

Foster carers and the coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccination

A vaccination against coronavirus (Covid-19) has now been offered to all adults and all children over the age of 12 in the UK. We understand that some foster carers and fostering service staff may have questions about this vaccine, including whether foster carers and others in the household are expected to be vaccinated. We have put together the following information to help you answer these questions.

Remember, you should always consult a medical professional if you have concerns about your health, including the impact of any vaccination.

As a foster carer, do I have to be vaccinated?

At the time of writing (November 2021), there is no legal requirement for foster carers in the UK to be vaccinated against Covid-19. This means that foster carers can choose whether or not they want to get vaccinated, just like other members of the public. There is nothing in the current legislation to suggest that your choice will affect your approval as a foster carer.

Will my fostering service expect me to be vaccinated?

Although there is no legal requirement for foster carers to be vaccinated against Covid-19, we have been asked whether fostering services might introduce a requirement for their carers to be fully vaccinated. (For example, care workers in nursing homes are legally required to be fully vaccinated, because the [World Health Organization](#) and other sources including the [Office for National Statistics](#) in England note that vaccinated people are better protected from severe illness and death as a result of Covid-19. There is also [some evidence to suggest](#) that the vaccine prevents those who catch the virus from infecting other people.)

At the time of writing, we are not aware of any fostering services that require their foster carers to be vaccinated. At present, there is also no national guidance for fostering services in the UK about the Covid-19 vaccination. This means that any future decisions will be made on a service by service basis in consultation with foster carers, unless national guidance is published.

If you need more information, you can ask your fostering service if they have a Covid-19 policy, and/or for a written statement about what they expect from you as a foster carer.

Can my fostering service ask me to get vaccinated?

It is up to you whether or not to get vaccinated. At present, your fostering service cannot ask you, or anyone else in the foster home, to have a Covid-19 vaccination, as there is no legal requirement for foster carers to do so.

In some circumstances, your fostering service could ask if you (and others in the foster home) have already been vaccinated. For example, you might be asked about vaccination if there are clinically vulnerable children who need to be placed with fully vaccinated foster carers, to reduce the risk of

them contracting Covid-19 and becoming extremely unwell. In this kind of situation, a fostering service might ask a foster carer to consider getting vaccinated to enable them to safely care for a child.

In the future, some fostering services might prefer their foster carers to be vaccinated in order to attend in-person training or other face-to-face events for foster carers. If this were to happen, fostering services might refuse to admit unvaccinated foster carers to these events, due to the potential risk of spreading Covid-19. It would still be up to you whether or not to get vaccinated, and we would hope that 'virtual'/online alternatives would be available for non-vaccinated foster carers; however, it is possible that not participating at mandatory training events may impact on recommendations made at annual reviews of foster carers.

I'm not sure whether to get vaccinated. How can I decide?

If you have questions or concerns about getting vaccinated, it is important to get your answers from reliable, trustworthy sources. For example, if you are worried about how a coronavirus vaccine might affect your body, or about the safety or side effects of vaccination, you should talk to a doctor, or look at the information on [the NHS website](#), or the website for your local Health Board. (It's worth remembering that there is lots of information about coronavirus vaccination on the internet, including on Facebook and Twitter, but not all of this information will be accurate or helpful.) If you have a faith, you may also wish to speak to a faith leader about your concerns.

It might also help to consider the following questions:

- What are the consequences of your decision for you? For example, if you become unwell, or have to self-isolate, is there someone who can care for you?
- What are the consequences of your decision for others? For example, is there anyone in your home who might be considered clinically vulnerable to coronavirus?
- Will your decision affect your role as a foster carer? If you become unwell, will you be able to continue fostering and supporting the children you care for?

Remember, only you can decide whether or not you need or would like to have a coronavirus vaccination.

How can I find out if my Supervising Social Worker is vaccinated?

As a foster carer, there are times when you will be expected to meet other people, such as your Supervising Social Worker, and let them come into your home. It might feel important to you that you know whether or not these people have been vaccinated against Covid-19.

At present, being vaccinated is an individual choice, so a person's vaccination status is safeguarded by strict data protection rules. This means that, for example, your Supervising Social Worker is the only person who can tell you if they have been vaccinated or not. Your fostering service cannot tell you anyone's vaccination status, nor tell anyone about yours, without express permission.

Your Supervising Social Worker, or other visitors, may be happy to offer information about their vaccination status, or to answer the question if you ask them. But in all cases, your fostering service should have done a thorough risk assessment before any visits take place. You should be confident that any visits that take place have been risk assessed and considered safe for everyone involved. If you are worried about this, you should speak to your fostering service about your concerns.

Is there anything else I should consider?

The current UK government guidance is that coronavirus remains a serious health risk, so you should stay vigilant to help protect yourself and others. This includes continuing to follow government

guidance on social distancing, letting fresh air in if you meet indoors, wearing a face covering where it is required by law, and in enclosed spaces, and getting tested if you experience any symptoms of Covid-19 (a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste).

In addition, it is recommended that foster carers without any symptoms of Covid-19 take a rapid lateral flow test twice a week at home, three to four days apart. Taking these tests is voluntary (you don't have to do it) but it is strongly encouraged, as they can help to detect cases of Covid-19 even if you don't feel unwell. You can [find the nearest place to get a rapid lateral flow test](#) on the government website, or [place an order for free rapid lateral flow tests to be delivered to your home address](#).

If you develop symptoms of Covid-19, then you should self-isolate immediately. Self-isolating means that you do not leave your home because you have or might have Covid-19. You should also get a PCR (laboratory) test, even if your symptoms are mild. You can [order a PCR test kit to be sent to your home or book an appointment at a walk-in or drive-through test site, on the government website](#). If the test result confirms that you have Covid-19, you will need to self-isolate for that day and the next ten (10) full days.

If someone in your household develops symptoms of Covid-19, or tests positive for Covid-19, everyone over the age of 18 who is **not fully vaccinated** should also self-isolate straight away, for that day and the next ten (10) full days.

If someone in your household develops symptoms of Covid-19, or tests positive for Covid-19 and you **are fully vaccinated** then you do not need to self-isolate. You are considered fully vaccinated if it is at least 14 full days since you had the full course of an approved coronavirus vaccine, and it was administered in the UK.

How do I find out more?

You can find more information about the coronavirus vaccines, including how to book an appointment, what happens at your appointment, and the safety and side effects of the vaccines:

- on [the NHS website](#) for England
- on [the NHS Inform website](#) for Scotland
- on [the Public Health Wales website](#) or through your [local Health Board website](#) for Wales
- on the [NI Direct website](#) for Northern Ireland.

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