

Covid vaccination requirement for NHS workers.

Impact on Doctors in Training

The Health and Social Care Secretary for England has stated that apart from a very small number of workers with valid medical exemptions, “All those working in the NHS and social care will have to be vaccinated” by 1st April 2022. The reason for this is clearly stated as to “avoid preventable harm and protect patients in the NHS, protect colleagues in the NHS, and protect the NHS itself.” Currently over 93% of NHS trust staff have already had their first dose and 90% have received a second dose.

Doctors in Training are employed by the NHS and are therefore covered by any regulation that applies to NHS staff. This statement therefore requires all doctors currently in training in England to ensure that they get themselves fully vaccinated against COVID 19 by 1st April 2022 to allow them to continue to work and train in the NHS, unless exempt or not in scope of the legislation (i.e. no requirement for patient interaction).

The DHSC have subsequently stated that all staff undertaking CQC regulated activities in England must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 no later than 1 April 2022 to protect patients. Therefore there will now be a requirement for anyone to be fully vaccinated, with a vaccine that is licenced in the United Kingdom as a requirement for starting, or remaining in, an English training programme, unless exempt or not in scope of the legislation.

It is acknowledged that the guidance issued by the DHSC may change in the future, and therefore the guidance notes written below will require regular review and update to reflect any changes made.

If you have any questions relating to the safety of the COVID 19 vaccine e.g. you have a potential contraindication to the vaccine, then please speak to your GP, medical team, or occupational health department as soon as possible to allow you time to fully consider the information, and take appropriate action prior to the deadline. The education team cannot advise you on vaccination safety or your decision whether to have the vaccination or not.

The decision in relation to clinical activities and your vaccination status will remain between the doctor in training and the relevant employing authority. Doctors in training should be aware of their vaccination status and the impact this will have on their progression.

If following consultation with GP, medical team, or occupational health services there is likely to be on going issues with your vaccination status due to lack of valid exemption, you should arrange a one to one meeting as soon as possible with your educational supervisor or programme lead to discuss, the potential impact on your training, future options, and support that can be offered. This conversation should include: -

1. Likely time course that vaccination will be an issue and whether a limited period out of programme can be used to allow resolution e.g. reflection on any decision to refuse vaccine.
2. Is it possible to cover the required curriculum and achieve completion of training without the need for further patient contact? This may be possible for doctors in the final stages of training who have completed all clinical capabilities / competencies requiring patient contact.
3. There may be some doctors in training who despite discussions and reflection decide not to be vaccinated for a reason other than an appropriately verified medical exemption. It is acknowledged that if their training requires patient facing activities to be undertaken to meet curriculum requirements, then they will likely not be able to satisfactorily complete

training and therefore will exit their training programme. For these individuals further discussion will be needed to establish what educational and career support can be offered to aid decisions around future career direction.

For a small number of doctors in training who have a valid medical exemption, it is recognised you may feel that you are in a vulnerable situation in the clinical setting. You will need to work closely with your employer and their occupational health department to ensure appropriate risk assessments and support requirements have been considered. You may also have concerns on the potential impact to your training and medical career if you are unable to work in particular clinical environments due to your personal risk and you should discuss this with your educational supervisor and TPD, who will be able to signpost you to additional sources of advice if appropriate.

Further advice and support may be accessed through the local HEE Professional Support and Wellbeing services.

If you have not yet received your first dose of COVID 19 vaccine, it is currently recommended that you should wait 8 weeks between the two initial required doses to optimise the effect of the vaccine. This means you should plan to have your first vaccination by 3 February 2022.

For further information of you can access the COVID 19 Vaccination advice page or NHSE guidance.

https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIINGFo7Sd9AIVxevtCh1d6Q18EAAAYASAAEgKInPD_BwE

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2021/12/C1470-vcod-for-healthcare-workers-planning-and-preparation-guidance.pdf>