

SOCIAL CARE COVID-19 UPDATE ENGLAND

Date: 18/06/2021

MANDATORY VACCINATION FOR SOCIAL CARE WORKERS

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 GMB's 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:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-vaccination-a-condition-of-deployment-in-older-adult-care-homes/outcome/making-vaccination-a-condition-of-deployment-in-care-homes-government-response>

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](#)

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.

- [GMB All Social Care](#)
- [Barchester](#)
- [Four Seasons](#)
- [HC-One](#)
- [The Huntercombe Group](#)
- [Larchwood](#)
- [Foster Carers](#)

- [Harbour Healthcare](#)
- [Social Care in Wales](#)

UNION VISITS TO YOUR WORKPLACE

It may still be some time 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](#).

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

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

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