



Department
of Health &
Social Care

CARE

Adult Social Care Delivery
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To:

Local Authority Chief Executives
Directors of Adult Social Services
Chief Executives of Integrated Care Systems
Care Quality Commission
All registered providers

14 December 2021

Dear Colleagues

Stepping up COVID-19 Booster vaccinations for social care staff

Thanks to the incredible efforts of people across the social care sector, the vast majority of frontline social care staff have now had a complete course of a COVID-19 vaccine. This has been a monumental achievement and we would like to thank each and every one of you for taking up the offer of a vaccine and supporting your staff to do the same.

However, as set out on Sunday evening by the Prime Minister, the rapid spread of the new Omicron variant means we must now do even more to protect ourselves, and those we care for, from the virus. Against this variant, while we expect that a person who has received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine will have a good level of protection against more severe disease, if you are boosted, your response is likely to be stronger.

The consequences for staff who become ill, and the ability of the sector to continue to provide care and support services, will be great if we do not step up our collective efforts to ensure all eligible staff receive their booster jab.

We have come so far but must now redouble our efforts to combat the risk from Omicron with a swift uptake of boosters. We must not forget also to continue to encourage those who have not yet received a vaccine, to take up the offer as soon as possible.

Social care services and the people who deliver them have shown remarkable resilience and commitment against the challenges of COVID-19. Of course, all



Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures remain a vital and reliable risk mitigation, but vaccinations have significantly reduced the risk of the virus and restrictions on services.

All the evidence tells us that boosting individual protection of people who draw upon social care services and those who work in the sector as soon as possible, will provide the best way of protecting ourselves by reducing the impact of the Omicron variant on the UK population. This includes the risk of infection, serious illness and death from the disease.

Vaccination uptake

In order to vaccinate people in care homes, vaccination teams have been carrying out visits to vaccinate residents and staff. By 5 December, the vast majority of older persons' homes had been visited by specialist teams to deliver the booster programme, with remaining care homes having a date for a visit before 24th December.

As of 5 December, 238,472 (75.4%) residents of older age care homes had received a booster. However, only one in three staff in older age care homes (146,990 individuals or 32.1% of all staff) and one in five staff working in care homes for younger adults or delivering domiciliary care (100,219 individuals or 20.2% of all staff) had received their booster dose.

While we know not every person will be eligible for a booster, the uptake rates among staff remain very concerning. Furthermore, only 20,603 (58.0%) of the residents of younger adult care homes had received their booster dose by 5 December.

The Capacity Tracker provides this crucial data and we greatly appreciate your effort and commitment to it. It is essential that we maintain this vital oversight, so that the right help and support is available. Stakeholders have told us that more residents and staff have received vaccination than this data currently suggests. Please therefore take all steps to ensure that it is accurate and up to date.

How social care staff can get their booster vaccination

The NHS has already visited 99% of older adult care homes to offer booster vaccinations to residents and staff. The remainder will be visited by 24 December, subject to no further Covid-19 outbreak. These vaccination teams will offer a booster to staff when they visit care homes and where possible staff will also receive the offer of flu vaccination at the same time.

Care home managers and teams have a crucial role in tracking who has had booster doses, both residents and staff, working with local partners to signpost opportunities for vaccination, communicating to local vaccinations teams the need for additional



visits and supporting the planning process for the day of the vaccination visit to ensure that sufficient vaccine is brought onsite and consenting information is made available.

Some care home staff may not have been available when vaccination teams visited and of course it is equally important that home care staff, personal assistants, and other community-based staff receive their boosters as soon as possible. Social care workers can book a vaccination slot via the National Booking Service¹ and should do so now if it has been 2 months since their second dose so that they can receive their vaccination once 3 months has passed. Staff can also use any walk-in vaccination centre² to get protected.

It's critical that all staff are encouraged and supported to get boosters as soon as possible. The government's Infection Control and Testing Fund³ provides financial support so staff can be paid for the time and administrative costs to get theirs.

Joint working in response to the pandemic in local areas has been critical in achieving success so far in the vaccination rollout. We also know that a further critical factor is the support of organisations and registered managers in encouraging and supporting staff, so please do continue to use the Department's communications toolkit⁴, to support and drive booster uptake in your area and local services.

Thank you for considering this letter and for the urgent work that is taking place to support social care workers to receive their boosters.

Kind regards,

Sir David Pearson

Chair Social Care
Task Force, DHSC

David Pearson

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¹ <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

² <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site/>

³ [Adult Social Care Infection Control and Testing Fund: round 3 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/adult-social-care-infection-control-and-testing-fund-round-3)

⁴ <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/92/resources/5855>