

# Unite in Health Position Statement on Covid-19 Vaccinations –

January 2021



The health sector of Unite the union is supportive of the Covid-19 vaccination campaign. The vaccines being used are an essential part of the programme to minimise the impact of the coronavirus disease. Vaccinations along with other equally important prevention strategies of frequent hand washing, wearing a face covering, keeping a safe distance from others and strictly following the legislation in your geographical area, will we hope reduce the reach and spread of the disease to those most at risk. In turn this should reduce the strains on health and social care and those employed within those systems. Consequently, Unite in health strongly recommends the voluntary uptake of the vaccine when offered for all health and social care workers unless their individual circumstances dictate otherwise.

In recent weeks there has been a change in the vaccination schedule for the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and when coupled with the administrative and logistical challenges of delivering the immunisation programme this has resulted in many questions and concerns being raised by Unite members. Whilst we understand the lack of absolute and unequivocal evidence can be challenging for our members and we recognise the clinical concerns of the approach, we would like to reassure you that by following the guidance issued by these national bodies, JCVI, (Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation) and the MHRA, (Medicines and Healthcare Regulation Authority) and adopted into your national NHS guidance with the support of your country's Chief Medical Officer, they will be supported and indemnified both by their NHS employers primary liability cover and unite Contingent Medical Malpractice cover. This includes the vaccinating of patients and staff.

We are aware that whilst the rationale behind the decision to change the schedule is an ongoing matter for debate in the healthcare community, the guidance currently issued is clear. We would not recommend that members act in contradiction to this guidance, as in doing so they are potentially inviting professional risk as a health care professional. If members are requested to act in contradiction to this guidance by their employer, the risk then sits with the employer. However this is a situation Unite would not wish to see its members placed in.

Unite also advocate for the full use of any vaccine supply and are firmly against any avoidable wastage, if you are a witness to any avoidable waste please contact your local Unite representative.

There is a particular question theme that relates to some members raising the concern that the mixing of the Pfizer and Astra vaccine is being encouraged, this action is NOT supported unless in exceptional circumstances and if this is your experience you should contact your local Unite representative.

There is a range of questions relating to the vaccination programme and there is guidance in place from each country and these links may be of use to you.

## England

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/951155/COVID-19\\_vaccination\\_programme\\_guidance\\_for\\_healthcare\\_workers\\_11\\_January\\_2021\\_V3.1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951155/COVID-19_vaccination_programme_guidance_for_healthcare_workers_11_January_2021_V3.1.pdf)

## Northern Ireland

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/doh-hss-md-04-2021.pdf>

## Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-guidance-for-health-and-social-care-professionals/>

## Wales

<https://www.nhsconfed.org/regions-and-eu/welsh-nhs-confederation/nhs-wales-employers/covid19>

**[www.unitetheunion.org](http://www.unitetheunion.org)**