, such as receptionists, ward clerks, porters and cleaners.
- This will also apply to agency workers, volunteers or trainees and those contracted to work for other providers.
- This will apply in public and privately funded settings, including hospitals, GP practices and where care is delivered in a person's home.
- Due to winter pressures and to allow legislation to pass through the parliamentary process, this will come into effect on 1st April 2022.
- This does not apply to the Covid-19 Booster.

There are some exemptions:

- Under 18's.
- Those who are clinically exempt from Covid-19 vaccinations.
- Those taking part in Covid-19 clinical trials.
- Those who do not have direct, face-to-face contact with a service user e.g. those providing care remotely (triage, telephone consultations); managerial staff working in sites away from patient areas.
- Those providing care as part of a Shared Lives Agreement.

Are Other Vaccinations Included?



The Government did listen to our concerns regarding mandating the flu vaccine and have decided not to push ahead with that part of the proposal. Therefore, workers in health and social care in England will not be legally required to have the flu vaccine as a part of their employment, this is still encouraged though. This will be reviewed again after this winter and ahead of next winter.

GMB Representation

GMB will continue to represent our members concerns at a national level as further guidance develops and the legislation passes through Parliament. We will continue to seek legal advice on behalf of our members as appropriate.

In the meantime, our advice to members is:

- Where possible, take up the opportunity to receive the Covid Vaccinations.
- Your employer may start consulting with you to seek clarification as to whether you have been vaccinated and where not, try to understand your reasons for refusal. Consideration for re-deployment options should also be given.
- You should ensure you are represented at any formal meetings by your local GMB Representative. We can only represent GMB members.
- If these proposals pass through Parliament and become law and there are no redeployment options, your employer may have to terminate your employment on 1st April 2022 if you are not double vaccinated or medically exempt.
- If you are not vaccinated and do not intend to be vaccinated because you have a particular health or belief reason for not wanting to be vaccinated, then please do not just resign, contact your GMB officer to discuss the next steps.
- This legislation does not apply to those staff that are employed in Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland.

Interested in being a GMB contact or Rep in your workplace?

[Become a workplace representative](#)

Not a GMB Member? Join [the union for care workers](#)



MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATIONS – SOCIAL CARE (ENGLAND ONLY)



Posted on: 10 November 2021

As of 11th November 2021, it is a legal requirement that anyone working in an adult residential social care home has to have been vaccinated with both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination, unless medically exempt. GMB opposed the Government proposals regarding this, but it will now become law. We continue to support and represent GMB members affected by this.

The Government have also recently proposed to extend this legal requirement to the wider social care sector and to also mandate the flu vaccination. GMB opposed these proposals again in the most recent consultation.

GMB is opposed to forced vaccinations of any worker and made this clear in both of the evidence submissions we made into the Government consultations on this issue. Both submissions were written following member surveys. You can access the full submissions at:

Making vaccination a condition of deployment in older adult care homes, May 2021.

[DHSCmandatoryvaccinations140521.pdf \(gmb.org.uk\)](#)

GMB Union response to Department for Health & Social Care Consultation on making vaccination a condition of deployment in the health and wider social care sector. October 2021.

[DHSCmandatoryNHSvaccinations22102021.pdf \(gmb.org.uk\)](#)

On the 9th November 2021, the Government published their report of the consultation responses. There were 34,900 responses, 65% were against mandatory vaccinations for health and social care workers. Despite this, they have announced their intentions to extend the legal requirement for more workers across the health and social care sectors to be in receipt of both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination.

More details will emerge in the coming weeks, but below is a [summary of what we know so far](#):



- Providers of CQC regulated activities in health and social care will have to ensure certain categories of workers are in receipt of both doses of the Covid-19 Vaccination.
- Affected workers will be those who have 'direct, face-to-face contact with service users'.
- These include front line workers, as well as non-clinical workers not directly involved in patient care but who nevertheless may have direct, face to face contact with patients, such as receptionists, ward clerks, porters and cleaners.
- This will also apply to agency workers, volunteers or trainees and those contracted to work for other providers.
- This will apply in public and privately funded settings, including hospitals, GP practices and where care is delivered in a person's home.
- Due to winter pressures and to allow legislation to pass through the parliamentary process, this will come into effect on 1st April 2022.

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- Under 18's.
- Those who are clinically exempt from Covid-19 vaccinations.
- Those taking part in Covid-19 clinical trials.
- Those who do not have direct, face-to-face contact with a service user e.g. those providing care remotely (triage, telephone consultations); managerial staff working in sites away from patient areas.
- Those providing care as part of a Shared Lives Agreement.

The Government did listen to our concerns regarding mandating the flu vaccine and have decided not to push ahead with that part of the proposal. Therefore, workers in health and social care in England will not be legally required to have the flu vaccine as a part of their employment, this is still encouraged though. This will be reviewed again after this winter and ahead of next winter.



GMB will continue to represent our members concerns at a national level as the guidance is drafted and the legislation passes through Parliament. We will continue to seek legal advice.

In the meantime, our [advice to members](#) is:

- Where possible, take up the opportunity to receive the Covid Vaccination.
- Your employer may start consulting with you to seek clarification into whether you have been vaccinated and where not, try to understand your reasons for refusal. Consideration for re-deployment options should also be given.
- You should ensure you represented at any formal meetings by your local GMB Representative. We can only represent GMB members.
- If these proposals pass through Parliament and become law and there are no redeployment options, your employer may have to terminate your employment on 1st April 2022 if you are not double vaccinated or medically exempt.
- If you are not vaccinated and do not intend to be vaccinated because you have a particular health or belief reason for not wanting to be vaccinated, then please do not just resign, contact your GMB officer to discuss the next steps.
- This legislation does not apply to those staff that are employed in Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland.

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[Become a workplace representative](#)

Not a GMB Member? Join [the union for care workers](#)

Facebook / Twitter: [@GMBSocialCare](#)

MANDATORY VACCINATION FOR FRONTLINE HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE WORKERS



Posted on: 1 October 2021



The Government in England made it law that all workers in adult residential care homes had to be Covid-19 vaccinated as a requirement of their employment. This will become law in England with effect from 11th November. GMB is opposed to mandatory vaccination of any worker and we stated this in our submission into the Government consultation on the issue.

Government in England have now launched a further consultation which seeks to:

- Extend the requirement for mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations to wider social care settings, including domiciliary care.
- Extend to health care settings.
- Make the flu vaccine mandatory for workers in health and social care settings.

GMB will be making a submission into this consultation to ensure the voices of our health and social care members are heard. We want to understand all the views of our members on this latest consultation. In order to do this, we have created this survey.

This proposal is one being made by the Government in England only. However, GMB has chosen to include our members outside of England in this survey so that they too can have their voices heard – so members in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are also encouraged to complete the survey.

Your answers will help us to understand the views of all of our members and ensure that all viewpoints are represented where possible.

This survey is totally confidential. Your manager will not know if you have completed it. We will use the results in our submission into this Government Consultation.

The more people that complete the survey, the stronger our evidence will become. So please do consider sharing this survey with other members and colleagues working in social care. It should take only a few minutes of your time to complete.

You can complete the survey online at gmb.org.uk/21vax

This survey closes on Friday 8th October 2021

KEEPING SAFE AT WORK



If you have concerns that you may have contracted Covid-19 in the workplace, please record your details on the GMB [COVID-19 Risk Register](#)

GMB's priority remains in keeping our members safe at work which is why throughout the Pandemic we have been regularly updating our Coronavirus Hub with all the information you need to keep yourself safe. [Visit the Coronavirus Hub](#)

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- [Barchester](#)
- [Four Seasons](#)
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- [The Huntercombe Group](#)
- [Larchwood](#)
- [Foster Carers](#)
- [Harbour Healthcare](#)
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HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE COVID-19 & FLU VACCINATION SURVEY



Posted on: 22 September 2021

The Government in England made it law that all workers in adult residential care homes had to be Covid-19 vaccinated as a requirement of their employment. This will become law in England with effect from 11th November. GMB is opposed to mandatory vaccination of any worker and we stated this in our submission into the Government consultation on the issue.

Government in England have now launched a further consultation which seeks to:



- Extend the requirement for mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations to wider social care settings, including domiciliary care.
- Extend to health care settings.
- Make the flu vaccine mandatory for workers in health and social care settings.

GMB will be making a submission into this consultation to ensure the voices of our health and social care members are heard. We want to understand all the views of our members on this latest consultation. In order to do this, we have created this survey.

This proposal is one being made by the Government in England only. However, GMB has chosen to include our members outside of England in this survey so that they too can have their voices heard – so members in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are also encouraged to complete the survey.

Your answers will help us to understand the views of all of our members and ensure that all viewpoints are represented where possible.

This survey is totally confidential. Your manager will not know if you have completed it. We will use the results in our submission into this Government Consultation.

The more people that complete the survey, the stronger our evidence will become. So please do consider sharing this survey with other members and colleagues working in social care. It should take only a few minutes of your time to complete.

You can complete the survey online at gmb.org.uk/21vax

This survey closes on Friday 8th October 2021

Not a GMB member

Join today and get involved – www.gmb.org.uk/join

Check out the Social Care Hub at – [The union for care workers | GMB](#)

MANDATORY VACCINATION IN CQC REGISTERED CARE SETTINGS



Posted on: 16 September 2021



Today 16th September 2021, is the date by which all those workers who are employed in a CQC registered care home would need to have had the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccination. The second dose has to have been administered by the 11th November 2021.

We were aware that there were to be medical exemptions, though what they were was not clear. What appeared to be clear was that if a member didn't fall within the exemption and hadn't had their 1st vaccine by today then their employment was at risk- subject to any ability to redeploy into another role not in a care home setting.

Yesterday, the government announced a temporary system for self-certification for medical exemptions from mandatory vaccination: [Temporary medical exemptions for COVID-19 vaccination of people working or deployed in care homes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/temporary-medical-exemptions-for-covid-19-vaccination-of-people-working-or-deployed-in-care-homes)

You can read GMB's response at: [Social care jab 'fudge' too late for tens of thousands sick with worry | GMB](#)

The most relevant section from the Government's exemption announcement states:

"On a temporary basis, from today, people working or volunteering in care homes who have a medical reason why they are unable to have a COVID-19 vaccine will be able to self-certify that they meet the medical exemption criteria, using the forms attached to this letter.

Care home workers who are exempt will need to sign the form attached to this letter and give this to their employer as proof of their temporary exemption status.

This temporary self-certification process has been introduced for a short period prior to the launch of the new NHS COVID Pass system which will go live imminently. Once the NHS COVID Pass system is launched, care home workers will need to apply for a formal medical exemption through that process.

This temporary self-certification will expire 12 weeks after the NHS COVID Pass system is launched."

It is important that you read the letter from the Director of Adult Social Care, that sets out what may be an exempt condition and interestingly includes a "time limited" exemption for pregnant women.

We are encouraging members who have not been vaccinated to approach their GMB Representative to raise any grievance or appeal that needs to be made if notice to terminate employment has already been given. If a member is applying for an exemption under the temporary self-certification, they do need to be clear that they do meet the criteria. If they do not that may have unforeseen consequences. So, an exemption form should be signed only if it is clear a member meets the criteria. We are awaiting the form and will post it once it is made available.



Government have also now launched a further consultation on extending mandatory vaccination to wider social care and health settings. They also propose to include the flu vaccination.

GMB will be responding to this consultation. Please keep an eye out for a member survey next week which will enable you to express your views on this issue.

Retention Crisis Deepens



Posted on: 4 August 2021

As you will know from the frontline the social care sector is facing a huge recruitment and retention crisis, a perfect storm of appalling pay and poor terms and conditions meant we went into the pandemic with over 100,000 vacancies across the UK, and this is only going to get worse with governments in England and employers forcing you to get vaccinated. The government's own estimates say that this could be up to another 70,000 workers in the sector leaving the sector by November.

This week we've now seen reports that several large care companies including HC-One **are offering signing bonus of £10,000 for night nurses**. This however welcome for those individuals is merely a sticking plaster.

[Read GMB's Response](#)

The only solution to dealing with the challenges government and providers have with recruitment in the sector is by addressing pay. And that is why GMB will be constant in calling out the need for this to be addressed as a priority. GMB is saying £15 per hour no less.

You are skilled workers that throughout the COVID pandemic and before have made many sacrifices for those you work for. It's time those that hold the purse strings recognised it.

Governments across the UK are talking about reforming the sector. The UK government has delayed and delayed reform. GMB is clear any reform must first and foremost mean investment in you, the workforce and your pay packets. The problems in social care can't be solved without paying you a salary that values the job you do.

The average salary in the UK is £15 per hours. We will be challenging politicians on why they think you're pay are worth any less than at least that.

We know it's going to get harder for many when government cuts universal credit by £20 per week after the end of September. Something they said they are not going to reverse. Universal credit is subsidising



poor pay for those in work including in care. Employers need to wake up – we cannot wait or rely on the politicians to pay up – what monies in the system should be going into your pay-packets as a priority.

Recruitment gimmicks, coercion or tinkering round edges isn't going to cut it. GMB reps and officers will continue to fight for you to make sure that their voices are heard.

Kelly Andrews

GMB Social Care Lead

Date: 19/7/2021

SELF-ISOLATION EXEMPTION

As Government stick to their 'Freedom Day' plans of easing all restrictions and mandatory mask wearing, Covid-19 cases continue to rise, and hospitals and ambulance services continue to face severe demand pressures. Chronic staffing shortages prior to the Pandemic are being made worse as absences increase due to fatigue, exhaustion, stress and anxiety and the thought of another wave of Covid-19, and the infamous ping of the Covid App.

The latest ill thought through response to this is to exempt health and social care workers for self-isolation guidance to allow them to attend work – and work only.

The latest guidance issued overnight, exempts health and social care workers from self-isolation so that they can attend work. However, they must go straight home after their shift, as the exemption doesn't apply to their personal life such as going to the supermarket or picking children up from school.

The guidance also requires daily testing of double vaccinated staff, the continued wearing of PPE – which GMB believes still does not offer the highest level of protection we believe our members need.

The guidance also requires for these workers not to be allowed to work with clinically vulnerable people, which is possibly most residents in care homes and patients who are ill in hospital.

GMB members are furious about this latest display of complete disregard for their health and safety. GMB will be working with local reps and members to ensure that their health and safety is a priority.

You can read GMBs press statement at: [**Health and social care workers self-isolation exemption 'one rule for them, one rule for us' | GMB**](#)

If you have concerns, please speak direct to your local GMB Representative.

FLU VACCINATION



Government have now published their annual national flu immunisation programme plan.

Health and social care workers are encouraged to be vaccinated. You can read full details about this, including information on considerations being given into how this plan will work alongside the Covid-19 vaccination programme and possible boosters.

National flu immunisation programme 2021 to 2022 letter – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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SELF-ISOLATION EXEMPTION



Posted on: 13 August 2021

From Monday 16 August, people who have had both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination or are aged under 18 will no longer be legally required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. The change was announced last month, as part of step 4 of the Government's COVID-19 roadmap. With 75% of people having received both doses of the vaccine, the majority of adults will no longer need to self-isolate if they are contacts.

As of Monday, double jabbed individuals and under 18s who are identified as close contacts by NHS Test and Trace will be advised to take a PCR test as soon as possible to check if they have the virus and for variants of concern. People can order a PCR home test online or by calling 119, or going to a test site.

As double jabbed people identified as close contacts are still at risk of being infected, people are advised to consider other precautions such as wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces, and limit contact with other people, especially with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable. They will not be required to self-isolate while they wait for the results of the PCR test.

Anyone who tests positive following the PCR test will still be legally required to self-isolate, irrespective of their vaccination status or age in order to break onwards chains of transmission. Meanwhile anyone who develops COVID-19 symptoms should self-isolate and get a PCR test, and remain in isolation until the result comes back.

From Monday, most double vaccinated health and social care staff who are close contacts of cases will be able to routinely return to work, provided they have had a negative PCR test. Daily LFD tests will need to be taken for 10 days as a precaution. Staff working with clinically extremely vulnerable patients or service users will need a risk assessment to be carried out by a designated person in the workplace before they return to work.

This new guidance supersedes previous Public Health England (PHE) guidance.

The following safeguards must be implemented for workers to safely attend work and be exempt from isolation:



- A negative PCR test prior to returning to their NHS workplace. Staff should not attend work whilst waiting for the result.
- Have received both doses of the vaccination at least 14 days previously.
- Daily LFD tests for a minimum of 10 days. If a positive test result is received at any time, they should isolate and arrange to take a PCR test.
- Must not have any Covid-19 symptoms.
- Continued use of IPC measures, in line with current UK IPC Guidance.
- Must be an up-to-date individual risk assessment and be working in an appropriate setting for their risk status, including redeployment to lower risk areas where appropriate.

If any of the above criteria cannot be met, or they have not had two doses of the vaccine, or they are living directly (same household) with a positive contact, they should continue to isolate in line with government guidance.

Providing all of the qualifying criteria is met, the individual may be exempt from isolation and return to work. This exemption will also apply for outside of work, unlike the previous exemption.

The Government press release regarding this can be accessed at: [Self-isolation removed for double jabbed close contacts from 16 August](#)

MANADATORY VACCINATION IN ADULT SOCIAL CARE HOMES

GMB has advised members that they should, where possible, take up the opportunity to receive the Covid Vaccination.

In England, The Department of Health and Social Care has published its guidance regarding the mandatory (required) vaccination status of anyone working or volunteering in a care home to protect residents from coronavirus (COVID-19). The guidance is aimed at service providers, registered persons, local authorities, workers, professionals, and tradespeople entering care homes, and residents of care homes regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) that provide accommodation for those requiring nursing. All the mentioned groups must be fully vaccinated i.e., have had **both** jabs by 11 November 2021, unless exempt under regulations.



Therefore, on the 16th September all staff within the above categories should have received their first vaccination, if not your employer may start consulting with you to seek clarification into your reasons for refusal if you are unable to provide proof of vaccination or exemption, then your manager should explore all options available to you.

However, you should note that the regulations in ENGLAND may allow your employer to terminate your employment if you are not double vaccinated or medically exempt as you will no longer be able to work in the home from the 11th November 2021.

If you are not vaccinated and do not intend to be vaccinated because you have a particular health or belief reason for not wanting to be vaccinated, then please do not just resign, contact your GMB officer to discuss the next steps.

This legislation does not apply to those staff that are employed in Wales, Northern Ireland & Scotland. GMB is aware that many care providers are, however, imposing the same requirement for proof of vaccination as they are in England. If your employer has advised you that they will be dismissing you because you have not been vaccinated and you have medical or other reasons why you are unable to take the Covid vaccine, do not resign, contact your GMB officer to discuss your individual situation.

COVID-19 VACCINATION



Posted on: 20 January 2021

The latest update given to GMB is that one third of all care home residents and one third of all social care staff have already received one dose of the vaccine. The aim is that all care home residents will have been vaccinated by the end of January.

Further guidance has now been issued to social care providers and local authorities regarding the programme of vaccinating all frontline social care staff – irrespective of employer or where care is delivered.

Scope for priority vaccines is:

- All frontline social care workers directly working with people clinically vulnerable to Covid-19 who need care and support irrespective of where they work (for example in people's own homes, day centres, care homes for working age adults or supported housing); whether they care for clinically vulnerable adults or children; or who they are



employed by (for example local government, NHS, private sector or third sector employees).

- 16–18-year-olds employed, studying or in training for health and social care work should also be offered the vaccine with their colleagues if a suitable vaccine is available.

The following are, however, not eligible within this priority group as defined by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI):

- Administrative staff who do not have any direct contact with clients.
- Social care workers working with children who are not considered priority within the context of the JCVI priority cohorts 1–9 (children under 16 who do not have underlying health conditions leading to greater risk of disease or mortality and children who have no underlying health conditions).
- Unpaid carers.

More details of the latest guidance issued can be accessed online using the link below. This also contains information and actions required of local authorities, care providers and community-based frontline social care workers from page 14 onwards. [Report template – NHSI website \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/reports-and-publications/report-template/)

As frontline care workers you should be aware of your right to access a vaccination as a priority group. If you haven't already, you should receive the national offer for vaccination, consent form, relevant vaccination leaflets and local information about how to access vaccinations. This will also include information from Public Health England (PHE) for women of childbearing age.

Unions requested a briefing on the Covid-19 Vaccination via the NHS Social Partnership Forum (SPF) this week to raise some of the queries being received from our members across health and social care. The briefing was given by representatives from the NHSE Vaccination Programme, Health Education England (HEE) and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). Some of the key points covered were:

- 4.4 million people vaccinated in one month.



- Aim is to get the over 70's, plus Shielding vaccinated by middle of February.
- Over 60% of over 80's vaccinated.
- 60% care home residents have been vaccinated.
- Shielding staff should continue to shield regardless of how many vaccines they have had.
- Breastfeeding has now been taken out the list of cautions and women can be vaccinated.
- Pregnant workers should have a conversation with the healthcare professional or GP – not necessarily ruled out.
- No evidence or logical way that it should affect fertility.
- Anyone who is patient facing should be vaccinated – irrespective of employer or job title.
- Employers have been advised to use occupational health registers to prioritise workers for the vaccine 1st dose. Regarding 2nd dose – it remains at 12 weeks.
- High vaccine uptake is crucial.

With regards the vaccination itself, some key points discussed in the briefing were:

- The vaccines need to be given as a two-dose schedule and the second dose can be given up to 12 weeks later. Priority should be given to giving the first dose.
- Pfizer – very high protection after one dose.
- Moderna vaccine is almost identical to Pfizer – except they gave their 2nd dose at 28 days later, instead of 21 days.
- Oxford AstraZeneca – 2nd dose given at many different times. 60% beyond 6 weeks, many at 12 weeks. Protective effect from 1st dose lasts for at least 12 weeks.



- All three trials show lots of protection after the 1st dose. All use the same protein. The platforms are different in getting it into the body – but the spike protein is the same. So not expecting the immune response to differ between them. Scientific point of view – do not feel there is a strong reason to suspect there will be any difference. Good evidence to suggest that 1st dose will generate a good response that will last for at least 12 weeks.
- From a public health point of view – the decision was taken to ensure twice the number of people to be vaccinated, rather than a smaller number.
- Reality is we have the choice between vaccinating more health and social care workers with one vaccine or less health and social care workers with two.
- The UK has one of the best vaccination systems in the world. So if any signal of danger (poor protection), PHE will spot this from UK data.
- Consent for vaccination is required, but not the form itself. Need consent each time a vaccination is given – it's not consent for the second dose being given three weeks later.
- Evidence from the clinical trials shows that anyone who contracts Covid-19 after the vaccination is likely to have less severe reaction to the virus compared to those who have not been vaccinated.
- Do not mix vaccines is the very clear advice at this time. But there is flexibility if someone does not know what vaccine they had 1st – but this should not be an issue in the UK where people have been vaccinated here.
- There are enough vaccines for the current Cohorts being prioritised.

More Information:

Most clinical questions can be answered in the [Greenbook, Chapter 14a](#) which is regularly updated.

Royal College of Midwives has issued [updated advice on COVID-19 vaccination in pregnancy and women who are breastfeeding](#).

You can read GMB's most recent statement on Covid-19 [Vaccinations](#)



KEEPING SAFE AT WORK & RISK ASSESSMENTS

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) has issued further advice as a result of the new variant of Covid-19 on ways to mitigate transmission risks.

“Existing mitigation measures (social distancing, ventilation, hand hygiene and mask usage) remain important, but given the increase in risk associated with the new variant, a commensurate strengthening in the measures taken may be needed.”

This means that because the virus is more infectious and the risk has increased, greater use of all these mitigations and a review of all risk assessments should be performed. The full set of any measures outlined in a risk assessment now needs to be implemented to the fullest.

Some key points to note in keeping workplaces safe for all:

- Every worker who can work from home must do so.
- All clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) (shielding) workers must remain at home.
- Standards of ventilation should be the highest achievable. This does not mean ignoring temperatures and regular temperature checks should be carried out.
- Social distancing must be rigorously adhered to in all areas including communal areas, common parts and canteens.
- Handwashing must be maintained, and wash facilities provided.
- Hygiene standards must be the highest achievable in terms of cleanliness and frequency of cleaning.
- All requirements for PPE and face coverings must be met in full with access to supplies as needed.
- Every worker who has been identified as being at a higher risk from Covid-19 should be individually assessed and suitable additional measures implemented.
- All workers who are required to self-isolate must be able to do so without fear of detriment.



GMB expects that GMB Health & Safety Representatives are involved in all workplace inspections and that these are carried out as frequently as possible, and daily if appropriate to do so. There should be regular (daily if possible) health and safety meetings to discuss and address current issues as they arise. Communication and updates with the whole workforce is essential.

If you have any concerns about health and safety in your workplace or regarding your individual risk assessment, please speak to your local GMB Representative immediately.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SOCIAL CARE TO BOOST STAFFING LEVELS

On Saturday 16th January the Government announced an additional £269 million to boost staff levels and testing in social care. This was in response to the on-going staffing crisis in social care as absence rates continue to rise as staff test positive for Covid-19 and follow self-isolation guidance.

However, the additional funding is actually £120 million, as the remaining £149 million referred to, is the funding already pledged in December to increase testing capacity and facilitate in making visits from family and friends possible and safe.

The £120 million is to be used by local authorities to address staffing shortages as they arise; continue to restrict staff movement between care homes where possible; support administrative tasks so that experienced staff can focus on providing care; and help existing staff to take on additional hours if they wish with overtime payments by covering childcare costs.

Whilst we welcome the additional funding, GMB believes that without a real living wage, contractual sick pay and professional recognition of the social care workforce, the money will be of little use in protecting and supporting the sector.

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Get It Right! GMB Coronavirus Hub

If you have concerns that you may have contracted Covid-19 in the workplace, please record your details on the GMB **COVID-19 Risk Register**

Date: 14/11/2021

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)



GMB continues to have concerns about the safety of our members in the workplace, specifically regarding PPE. We continue to hear reports of PPE that is low in quality and protection. GMB has consistently called on Government to review Public Health England guidance and increase the level of protection available to our members working in health and social care.

This issue is a priority more than ever now as we see the effects of a new strain of the virus with higher transmission rates. The Government have a responsibility to do everything in their power now to protect workers.

GMB has contacted Government again calling on them to increase PPE guidance to level 3 for all health and social care workers who need it.

[READ A COPY OF OUR PRESS STATEMENT & LETTER HERE](#)

COVID-19 VACCINATION – ENGLAND

New operational guidance has now been issued regarding the vaccination of frontline health and social care workers. This provides for an immediate requirement to vaccinate frontline health and social care workers.

NHS Trusts (including acute, mental health, community and ambulance trusts) have now been instructed to establish 'hospital hubs' by mid-January with responsibility for vaccination of individuals. It outlines that priority is to be given to frontline staff at 'high risk of acquiring infection, at high individual risk of developing serious disease, or at risk of transmitting infection to multiple vulnerable persons or other staff in a healthcare environment. This includes:

- frontline social care workers directly working with vulnerable people who need care and support irrespective of where they work (for example in hospital, people's own homes, day centres, or supported housing); or who they are employed by (for example local government, NHS, independent sector or third sector).

GMB supports the vaccination programme and the prioritisation of all health and social care workers. However, we understand there may be reasons why an individual cannot be vaccinated. Individuals should discuss any issues or concerns they have with their line manager and contact your local GMB Representative for support if required.

The Government have published detailed information regarding the vaccine for social care workers which we would advise our members to read. It can be accessed at:



COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for social care staff – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Guidance has also been issued for women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding. It can be accessed at:

COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

GMB attends weekly stakeholder meetings with the Department of Health and Social Care to discuss the national vaccine programme and will ensure you are aware of developments and further advice when it becomes available.

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Follow and like our Facebook Page – **GMB Social Care**

Follow us on Twitter – [@GMBSocialCare](https://twitter.com/GMBSocialCare)

Date: 12/01/2021

GMB Letter to Secretary of State for Health & Social Care

GMB have written to Matt Hancock raising our members' concerns around the current guidance for PPE in Health & Social Care settings.



Our suggestions included:

“...specifying higher performance face coverings and masks, this should particularly be considered in settings where people are more vulnerable to the consequences of the disease and/or are more likely to be infectious.”

“...engineering, procedural and personal controls... [to be] applied rigorously to ensure they are effective.”

“Organisations and individuals should reassess their environments in the light of new evidence about transmissibility of the new variant to consider whether they have maximised all the steps they can take to reduce the probability of transmission.”

The full letter is available to read [here](#), we will update the noticeboard in the event we receive a response.

Date: 11/01/2021

HCMS Covid 19 Remuneration Guide

The healthcare employer has released its remuneration guide for permitted and paid absence including furlough, sickness, and self-isolation after testing.

[Read the full guide here](#)

Date: 06/01/2021

TESTING

Government have committed an additional £149 million to increase Covid-19 testing in care homes. The money will be distributed by local authorities to care homes in their areas. This money is to be used to ensure staff are tested twice per week with rapid tests – this is **in addition to** the weekly PCR tests that



you should already be having. Twice weekly rapid testing of staff will assist care providers that have to move staff between care homes due to staffing levels.

The funding can also be used to help care homes in Tiers 1, 2 and 3 with costs arising from facilitating visits from family and friends.

VACCINATION

Social care residents and care workers are to be prioritised for vaccinations. GPs have been asked to prioritise care home residents and staff out of their supplies of the vaccine and have been encouraged to administer vaccines in care home settings before the end of January. There should be 12 weeks maximum between first and second dose – both doses must be from the same vaccine type.

Your employer should be communicating with you on this with details of how you will be able to access the vaccine. If you have any concerns please speak with your local GMB Representative.

NHS England have a dedicated webpage where you can access all the latest information on the vaccine programme – [Coronavirus » COVID-19 vaccination programme \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination-programme/)

Statistics regarding the numbers of vaccinations will also be regularly updated at – [Statistics » COVID-19 Vaccinations \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccinations/)

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Employers must carry out a risk assessment, looking specifically at risks of exposure to Covid-19. All steps must be taken to reduce the risk of employees catching the virus to as low as possible. Risk assessments must be carried out by a **‘competent’** person – someone who knows and understands both the workplace and the work. In GMB recognised workplaces, we expect Safety Reps to be consulted on any risk assessment carried out.

Once the risk assessment is performed and the necessary measures are in place, it is critical that the standards are upheld, and the risk assessment regularly reviewed to ensure it is still accurate. During the current Covid pandemic, the situation is changing regularly and dramatically, and three months is too long between inspections and meetings. GMB firmly believes that inspections should be much more frequent, and specific to consider primarily Covid issues.



For most workplaces, a weekly inspection and committee meeting should be implemented, to ensure that any issues identified can be urgently addressed. In some workplace where either the Covid risk is high, or workers are grouped into many cohorts (small teams), it may be better to organise daily floor walks, so that cohorts do not have to mix. Whichever method is adopted, the most important consideration is that issues can be quickly identified and addressed, and the information can be quickly shared with the workforce.

GMB expects employers to be updating risk assessments in consideration of the new variants of the virus. Please speak to your local GMB Rep if you have concerns about risk assessments in your workplace.

GMB's priority remains in keeping our members safe at work which is why throughout the Pandemic we have been regularly updating our Coronavirus Hub with all the information you need to keep yourself safe. You can check it out at: [Get It Right | The Coronavirus Hub | GMB](#)

If you have concerns that you may have contracted Covid-19 in the workplace, please record your details on the GMB Risk Register at: [COVID-19 Risk Register | GMB](#)

SOCIAL CARE NOTICEBOARDS

You can read and share the latest guidance and advice for social care members on the GMB websites dedicated noticeboards. Please keep checking regularly for updates.

- [Barchester Noticeboard](#)
- [Four Seasons Noticeboard](#)
- [HC-One Noticeboard](#)
- [The Huntercombe Group Noticeboard](#)
- [Larchwood Noticeboard](#)
- [Foster Carers' Noticeboard](#)
- [Harbour Healthcare Noticeboard](#)
- [Social Care in Wales Noticeboard](#)



UNION VISITS TO YOUR WORKPLACE

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However, we want you to know that we are still here. We are considering a variety of ways that we can get information to you and engage with you on your issues in the workplace. One way to do this is to arrange a virtual online meeting for your workplace. If you would like to book one of these please contact your local GMB representative or email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

ARE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS CORRECT?

It is essential that your membership details are up to date so that we can ensure you are kept up to date with advice and guidance relevant to you.

You can update your details by contacting your local GMB Representative or online using the GMB website at gmb.org.uk/mygmb-edit

Not a GMB Member? Join today gmb.org.uk/join

[More information about being a GMB Representative in your workplace?](#)

Follow and like our Facebook Page – [GMB Social Care](#)

Follow us on Twitter – [@GMBSocialCare](#)

Date: 21/12/20

END OF YEAR ROUND UP



As the year comes to an end, GMB Union wants to thank all social care members for their hard work and efforts during the year and for their continued membership with GMB.

This year has been extremely difficult for everyone, but especially for all those who continued to work throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic providing essential services within our social care system. We have had to collectively fight from the start of Covid-19 to ensure our members were protected – physically, mentally and financially.

We have made many representations to Ministers and the Department of Health & Social Care, ensuring they knew the reality of what our members were facing on the frontline.

We have had some successes throughout the year which include:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for social care workers in residential care who had initially been excluded from Public Health England and government guidance. GMB and other Unions campaigned to make sure you had access to the PPE needed to keep you safe at work.
- Influenced the government's taking back central control of the logistics for delivery and supply of PPE which included ensuring social care received essential equipment.
- Free car parking for social care workers.
- Government funding to pay full and normal pay for residential social care staff who were off work due to Covid-19.
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) payable from day one, instead of day four of sickness.
- Inclusion in the Furlough Scheme for vulnerable social care workers.
- Access to regular testing.
- Death in Service Life Assurance Scheme for Covid-19 deaths.

It is without doubt that all social care workers have been consistently failed throughout Covid-19 and that is why GMB will not stop calling for an independent inquiry into the Government's handling of the Pandemic. Unfortunately, that inquiry will come too late for the hundreds of health and social care workers who have lost their lives.



GMB's priority remains in keeping our members safe at work which is why throughout the Pandemic we have been regularly updating our Coronavirus Hub with all the information you need to keep yourself safe.

GMB Coronavirus Hub

If you have concerns that you may have contracted Covid-19 in the workplace, please record your details on the GMB Risk Register.

COVID-19 Risk Register

Covid-19 Vaccination

It is with great relief that some of our elderly population have now been vaccinated. It will take many months for people in the prioritised categories to be vaccinated but we hope to see the vaccination programme roll out speedily and efficiently over the coming months.

Health and social care workers have been identified as a priority group of workers to be vaccinated and we have already started to see some social care staff be vaccinated, although the vast majority will not have access until the New Year.

GMB supports the Covid-19 vaccination programme and would encourage our members to have both the Flu and Covid-19 vaccination. However, this is not mandatory, and we understand that some of our members are not able to be vaccinated e.g. for health reasons; pregnancy; etc. We therefore would expect that no member suffers a financial detriment as a result of not being vaccinated. If you have any concerns regarding this, please speak with your local GMB Representative.

Mental Health in Social Care

A mental health crisis is looming within social care. This comes after years of austerity and cuts to services. The inability of the care sector to recruit and retain staff led to a 110,000+ vacancy crisis prior to Covid-19. Almost a year of fighting Covid-19, with little or no time to rest and recover before we headed into the second wave and winter has left many social care staff unable to cope.

Thank you to those who took part in the recent GMB mental health survey. We would now like to ask you some more questions so we can understand what we need to do next in this crucial area for our social care members. You can complete the survey online at gmb.org.uk/mhCARE



COMPLETE THE SURVEY

If you are struggling, please speak out.

Mental Health Resources

Are your contact details correct?

It is essential that your membership details are up to date so that we can ensure you are kept up to date with developments in social care issues relevant to you.

You can update your details by contacting your local GMB Representative or [online using the GMB website](#).

Union Visits to your Workplace

It will be many months before we see a return to any form of 'normality'. Covid-19 will still present a danger to social care workers and the people you care for. As a result, it means that your GMB Union Representatives may continue to have difficulties visiting you in your workplaces. However, we want you to know that we are still here. We are considering a variety of ways that we can get information to you and engage with you on your issues in the workplace. One way to do this is to arrange a virtual online meeting for your workplace. If you would like to book one of these please contact your local GMB representative or email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

GMB Representative Taster Sessions

Have you ever been interested in the role of GMB Representative in your workplace but unsure whether you have the skills or can commit the time? Why not join one of our Social Care Rep Taster Sessions? If you're interested, email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk and we will be in touch with more details.

Lee Mead – Exclusive Ticket Giveaway



Lee Mead is best known for winning the title role in the 2007 West End revival of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat through the BBC's show 'Any Dream Will Do'. He is also known for starring in Casualty and Holby City.

As a thank you to GMB key workers he is giving away 1000 tickets to his 2021 tour in England and Wales. You can enter the ballot to win two tickets at: <https://bit.ly/3oUK0zj>

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

The Pandemic is far from over as we continue through the second wave of Covid-19 and face the winter pressures. GMB will continue to be by your side throughout.

We hope that you get some time over the Christmas holidays to rest and spend time with your families and loved ones. We wish you and your families a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

[GMB Social Care](#) on Facebook – Twitter – [@GMBSocialCare](#)

Date: 06/11/20

FLU VACCINATION 2020

This year due to the Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid-19), [free flu vaccinations are being made available to all health and social care workers](#).

As in previous years, GMB Union supports the campaign. Ensuring health and social care workers are vaccinated will assist in our collective efforts to reduce the risks of spreading infections. This is especially important in social care in order to protect the people you care for, as well as to protect yourself.

Vaccinations are just one way to reduce the impact of flu on the NHS and within social care settings. However, we fully support our members' choice on this issue and would not support it becoming mandatory. Social care staff have the right to make their own choice about whether or not to be vaccinated, without fear of being pressurised or bullied. Staff should be protected from any detriment as a result of refusing to be vaccinated.

If you have concerns about any of the above, you should speak immediately with your local GMB Representative.



TRACK & TRACE ADVICE (ENGLAND)

Revised guidance has been published by the Government, '[Covid-19: Management of staff and exposed patients or residents in health and social care settings.](#)'

In summary, social care settings are effectively out of the scope of Test and Trace in terms of contact tracing under this new guidance. This means that if you come into close contact with a resident or service user who tests positive for Covid-19, you will be exempt from the requirements to self-isolate for 14 days, on the presumption that you would have been wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). However, where members are in close contact without PPE being worn, then GMB believes that this should still be considered as close contact – examples could include in rest areas and on breaks.

GMB Union has concerns about the introduction of these rules and believe they have been introduced to stop whole care homes having to close because all staff are self-isolating. The exposure risk still exists when facemasks and PPE are not being worn, so any reports of close contacts under these circumstances should be taken seriously and acted upon.

If you have any concerns regarding this, please speak to your local GMB Representative.

Check out the [GMB Coronavirus Hub](#) for all the up to date advice on your rights and keeping safe at work.

JOIN GMB'S PAY JUSTICE CAMPAIGN!

PPE & A WINTER PLAN IN SOCIAL CARE – COVID-19

The Government recently published their Winter Plan for Social Care which places responsibility on your employer to provide you a safe place of work and full sick pay for any Covid-19 related absence.

These responsibilities include:

Access government funding for infection, prevention and control measures to pay full sick pay for all staff who have to take time off work due to Covid-19 reasons.

- Restrict all, but essential, movement of staff between care homes.



- Access free PPE stocks and ensure all staff have the appropriate PPE in line with current guidance.
- Implement Covid-19 policies to include:
 1. Undertaking a learning review after an outbreak.
 2. PPE policy on appropriate use, supply, reporting shortages, etc.
 3. Training for all care staff on infection, prevention and control.
 4. Identified a lead for infection, prevention and control for Covid-19.
 5. Guidance for staff who may have to self-isolate.
 6. Limiting staff movement between care homes unless absolutely necessary.
 7. Guidance for staff on how to access testing.
 8. Policy on new admissions.
 9. Policy on visits to the care home.
- Undertake individual risk assessments for all staff who are at increased risk. (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, people that have been shielding, pregnant workers, etc.)

If your employer is not doing any of the above, you need to report this to your GMB Rep.

Please contact your GMB Rep directly for full details and support.

Full Sick Pay

GMB has been campaigning for full sick pay to be a contractual right for all social care workers. The recent success in this campaign is that the Government have provided additional funded to enable your employer to pay full sick pay for Covid-19 related absences.

However, for us to succeed in securing full sick pay all year round and for all illnesses – we need your support.



SIGN THE PETITION

Once you have signed the petition, please share it with you work colleagues and share on your social media pages.

Personal Protective Equipment

The issue of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in social care has been one of the huge problems faced by GMB members working in social care during the Coronavirus Pandemic. The social care workforce were originally excluded from Government and Public Health England Guidance. The GMB was successful in getting this guidance amended.

READ THE FULL GUIDANCE

The NHS was asked by the Department of Health & Social Care to assist social care settings in the training of Infection, Prevention and Control (IPC), which will include training for staff on the appropriate use of PPE.

Guidance was amended again on 21st May 2020 and can be accessed here:

AMMENDED GUIDANCE

Key points to note are:

- Gloves and aprons should be used for single use only and disposed after each service user / resident contact.
- Sessional use means 1 worker, 1 shift.
- Gowns or coveralls can be used for an entire session of work in higher risk areas, but staff should not move between Covid and no-Covid areas.
- Fluid repellant surgical masks (FRSM) and eye protection can be used for an entire session of work.



- PPE must be changed when moving between Covid Positive and Non-Positive residents / service users.
- Any PPE that is suitable for reuse (in cases of extreme shortages) is to be reused by that individual only and not shared amongst workers, with appropriate cleaning performed after each use. A detergent product either combined / sequentially with a decontamination product should be used to clean the item, rinsed thoroughly and left to dry.
- Reusable face masks should be carefully folded so the outer surface is held inwards and should be stored in a clean sealable bag / box marked with the person's name. Fit checks should be performed each time a respirator is donned if it is reused.
- Hand hygiene should be practiced and extended to exposed forearms, after the removal of PPE.
- All staff should adhere to social distancing (2 meters) wherever possible, particularly if not wearing PPE and in non-clinical communal areas.

It is essential that all social care staff wear the appropriate PPE. When doing so, staff are reminded that they are entitled to take regular breaks and rest periods, ensuring that you increase your fluid intake. Breaks should be staggered to limit the numbers of staff in communal rest areas.

MANDATORY VACCINATION FOR SOCIAL CARE WORKERS



Posted on: 18 June 2021

The Government's consultation on mandatory Covid-19 vaccinations for social care workers in adult care homes has now closed and the disappointing decision has been taken by Ministers to make the Covid-19 vaccination mandatory for some social care workers.



GMB union supports vaccinations. However, we do not support the forcing of vaccinations on social care workers. We believe there is a lot more that Government could do to understand vaccine hesitancy amongst the social care workforce and put more education and measures in place to address concerns. Instead, some social care workers are facing dismissal from employment in 16 weeks if they are not vaccinated (except for those with specified medical exemptions).

You can read our response to the announcement at: [‘Ill thought through’ plan to mandate vaccinations could lead to care staff ‘exodus’ | GMB](#)

You can read GMBs statement on vaccinations at: [Vaccination | GMB](#)

What does this decision mean?

Government will now bring forward Regulations that will require all CQC regulated service providers of nursing and personal care, in care homes in England, to allow entry to the premises only those who can demonstrate evidence of having had a complete course of an authorised Covid-19 vaccine (or evidence that they are exempt from vaccination). This requirement will only apply indoors and will exclude residents, friends or relatives of residents who are visiting, persons providing emergency assistance or urgent maintenance work in the care home, and those under the age of 18 years.

This policy will apply to all CQC registered care homes in England which provide accommodation for persons who require nursing or personal care.

The policy will also apply to all persons who enter a care home, regardless of their role (excluding those mentioned above). This will include professional visiting a care home, such as healthcare workers, tradespeople, hairdressers and beauticians, and CQC Inspectors. It will not apply to persons who only work in the outdoor surrounding grounds of care home premises.

Government have also confirmed that they are currently considering whether to extend this policy to other high-risk groups and settings, such as younger peoples care homes and hospitals. The consideration is also being given as to whether this should be an on-going requirement across all health and social care.

Government is also considering whether the policy should extend to include the flu vaccination.

Affected social care workers who have not been vaccinated, now have 16 weeks to receive both doses of the Covid-19 vaccination, or face dismissal from employment.

You can read the full Government response at:



What are your legal rights?

A message from GMB's Legal Director:

"GMB is opposed to a mandatory requirement for care home employees (or any other employees) to be vaccinated. We urge the government to think carefully before embarking on this course of action.

If the government takes this course and an employer thinks that this gives them the green light to dismiss our members then that is incorrect.

Any employee dismissed because they have not been vaccinated may potentially have a claim for unfair dismissal. We would have to see the detail of the case and also the legal instrument the Government employs to bring in mandatory vaccination in the care sector.

All employer's would still need to act reasonably in treating non-vaccination as a reason to terminate employment; that employer would still be obliged to look for alternative work for the employee to undertake.

For employers outside of the care sector – and assuming the Government persists in making it mandatory in that field of work– they really do need to tread very carefully in asserting that they will never employ those who are not vaccinated or dismiss those who refuse to be vaccinated.

The far better way to tackle concerns over being vaccinated is to educate and reassure. Many care home employers have been doing exactly that and have seen good take up– when the value of being vaccinated is explained cogently to employees then people get the message; when people are allowed paid time off to get their jab then take up is good; where employers pay full sick pay so that anyone experiencing a reaction to the jab knows they won't lose wages if they have to take time off– then take up improves.

It seems that once again a sector occupied by low paid female workers is being used as a guinea pig profession by the Government to see if society will tolerate mandatory vaccination– that simply cannot be right. At one stage we were clapping on a Thursday to show our thanks for the work these people did during the pandemic, now the government hopes we will get behind insisting they be vaccinated so they can continue to be employed".



What's next?

GMB has already contacted some of the national care providers we are recognised with to try to understand what they intend to do now on this issue. Please keep an eye on the GMB noticeboards for updates.

Are you a GMB member that hasn't been vaccinated and are concerned about what this means for you? Please contact your local GMB Representative to discuss further. If you do not know who your GMB Representative is, please email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

COVID-19 VACCINATION SELF-REFERRAL BOOKING PORTAL

It has been confirmed to unions that the Portal is still available for health and social care workers to use to book their vaccination and there are not any suggestions that it will be removed. Most people are being picked up via the main routes but this will remain as an additional route for staff to access vaccines.

Using the National Booking Service is quick and simple. You can do it online at nhs.uk/CovidVaccination, or by calling 119 if you can't use the internet.

KEEPING SAFE AT WORK

If you have concerns that you may have contracted Covid-19 in the workplace, please record your details on the GMB [COVID-19 Risk Register](#)

GMB's priority remains in keeping our members safe at work which is why throughout the Pandemic we have been regularly updating our Coronavirus Hub with all the information you need to keep yourself safe. [Visit the Coronavirus Hub](#)

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- **Larchwood**
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- **Harbour Healthcare**
- **Social Care in Wales**

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Not a GMB Member? [Join today](#)

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Check out the GMB Social Care Hub – [The union for care workers | GMB](#)

Like our [Facebook Page](#)

Follow us on Twitter – [@GMBSocialCare](#)

RESTRICTING STAFF MOVEMENT BETWEEN CARE HOMES



Posted on: 9 June 2021

In November 2020, GMB submitted evidence into the Government's Consultation on restricting the movement of staff across care homes as a measure of infection prevention and control.

Whilst GMB was generally supportive of the proposal it would have proven difficult to adhere to due to staff shortages and low pay across the sector which results in many care workers having several jobs in order to make ends meet.

The Government have now responded to the consultation submissions. In summary, they have confirmed that they will not be moving forwards with the proposals to restrict the movement of staff between care homes at this time. They acknowledged concerns regarding staffing levels and reiterated that they have recently announced £120 million funding to support local authorities in boosting staffing levels.

You can read the Government's full response at: [Stopping movement of staff between care settings: response to consultation – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

IMMIGRATION HEALTH SURCHARGE



If you work in health and social care and have paid the Immigration Health Surcharge (or it was paid for you and you are now repaying it to an employer), you may be able to claim your money back from HM Government.

Reimbursements are made on a 6-monthly basis in arrears, provided you have worked for an average of at least 16 hours per week over the full period.

Applications are now being processed for the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021, though it is possible to backdate a claim to 31 March 2020 if you haven't already applied.

You must have worked for at least 16 hours per week during that period, but this can be in more than one eligible job. Reimbursement payments are processed in six-month instalments in arrears.

Eligible applicants can now:

Apply online – [Apply for your immigration health surcharge reimbursement – GOV.UK \(immigration-health-surcharge-reimbursement.service.gov.uk\)](https://immigration-health-surcharge-reimbursement.service.gov.uk)

Find out more about the scheme – [Immigration health surcharge: applying for reimbursement – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Immigration Health Surcharge Research

The NHS BSA are currently working on a piece of research around the Immigration Health Surcharge, which is paid as part of a UK Immigration visa application.

What the research is about

Eligible individuals who have been working in the health and care sector for on average 16 hours per week starting from or after the 31st March 2020 and have paid their IHS, will be able to apply for a reimbursement. We'd like to talk to people who feel they may be eligible for a reimbursement. The research will help us to design a service that meets the needs of the people using it.

What the research involves

Participants will be testing out the online service or a prototype that will help to support people to get a reimbursement. We'd like to get your feedback on what it was like to use and how we could improve it. We may also be conducting short interviews. The research session will take no longer than 1 hour and will be done remotely.

Participants will receive a gift voucher for taking part in this research.



Who can take part

We'd like to talk to a wide range of people in different job roles in the health (NHS) and social care sector e.g. health assistants, care home managers, receptionists or cleaners.

You'll be over 18 and:

- a Tier 2 (General) visa holder
- a Tier 4 (Student) visa holder who is working in the health and social care sector alongside their studies
- a dependant of a Tier 2 (General) or Tier 4 (Student) visa holder who is working in the health and the social care sector
- a dependant of a UK national or another migrant
- Tier 5 Medical Training Initiative (MTI) visa holder

If you'd like to find out more about this research or would like to take part, email nhsbsa.ihs-research@nhs.net

Date: 28/05/2021

COVID-19 VACCINATION

51.6 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccinations have been administered in England. Currently vaccines are being offered to 32-year-olds (Cohort 11) and efforts continue on encouraging people to have their second doses.

The variant identified in India is causing concerns and those that are being admitted into hospital with it, are usually those who have not had the vaccine. The offer of a vaccine remains open. If you have been offered the vaccine and previously refused, you can still come forward now and have your vaccination.



Advice regarding second doses of the vaccine have now changed. Individuals in Cohorts 1-9, which includes health and social care workers, are now advised to have their second doses within 8-9 weeks of their first, rather than 11-12 weeks as initially stated. For people in Cohorts 10+, it is still advised that 11-12 weeks will suffice.

An FAQ has been produced on second doses and can be accessed at: [C1254-covid-19-vaccination-programme-faqs-on-second-dose-v2.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

INFECTION, PREVENTION & CONTROL (IPC) GUIDANCE

Throughout the Pandemic, there have been many changes made to IPC Guidance in health and social care settings. Links to the current setting specific guidance can now all be accessed in one place.

This includes guidance on PPE and ventilation, primary and secondary care, care homes and social care, community and home care, ambulance and first responders.

You can access this online at: [covid-19-compendium-of-guidance-and-information-v7.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)

FREE CAR PARKING

At the start of the Pandemic, GMB and other unions called on Ministers to waive on street and in bay car parking charges for health and social care workers, to ensure they were able to travel to and from work in as safe an environment as possible.

With infection rates being on the rise once more, the Pandemic is far from over for our key workers in health and social care.

It is therefore a disgrace, that Government have seen it as being an appropriate time to amend the guidance with an end date of 21st June 2021, without any consultation with or notification to trade unions.

GMB has written to the Secretary of State Matt Hancock, calling for his urgent intervention to reverse this outrageous decision.

You can read a copy of the letter below.



You can read a copy of our press statement at: [Government u-turn on free parking for NHS and social care workers 'beyond belief' | GMB](#)

You can read the government guidance at: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): health, care and volunteer workers parking pass and concessions – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

GMB

UNION

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health & Social Care
Department of Health & Social Care
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2NS

Friday 28 May 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

Re: Free car parking for Health & Social Care Workers

At the start of the Pandemic, GMB and other unions asked Ministers to waive car parking charges for Social Care and NHS staff. This was secured to enable staff to travel to and for work, in as safe an environment as possible.

The pandemic is far from over, as we start to see a concerning increase in Covid-19 infections due to the variant of the virus first identified in India.

It is therefore a disgrace to see that guidance regarding the free car parking for health and social care workers has been amended to state that it will come to an end on the 21st June 2021, without any consultation with or notification to trade unions.

GMB members working in health and social care have been repeatedly failed by Government throughout the pandemic. Failures to provide sufficient PPE at the start of the pandemic and the discharge of Covid-19 positive patients into care homes, put our members in harm's way.

Free car parking has been one measure taken to protect workers and GMB is demanding that free car parking is extended to not only cover the entire period of the pandemic, but that it also continues afterwards.

We need you to urgently intervene and ensure NHS & Social Care staff continue to have access to free parking as a priority.

Yours sincerely,

Rehana Azam
GMB National Secretary

cc. Paul Scully MP

Join GMB Union now
www.gmb.org.uk/join

COVID-19 VACCINATION – NATIONAL BOOKING SERVICE



Posted on: 13 April 2021



The national booking self referral service for health and social care workers has now been reinstated, after temporarily being suspended earlier this month.

Eligible workers can book their Covid-19 Vaccination by calling 119 or online at nhs.uk/covid-vaccination

Eligibility checks and ID requirements remain in place and are detailed below.

When the individual arrives for their appointment

They should verbally declare to the person at the vaccination site that is booking them in that:

- they are a health or social care worker
- the type of role/work they do
- the name of their employer

The person should also show further proof of employment as a health or social care worker such as one of the following:

- A recent letter from their employer
- A staff ID badge
- A recent (last 3 months) payslip which shows their employer

The individual should be informed, by the person recording their vaccination, that it will be recorded that they are a health or social care worker.

Who are eligible frontline social care or health care workers in England?

People that have direct contact with patients, clients or service users at higher risk from coronavirus (COVID-19).

Social care workers:

- you are a registered professional in social care (such as a social worker or nurse)
- you work in residential care, nursing care or in supported living



- you provide personal care for people in their homes

The following are, however, not eligible within this priority group as defined by the JCVI:

- Administrative staff who do not have any direct contact with clients.
- Social care workers working with children who are not considered priority

within the context of the JCVI priority cohorts 1-9 (children under 16 who do

- not have underlying health conditions leading to greater risk of disease or
- mortality and children who have no underlying health conditions).

VENTILATION



Posted on: 11 March 2021

New guidance has been published regarding ventilation to stop the spread of Covid-19. This includes guidance for workplace settings and vehicles. You can access it at:

[Ventilation of indoor spaces to stop the spread of coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK](#)

RESTRICTING STAFF MOVEMENT BETWEEN CARE HOMES

Government have issued new guidance to care providers with regards restricting workforce movement between care homes and other care settings.

The full guidance can be accessed at:

[Restricting workforce movement between care homes and other care settings - GOV.UK](#)

COVID-19 VACCINATION



Posted on: 9 April 2021

We have received confirmation that despite expected shortages in supply of the Covid-19 vaccines over the next month, all health and social care staff will be prioritised for their second doses.

FAQs on Second Doses

GMBs response to reports that Government are considering making the Covid-19 vaccine mandatory for all social care workers:

Forced social care vaccinations 'more shoddy behaviour from government without trust of workforce'

Following on from this week's announcement from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and the Independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) regarding the use of the Astra Zeneca vaccine, guidance has now been issued to NHS trusts and primary care.

The advice states guidance in three circumstances:

1. People who have had their first dose of the Astra Zeneca vaccine should continue to be offered their second dose of the Astra Zeneca, irrespective of age. Unless:

'Administration of the COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca in patients with a history of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis, acquired or hereditary thrombophilia, heparin-induced thrombocytopenia or antiphospholipid syndrome should only be considered when the potential benefit outweighs any potential risks. Patients who have experienced major venous and arterial thrombosis occurring with thrombocytopenia following vaccination with any COVID-19 vaccine should not receive a second dose of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca.'

2. People over 30 years of age who are waiting for their first vaccine should be offered the Astra Zeneca.
3. People under 30 years of age who are waiting for their first vaccine should be offered an alternative vaccine if one is available.

[Read The Full Letter](#)



COVID-19 VACCINATION

The deadline for frontline health and social care workers to book directly to receive a COVID-19 vaccine at a Vaccination Centre or pharmacy-led site has been extended until further notice.

Self-referral extension for eligible staff

Millions of people have had the first dose of their COVID-19 vaccine, including the majority of frontline health and social care workers.

To ensure no frontline workers who want one are left behind, the NHS has opened the National Booking Service to allow eligible staff to book directly at a Vaccination Centre or pharmacy-led site.

Using the National Booking Service is quick and simple. You can do it online at nhs.uk/CovidVaccination, or by calling 119 if you can't use the internet.

This service is open to any eligible health and social care worker – whether you work directly for the NHS or a contractor, an independent provider or are in private practice.

You will be asked to self-certify that you are eligible when booking, and provide proof of your eligibility when you attend your appointment.

The ability to book directly is only expected to remain open for a limited period of time, so if you haven't had your first dose yet, make your appointment as soon as possible.

It's important to remember, in the meantime and even if you have had the vaccine, we all still need to follow all the guidelines to control the virus and save lives. That means following the IPC and testing measures in your workplace, and the general advice at work, at home and when you are out and about.

COVID RISK ASSESSMENT



Posted on: 24 February 2021

A new risk assessment tool has been produced by Oxford University which has added 1.7 million people to the Shielding list. These people should now stay at home with immediate effect. This is something that GMB has supported for a long time.



Anyone who has been added to the list should have been contacted and informed to stay at home. This will be to at least the end of March 2021.

However, we don't know how people have been put into the shielding group and others haven't. We need to wait until we see the rationale for their inclusion or exclusion. However, even if someone who is in a high risk category has not been advised to shield, it does not mean that they are no longer at risk. These could be people with disabilities, underlying health conditions, from a Black Asian or Minority Ethnic background, elderly, etc. These groups are still known to be high risk and GMB advises that individual risk assessments still need to be completed.

If you have not been contacted but believe yourself to be at high risk, you can speak direct to your GP for advice.

If you have any concerns about this, please speak with your local GMB Representative.

CARE HOMES RE-OPENING TO VISITORS

Government has announced that care homes will start to open for family members with effect from 8th March 2021. It will be done under rules stating that the visitor must be the same person on all visits, they will be required to be tested before entering and that they will have to wear PPE.

However, there are lots of unanswered questions at this stage. What PPE is required? Who provides PPE? If it's the care home will this impact on PPE stocks available for staff? What is the testing process? What happens if the family member tests positive?

We also have concerns that this may lead to violence and aggression against staff who refuse entry to the home to family members.

GMB is seeking more details on this and will be working with care providers to ensure any issues are resolved immediately.

If you have any concerns, please speak to your local GMB Representative.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Frontline social care workers in England who have direct contact with patients, clients or service users aged 16+ who are clinically vulnerable to Covid-19 are a priority group to receive the Covid-19 vaccination.



To support eligible staff to receive their vaccination, the NHS Covid-19 Vaccination Booking Service is currently taking self-referrals to book appointments in a vaccination centre or community pharmacy. This can be done online at www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination . If staff can't get online, they can phone 119 free of charge, 7am to 11pm, 7 days a week. As part of the booking process, eligible staff need to self-declare they are a health or social care worker.

Staff will be able to book this way for a limited period, until 28 February.

When staff arrive for their appointment, they will need to declare when being booked in that they are a health or social care worker, the type of role/work they do and the name of their employer

The member of staff should also show further proof of employment such as a staff photo ID badge, a recent letter/email from their employer (dated within the last 3 months) or recent payslip which shows their employer (dated within the last 3 months).

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

GMBs campaign for increased levels of PPE for all social care staff continues. If you have concerns about PPE in your workplace, please contact your local GMB Representative.

KEEPING SAFE AT WORK

If you have concerns that you may have contracted Covid-19 in the workplace, please record your details on the GMB Risk Register at: [COVID-19 Risk Register | GMB](#)

GMB's priority remains in keeping our members safe at work which is why throughout the Pandemic we have been regularly updating our Coronavirus Hub with all the information you need to keep yourself safe. You can check it out at: [Get It Right | The Coronavirus Hub | GMB](#)

SOCIAL CARE NOTICEBOARDS

You can read and share the latest guidance and advice for social care members on the GMB websites dedicated noticeboards. Please keep checking regularly for updates.

All Social Care – [GMB All Social Care Noticeboard | GMB](#)

Barchester – [Barchester Noticeboard | GMB](#)



Four Seasons – [Four Seasons Noticeboard | GMB](#)

HC-One – [HC-One Noticeboard | GMB](#)

Huntercombe – [The Huntercombe Group Noticeboard | GMB](#)

Larchwood – [Larchwood Noticeboard | GMB](#)

Foster Carers – [Foster Carers' Noticeboard | GMB](#)

Harbour Healthcare – [Harbour Healthcare Noticeboard | GMB](#)

Social Care in Wales – [Social Care in Wales Noticeboard | GMB](#)

UNION VISITS TO YOUR WORKPLACE

It will be many months before we see a return to any form of 'normality'. Covid-19 will still present a danger to social care workers and the people you care for. As a result, it means that your GMB Union Representatives may continue to have difficulties visiting you in your workplaces.

However, we want you to know that we are still here. We are considering a variety of ways that we can get information to you and engage with you on your issues in the workplace. One way to do this is to arrange a virtual online meeting for your workplace. If you would like to book one of these please contact your local GMB representative or email PublicServices@gmb.org.uk

ARE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS CORRECT?

It is essential that your membership details are up to date so that we can ensure you are kept up to date with advice and guidance relevant to you.

You can update your details by contacting your local GMB Representative or online using the GMB website at <https://gmb.org.uk/mygmb-edit>

Not a GMB Member? Join today at www.gmb.org.uk/join

Would you like more information about being a GMB Representative in your workplace?



Date:10/02/2021

COVID-19 VACCINATION

99.1% of care homes have now been visited and vaccinations have taken place. 91% of residents have been vaccinated. It takes up to 4 separate visits for all the vaccinations to be completed. The remaining 1% of care homes have not been able to go ahead due to Covid-19 outbreaks.

Numbers of social care staff that have now received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccination continues to increase. A letter to frontline health and social care workers encouraging them to protect themselves and others by getting the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible has been issued from Ruth May, Professor Stephen Powis, Dr Keith Ridge, Professor Jacqueline Dunkley-Bent, Suzanne Rastrick, Prerana Issar, Dr Nikki Kanani, Sara Hurley, Professor Dame Sue Hill and Professor Deborah Sturdy.

[Read the letter in full](#)

A letter to Primary Care Network (PCN) led vaccination sites has been issued from Dr Nikita Kanani (Medical Director for Primary Care) and Ed Waller (Director of Primary Care) thanking colleagues in adult care home settings for the major progress made in vaccinating residents and staff in older adult care homes. The letter also includes information for the next steps. This includes confirming completion of visits for all adult social care homes still awaiting their first visit by close on Sunday 31 January (apart from in truly exceptional circumstances).

The letter also advises on social care staff vaccination issues. They are asked to continue to do everything they can to work with care home managers to encourage staff members to have the COVID-19 vaccination. Where staff have declined to receive the vaccination at the care home setting, they can still access the vaccination via their PCN-led local vaccination site, or another vaccination centre convenient to them.

[Read the letter in full](#)

If you want to check out the most up to date statistics regarding vaccinations you can do so at:

england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

GMBs campaign for increased levels of PPE for all social care staff continues. If you have concerns about PPE in your workplace, please contact your local GMB Representative.

Date: 03/02/2021

COVID-19 VACCINATION

GMB advice regarding the Covid-19 Vaccination can be accessed [here](#)

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

GMB has been calling on the Department of Health & Social Care to work with us to review and amend current PPE guidance and provide the highest level PPE for all health and social care staff working with or near suspected or confirmed Covid-19 positive patients or residents. We have now received a response to our two most recent letters which states that guidance will not be amended.

Despite this response, local employers can choose to afford higher protection than what is stated in the PPE Guidance – some Trusts have already started doing this. GMBs position remains the same that we believe the highest level of PPE should be made available to these workers and encourage all local employers to make level 3 PPE available.

The full response from the DHSC can be read [here](#)

Date: 27/01/2021

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)



GMB continues to call for the highest level of PPE for all health and social care staff working with or near residents and service users with suspected or confirmed positive for Covid-19. We have repeatedly raised this for several months with the Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE). The most recent response we have received from PHE again fails to amend their guidance and increase the levels of protections available to workers.

You can read a copy of the response here.

CARE FULL SICK PAY

Social care workers have gone above and beyond during the Covid-19 Pandemic, responding day in day out to the threat the virus poses on older and vulnerable people with commitment, passion and care.

Despite this many care homes are still failing to offer full pay for periods of sickness. Statistics show that full sick pay for social care workers is one of the most effective infection control measures – ensuring that those that move in and out of care settings only do so when they are well enough to do so.

GMB has been campaigning since the start of the Pandemic for full pay for all social care workers who have to take time off work due to Covid-19. As we see infection rates rising again in care homes we have launched an online tool so you can see which care homes are doing the right thing and paying full pay.

Encourage friends and relatives to check if their care provider is doing the right thing on SSP!

If you haven't already signed our petition for full sick pay for all social care workers **please sign and share it today!**

COVID-19 VACCINATION

More than 70% of care home residents have now been vaccinated. Social care staff are also increasingly accessing the vaccine in many settings. GMB has received reports that some health and social care staff have been unable to access the Covid-19 vaccination due to them not having an NHS number. This issue has been raised with NHS England & NHS Improvement who have confirmed that all patient facing social care workers should be able to access the vaccine.

The consent form for the vaccine can be completed without an NHS Number.

Report template – NHSI website



A worker from overseas working within social care can also automatically register for a GP and be allocated an NHS number.

If you do not have an NHS number and have been denied access to a vaccine please raise this immediately with your local GMB Representative.

Work in the Community?

Guidance has now been issued specifically on vaccinations for community based social care workers. Local authorities and care providers should be working together to ensure you can access the vaccine.

Access the full guidance.

If you have not been offered a vaccine yet please speak to your employer and raise any issues direct with your GMB Representative.

COVID-19 VACCINATION



Posted on: 16 April 2021

This week, Government launched their consultation on the mandatory vaccination of adult social care home workers.

It is proposed that legislation is amended to make it compulsory for all workers in adult social care homes caring for at least one person over the age of 65 to be vaccinated against Covid-19. GMB is clear that we support and encourage our members to be vaccinated but there may be reasons why an individual chooses not to be. We will be responding to the consultation in the coming weeks.

If you are a GMB member working in social care you will shortly receive a survey for you to complete and inform us of your opinions on vaccinations and whether you support them being mandatory for you to work in social care. We will also be looking for volunteers who are choosing not to be vaccinated, or have already been vaccinated, to attend focus groups with us, so we can fully understand and represent your views as a part of this consultation. Please keep an eye out for the survey being sent to you by email or text.

A part of the consultation also refers to whether this policy will also be extended to other professionals who enter the care home – including NHS and Local Government workers. Although Government are not yet proposing mandatory vaccination for all NHS and Local Government workers, it may be that if this proposal goes ahead in Social Care, it will also follow into other sectors afterwards.



GMB will continue to represent the views of our members and will keep you updated as this develops.

Read GMB's [Vaccination Statement](#)

Read GMB's response to this consultation on [care worker mandatory vaccinations](#).

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

GMB continues to campaign for greater levels of protection for health and social care workers, specifically in terms of calling for access to higher levels of PPE.

Government have now updated their guidance for PPE in care homes to provide some greater protection for staff. The amended guidance provides for the wearing of Type IIR mask and eye protection in more circumstances. This guidance can also be extended to visitors.

[Read the full personal protective equipment \(PPE\) Guidance](#)

ON THE CORONA FRONTLINE

GMB contributed to a new report which has just been published that looked at the impact of Covid-19 on the care workers and the people they care for in England. It considered why the care sector was so vulnerable and ill equipped, as well as the fight for longer term reform. It also focusses on the need to shift public opinion on the status and value of care work and the need to address the structural inequalities that impact on care workers.

[Read "On the Corona Frontline. The Experiences of Care Workers in England"](#)

VISAS

Free one year visa extensions have now been granted to eligible overseas health and care workers whose visas were due to expire before 1st October 2021.

The extension covers all healthcare professionals working in the NHS and the independent health and care sector. Visas will be extended for a year, free of all fees and charges, including the Immigration Health Surcharge.



Eligible individuals will need to complete an online form to verify their identity and then employers will be asked to confirm their eligibility.

More details can be accessed online at: [Health and Care Worker Visa](#)

RESEARCH STUDY FOR CLEANING, CATERING AND HOUSEKEEPING STAFF IN CARE HOMES

Kings College London are doing research into the experiences and thoughts of cleaning, catering and housekeeping staff (ancillary staff) during Covid-19.

Participation is anonymous and confidential. A £20 voucher will be issued to participants for their time.

If you would like to take part, more information can be sent to you upon request by emailing olivia.luijtenburg@kcl.ac.uk

