

## **COVID-19 Vaccinations for People with a Learning Disability and their Family Carers**

### **Your questions answered (5<sup>th</sup> March 2021)**

The Right Support for Carers Group, Worcestershire and Jenny Hewitt, Carer Engagement Lead at Worcestershire Association of Carers have worked with Rachael Skinner, Associate Director of Nursing and Quality at NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), to answer questions that have been raised by carers.

**We hope you will find the following information helpful.**

#### **Is there any information around reasonable adjustments available?**

There is information around reasonable adjustments related to vaccinations and this is available here – <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/covid-19-vaccination-training/>

The CCG has also produced guidance that includes reasonable adjustments for all health appointments <https://herefordshireandworcestershireccg.nhs.uk/health-services/annual-health-checks-for-those-with-learning-disabilities>

#### **Is it a reasonable adjustment for a person with additional needs to take a support worker with them to attend an appointment?**

Yes, it is permissible as a reasonable adjustment for a support worker to attend an appointment for a vaccination to support an individual who would benefit from this.

**Carers feel that GPs should be advised to vaccinate carers alongside the person with Learning Disability. This would prevent the issue of the carer having to find alternative cover arrangements when they were called for vaccination. In some cases, the cared for and the carer have been able to be vaccinated together. For those who have been able to do this it has significantly reduced the anxiety for the Young Person. Can this be requested?**

Requesting that both the carer and the person with a learning disability are vaccinated at adjacent appointments is a good suggestion to make when an appointment is offered. Unpaid Carers (who provide direct care and support) are now eligible for vaccination. Young People (cared for) with Learning Disability, if aged 18 years or over, and carers can book online via the national booking service. They may be able to get adjacent appointments to attend together but this may not always be possible. People may choose to wait for a call from their GP Practice. A person with a learning disability aged 16 or 17 will need to have their vaccination with their GP as Vaccination Centres do not usually hold the brand of vaccine that is authorised for those under 18 years of age.

**Should we call our GP if we have not had a phone call for an appointment?**

Everyone is being asked not to call their GP Practice but to await until the GP Practice calls them - phone lines are very busy responding to people asking about vaccines and this increases a risk that some urgent calls may not be able to get through. Clarity around who is eligible has now been confirmed and so if you haven't already been contacted, people will receive calls during the first few weeks of March. You may request an appointment for an unpaid main carer when the GP Practice calls to book in an appointment, if you haven't already received your vaccine. Unpaid carers who are eligible, and people with a learning disability, can book an appointment via the National Booking System at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

## **What will happen if my family member with a learning disability is not yet on the GP Learning Disability Register?**

If you think that a young person or adult isn't on the GP Learning Disability Register then you may wish to contact their GP Practice by email, to advise of this. The CCG are working with local health experts, including Community Paediatricians, to ensure that all 16 and 17 year olds who may be eligible are given opportunity to be added to the Learning Disability Register to receive an Annual Health Check. Young people under the age of 16 are not yet routinely eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. The vaccination programme offers a great opportunity for people to be added to the Learning Disability Register. There are other data searches that GP Practices will also be using to identify people with Learning Disability and associated conditions that will place them into the same level of vaccination prioritisation. This, for example, may include clinical codes within health records that identify that a person has epilepsy or cerebral palsy. If the person has never told their GP that they have a learning disability then now is a good time to do so.

## **Is there any reassurance that can be provided to people with a learning disability who don't have access to transport?**

If there are specific personal circumstances that results in a person being unable to attend their GP Practice for any appointments a person will be eligible for a home visit for vaccination. If challenges are due to the availability of public transport then support from your local Council service may be able to help. The Council, Public Health and the CCG are working together to identify what other support can be put into place to enable everyone to take up their offer of a vaccination and will ensure that transport services are included within plans.

## **Is there other help available to support a person with a learning disability to overcome anxiety to tolerate vaccination?**

Yes, there is. Accessible information is available for families and carers to help explain what will happen and what side effects might be experienced.

Accessible resources can be located at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-easy-read-resources>

Accessible resources include:

[Covid Vaccine film](#) produced in collaboration with Skills for People and Learning Disability England

- PHE [easy read Covid vaccination leaflet](#)
- PHE [easy read What to expect after the vaccine leaflet](#)
- PHE [Easy read adult consent form](#)

Additional [training materials for COVID 19 vaccinators and volunteers](#) provide top tips on communicating with people with a learning disability or autism and include reasonable adjustments that should be considered.

### **If our family member's needs are complex how will we cope to support vaccination?**

A number of Nurses within the Community Learning Disability Teams have undertaken additional training in vaccination or have specialist skills to help people to tolerate or feel less anxious about an injection. If you are in this situation either contact your Community Nurse or contact your GP Practice and ask that they make a referral to the Community Learning Disability Team to ask for vaccination support.