



**24 April 2021**

## **HUMAN RESOURCE ADVICE 04 - 21**

### **COVID-19 Vaccination**

#### Scope

The advice applies only to the COVID-19 vaccination programme which commenced in the Winter of 2020/21. It does not apply to other vaccination programmes or preventative medical treatments.

#### Advice

Local Government in Scotland continues to play a critical role in the Covid-19 pandemic response. The national coronavirus (Covid-19) vaccination programme has, from December 2020, become a central element of the country's Public Health approach to recovery from the pandemic.

Adults are being offered the vaccine in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's (JCVI's) prioritisation recommendations, with age a primary determinant. A small number of occupational groups have been prioritised as an exception given their specific roles, notably social care staff.

Local Government employers are committed to supporting their employees to get the vaccine when they are offered it. The vaccine reduces an individual's chance of developing serious or life-threatening symptoms. It also protects society as vaccinated people are thought to be less likely to transmit the disease. Transmission between unvaccinated people may increase the risk of new variants developing.

Employers will:

- Communicate with employees about the benefits of vaccination and signpost to trusted sources about the vaccination programme, including at [NHS Inform scot: The coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine](https://nhsinform.scot/the-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine) (nhsinform.scot) NHS Scotland strongly recommends that individuals get the vaccine as soon as it is offered.
- Ensure that employees have appropriate paid time off, as required, to be vaccinated against coronavirus (Covid-19), including reasonable travel to and from the vaccination centre.

Some individuals might experience side-effects from their vaccinations. Some side-effects are relatively common, such as pain in the upper arm at the vaccination site. The NHS advises that most of these side-effects are mild and short term.

Employees should follow the guidance offered post-vaccination by the vaccination teams and any other medical advice.

Further information on side-effects can be found at: [Side effects of the coronavirus vaccines | The coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine](#) (nhsinform.scot)

Where vaccination side-effects are to such an extent that they temporarily impact on an employee's ability to carry out some, or all, of the duties of their job, employers should adopt a flexible and supportive approach, such as:

- Work with employees to adjust duties temporarily.
- Where necessary, allow a short period of paid leave, which may be normal sickness allowance if the individual is eligible.
- It is recognised that council's sickness absence policies are locally agreed. We are aware that some councils, while recording the absence in the normal way are exercising discretion if the period of absence means the person would break an attendance management trigger level. In the interests of reducing vaccine hesitancy, it is recommended that this approach should be considered by councils.
- In line with NHS information about the duration of side-effects the approach recommended should be applied for adverse reactions impacting on ability to work for up to 48 hours. Absences for longer than this should be treated in the same way as any other illness which prevents normal working.
- We are aware that some councils have formed agreements with unions locally and the advice in this circular is not intended to supplant these. Other councils may find it helpful to discuss and agree this through local consultation frameworks.

In following medical advice after vaccination, employees must also adhere to the advice on fever, which is quite common after vaccination. This advice, including the situations in which individuals would have to self-isolate and book a Covid-19 test, can be found at: [Side effects of the coronavirus vaccines | The coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine](#) (nhsinform.scot).

The advice in this circular was drafted with the assistance of the SJC unions' joint secretaries. The SJC regards appropriate support for all parts of the Local Government workforce to be vaccinated against COVID-19 as important in combatting the pandemic, in reducing vaccine hesitancy, and for individual protection.

COSLA Employers' Team  
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