



WEEKLY NEWSLETTER – 24th February 2021

EXTRAORDINARY COVID-19 UPDATE

- ❖ [Additional cohort of patients identified as high risk from COVID-19](#)
- ❖ [Updates to the COVID-19 vaccination Enhanced Service](#)
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1. Additional cohort of patients identified as at high risk from COVID-19

These patients (with a number of factors i.e. ethnicity and deprivation) have now been prioritised for vaccination and added to the Shielded Patient List.

A letter was [sent to GPs](#) which contains important information about how this group has been identified and how they should be prioritised for vaccination, as well as the advice they should follow.

Patients identified by QCOVID® in the first cohort (aged 19-69) should now be visible in all GP systems, and have been sent a notification letter centrally. Patients identified in the second cohort (mainly those aged over 70) will start to receive letters and emails from Wednesday 24 February and high-risk flags will begin to appear against these people in GP IT systems from the same day. If any of these patients have not yet been offered vaccination, particularly those aged over 70, we encourage you to ensure that they receive one as soon as possible.

GPs can evaluate a patient's risk with the most up to date information using the [clinical tool](#) and remove them from the Shielded Patient List if necessary.

As outlined in the letter sent to GPs last week shielding advice has been extended until 31 March. Last week the [Government wrote to the existing cohort](#) of 2.3m individuals on the Shielded Patient List to inform them of this extension. The new cohorts identified through the QCovid model, have already been advised to shield until the same date.



2. Updates to the COVID-19 vaccination Enhanced Service

[Updates have been made to the Enhanced Service for the COVID-19 vaccination programme 2020/21](#). These changes have been agreed with the General Practitioners' Committee of the British Medical Association and expand the circumstances in which a primary care network (PCN) grouping can vaccinate eligible patients registered with other practices/another PCN grouping.

A PCN grouping can vaccinate eligible patients registered with another PCN grouping in a residential setting e.g. care homes for patients with a learning disability.

To reflect the additional supplements for vaccinations in care homes and other residential settings, NHSE have included clarity on making additional discretionary payments available to GP practices. This is to support the delivery of or to incentivise vaccinations to under-represented groups in exceptional circumstances. There is further information on [additional funding available to support vaccinations in residential settings here](#)

3. Guidance for investigating and managing individuals with a possible or confirmed COVID-19 Variant

In response to the emergence and spread of new SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern (VOC) and variants under investigation (VUI) in different countries and regions, specific precautions and actions are required in relation to the management of patients who have recently returned from areas where these VOC or VUI are known or are believed to be circulating, as well as their contacts. [This guidance](#) is for healthcare staff in primary and secondary care and provides advice on the investigation and management of patients who may be infected with a new SARS-CoV-2 VOC or VUI.

4. Guidance on vaccinating those aged under 18

The AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine is not licensed for use in those under the age of 18. Should any young staff members or volunteers (aged 16-17) present to a vaccination centre for vaccination, they should be referred to their GP or local hospital hub where they can access the Pfizer vaccine which is authorised for this age group. If the Pfizer vaccine is unavailable, JCVI have recommended that the AZ vaccine can be used as an alternative in those aged 16-17 years. This is outside the license and must therefore be done under a PSD (by a medical prescriber) and cannot be done under a PGD or National Protocol.

This guidance is also in line with the [13 February 2021 letter](#) which describes that Pfizer is the vaccine of choice for clinically extremely vulnerable young people aged 16-17 years old.



5. Post-vaccine waiting room animation

[This animation](#) reinforces the importance of following COVID-19 guidelines after people have been vaccinated. If your site has access to plasma screens/TV please download the video from FutureNHS and play it on a loop for public viewing, ideally in the post-vaccination observation area. The video is subtitled and can be played on mute as well. Translated versions of the animations and posters will be available soon.

Please note that the LMC are unable to accept calls or hold communications with patients, we are GP representatives, and we would respectfully ask that Practices do not advise patients to contact us. Could we also remind Practices that any copies of patient related correspondence MUST be anonymised as the LMC can not accept patient identifiable data.

Please note our office contact times remain 10:00-16:00 and any queries on the day should be directed to birmingham.lmc@nhs.net as we are currently remote working so would be grateful if all contact were made via the nhs.net email.

Helpful Links:

BMA COVID-19: toolkit for GPs and GP practices <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/gp-practices/covid-19-toolkit-for-gps-and-gp-practices> Comprehensive guidance for GPs, partners, and practice managers to manage employment and contractual issues and service provision during the coronavirus pandemic.

GOVERNMENT WEBSITE: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> for recent and upcoming changes, guidance & support.

NHS ENGLAND: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/implementing-phase-3-of-the-nhs-response-to-the-covid-19-pandemic/>