VACCINATIONS

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**Policy Statement**

This policy on vaccination applies to all staff who might contract an infectious illness through the course of their work, which is preventable through immunisation following the Department of Health and Social CareCode of Practice and related guidance for Health and Adult Social Care on the Prevention and Control of Infections.

**The Policy**

The aims of the vaccination policy are:

• To protect the company’s staff, their families and friends, from infections contracted at work.

• To protect the people receiving the services of the company from contracting infections from the company’s staff, particularly those who do not respond well to their immunisations.

• To protect other staff who are in contact with infected staff.

• To help the company to deliver its services without disruption.

The organisation also accepts that it has a responsibility under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 to take all possible steps to protect its staff from any infectious illness or hazardous substances they are at risk of contracting during their work.

It exercises its responsibilities by ensuring that risk assessments have been, or are being, carried out wherever there is a possibility of an employee contracting any infectious illness from their work.

The organisation does not consider vaccinations to be a ready substitute for adequate risk assessments and good infection control procedures as described in its Infection Control Policy.

Depending on the outcome of the risk assessment, it will then take all necessary steps to protect its staff from contracting identifiable illnesses.

The first step will be to agree on a risk management plan with all concerned, and which staff will be expected to implement.

In the case of new service users, the risk assessment and any management plan will be part of the initial assessment and agreed upon with service users and commissioners or care managers.

Where risks are identified at a later stage, the company will discuss how to control any risk by reviewing the situation with service users, commissioners, and care managers.

The organisation expects to be fully informed of any risks from infectious illnesses that have already been identified from the original need’s assessment. It will discuss with the service commissioners or case managers in the contractual process how any continuing risks are to be assessed and managed. It will ensure that the risks continue to be monitored through the care plan and are kept under review.

As a rule, the organisation recommends that all staff are vaccinated against any infections or infectious illnesses they are at risk from within the general population. It then expects its staff to have maintained their vaccinations against such common illnesses, as are provided through the NHS.

Routine vaccinations, which all staff should keep up to date through the NHS, include tetanus, diphtheria, polio and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). Department of Health and Social Care guidance states that the MMR vaccine is especially important where there is a risk of transmitting measles or rubella infections to children or adults.

Vaccines for Hepatitis B and Varicella may be offered on a selective basis following a risk assessment.

**Hepatitis B**

In line with the Department of Health and Social Care guidelines, the organisation recommends vaccination against Hepatitis B for any of its members of staff who has direct contact with service users’ blood or blood-stained body fluids. This includes anyone at risk of injury from blood-contaminated sharp instruments or of being deliberately injured or bitten.

**Varicella**

The organisation recommends that staff who are proven through screening or testing to not have had chickenpox or herpes zoster should be given the Varicella vaccination.

**Influenza**

The company also follows the Department of Health and Social Care guidance in recommending to its staff that they have annual vaccinations against influenza. The guidance states that influenza immunisation for health and social care staff is likely to reduce the transmission of influenza to vulnerable people, some of whom may have impaired immunity and reduced protection from any influenza vaccine they have received themselves.

Frontline social care workers who are unable to get the vaccine through their employer are eligible for a free flu vaccination this season. Flu vaccination guidance for social care workers - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

**Covid-19**

The Department of Health and Social Care guidance for frontline social care workers is that Health care workers and those working in social care are at much higher risk of repeated exposure to the infection and therefore should be vaccinated.

Catching COVID-19 can be serious and may lead to long term complications. These are more common in older staff or those with underlying clinical risk factors.

An individual can have COVID-19 without any symptoms and pass it on to family, friends and service users, many of whom may be at increased risk from coronavirus. Being healthy does not reduce your risk of catching COVID-19 or passing it on.

With high rates of COVID-19, it is more important than ever to help stop the spread of coronavirus, avoid pressure on the NHS and keep the health and social care workforce healthy.

We do not discriminate against those who choose not to be vaccinated or those who are medically exempt.

To minimise the risk to people who receive care and support, as health and social care providers we encourage and support all our staff to get a COVID-19 vaccine and a booster dose as and when they are eligible, as well a vaccine for seasonal influenza. We do this by putting in place arrangements to facilitate staff access to vaccinations, and by regularly reviewing the immunisation status of their workforce in line with immunisation against infectious diseases (‘the Green Book’).

Everyone eligible can either book their first dose, a second dose and booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccination online via the national booking service, or can attend a walk-in centre.

In line with the Department of Health and Social Care Covid-19 supplement to the infection prevention and control resource for adult social care, to ensure the safety of people who receive care, we undertake risk assessments wherever possible. These should take into account the COVID-19 vaccination status of both staff members and the people they care for. Relevant clinical advice should be considered, including whether any individuals are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection. As a result of these risk assessments, we may consider taking additional steps such as prioritising the deployment of vaccinated staff to care for those who are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection, where proportionate.

**Employment Procedures**

On appointment, each new employee completes a pre-employment health questionnaire, which should give information about previous illnesses and immunisation against relevant infections (or refusal to give consent to immunisation). This enables the organisation to review with the employee any new immunisation needs, which can be identified from the organisation’s general health and safety risk assessments.

To protect service users and other staff, staff are also asked to report episodes of possible infectious illness to the organisation, particularly if contracted after travel abroad. When necessary, staff that are infected or suspected of being infected may need to be excluded from work until they have either recovered or the results of specimens are available.

The organisation will support staff to receive any vaccinations as indicated by a risk assessment, and pay for these or reimburse any costs to the employee. Where appropriate and reasonable to do so, the organisation will then negotiate any costs it incurs with the service purchasers or commissioners.

**Consent**

The organisation asks that staff give their consent to vaccination voluntarily and freely. All staff under consideration are informed about the process, benefits,and risks of immunisation and their decision are recorded.

It also respects the rights of staff to take their own decisions on whether to be vaccinated and recognises that some staff will not wish to be vaccinated for their own reasons. It will then fully discuss the implications with those individuals and the further risks that will need to be managed.

**Vaccination Procedures**

Where vaccination is the most effective way to protect against an infectious illness, the organisation will act according to the following procedures:

• Articulate the reasons for supporting and recommending vaccination, including the extent of the risks involved, to all staff affected.

• Outline how staff who agree to vaccination will be protected during the period before vaccination and between vaccination and the onset of immunity.

• Outline any measures to be taken to protect staff who do not give their consent to being vaccinated and who will be exposed to any risks of contracting the illness in consequence.

• Consider the position of any employee who not only refuses to be vaccinated but also work in any at-risk situations, as this might create problems of equity and fairness concerning other staff members. If the staff member has good reasons for withholding consent, e.g., they are allergic to the vaccination, all measures will be taken to reduce the risks to that person, which may include transferral to other care situations.

• Maintain a record on the staff files of any vaccinations carried out in relation to the work situation, including monitoring the need for follow-ups, boosters etc. in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Management of Records Code of practice.

**Related Policies**

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

Data Protection Legislative Framework (GDPR)

Good Governance

Infection Control

**Related Guidance**

Covid-19 supplement to the infection prevention and control resource for adult social care https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infection-prevention-and-control-in-adult-social-care-covid-19-supplement/covid-19-supplement-to-the-infection-prevention-and-control-resource-for-adult-social-care

Record Management Code of practice

https://www.nhsx.nhs.uk/information-governance/guidance/records-management-code/

The Department of Health, Immunisation Against Infectious Disease: The Green Book:

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book

**Training Statement**

The organisation encourages all of its staff to have access to occupational health advice.

It seeks information and advice as needed from its local occupational health service and infection control units.

It provides staff with up-to-date information it receives on vaccination guidance.

Staff receive information on the organisation’s policy upon appointment and during their induction programme. They receive further training on selective vaccination issues as required and are encouraged to raise specific concerns in supervision.

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Person responsible for updating this policy: M Zvavamwe

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