

March 2021

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION NOTICE FOR KAT STAFF**

We are proud to say that KAT is pro-vaccine and that we have and continue to determinedly campaign to ensure that our community is offered the COVID-19 vaccine.

**We believe, except in exceptional circumstances that having the vaccine is a duty of care.  Every one of us has a duty to safeguard the vulnerable people we support from harm.  COVID-19 is currently the most significant risk that people face.**

The Senior Management team have agreed that vaccination success will be anything above 85% uptake. We have already and will continue sharing the latest data with all staff so that everyone can see how we are working together to keep the people we support and our colleagues safe.

We know that the COVID-19 vaccine provides the greatest protection available to protect the vulnerable people we support, our colleagues, your families and yourselves.

**There are very few exceptional circumstances where people cannot have the vaccine.** The vaccines do not contain living organisms, and so are safe for people with disorders of the immune system. These people may not respond so well to the vaccine. A very small number of people who are at risk of COVID-19 cannot have the vaccine – this includes people who have severe allergies.

**Why it is important to get your COVID-19 vaccination?**

Fact - frontline workers working in social care are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 at work, especially if you are working in a care setting as this means you are at a much higher risk of repeated exposure to the infection.

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

As we know, from the testing regime that we employ, that you can have COVID-19 without any symptoms and pass it on to family, friends, and residents, 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.

The order in which people have been offered the vaccine is based on advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).  The vaccine is being given in order of importance:

* health and social care workers are considered of paramount importance
* people aged 55 and over
* people at high risk from coronavirus (clinically extremely vulnerable)
* people who live or work in care homes
* people with a condition that puts them at higher risk (clinically vulnerable)
* people with a learning disability
* people who are a main carer for someone at high risk from coronavirus

Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said there was a professional standard that staff should adhere to that involves not putting people in their care at risk.

Health and care workers should have a Covid-19 vaccine as part of their “professional responsibility” to patients, England’s deputy chief medical officer has suggested.

We have both a professional and community responsibility.

**How do we know Covid vaccines are safe?**

The coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine is safe and effective. It gives you the best protection against coronavirus.

Safety trials begin in the lab, with tests and research on cells and animals, before moving on to human studies.

The principle is always to start small and only move to the next stage of testing if there are no outstanding safety concerns.

If the safety data from the labs is good, scientists can check the vaccine or treatment is effective too.

That means tests on large numbers of volunteers - about 40,000 in the case of Pfizer-BioNTech, which was the first to be approved in the UK.

Half are given the vaccine and the other half a placebo jab. The researchers and participants are not told which group is which, until after the results, to avoid bias.

All the work and findings are checked and verified independently.

The Covid vaccine trials have happened at breakneck speed, but they have not skipped any steps.

Approval is only given in the UK if the regulator is happy that a vaccine is safe and effective.

Checks continue after approval to make sure there are no further side effects or long-term risks.

**Can I contract Covid from the Vaccine?**

Vaccines do not give you a disease. Instead, they teach your body's immune system to recognise and fight the infection they have been designed to protect against.

Some people do experience mild symptoms after being vaccinated. This is not the disease itself, but the body's response to the vaccine.

Common reactions that may affect more than one in 10 people and typically get better within days include sore arm, headache, and a mild fever, but only some experience one or more of these reactions.  Indeed, many staff who have had a COVID-19 vaccination have told us they had no reaction at all.

**Should I have it if I have just had a baby, pregnant or planning a pregnancy?**

You can have the COVID-19 vaccine if you are breastfeeding.

There is no evidence the COVID-19 vaccine is unsafe if you are pregnant. But more evidence is needed before it can be routinely offered.

However, the JCVI has updated its advice to recommend you may be able to have the vaccine if you are pregnant and:

* at high risk of getting coronavirus because of where you work
* have a health condition that means you are at high risk of serious complications of coronavirus.

You do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination. The vaccine cannot give you or your baby COVID-19.  Speak to a healthcare professional before you have the vaccination. They will discuss the benefits and risks with you.

**Can you still transmit Covid-19 after vaccination?**

The current research is swaying towards the fact that the vaccine is likely to protect against transmission, but it is not known yet because the vaccine is too new.  So far, the available COVID-19 vaccines have not been judged primarily on their ability to prevent transmission – though this is being evaluated as a secondary endpoint for many of them.  Instead, their efficacy is assessed by whether they can prevent symptoms from developing.

**What do we want for you?**

As we stated above, the Senior Management team have agreed that vaccination success will be anything above 85% uptake.  Accordingly, our mission is to achieve this uptake.  Therefore, we are writing to you, because we feel it is essential that we are explicit in communicating to everyone who has not had a COVID-19 vaccination the benefits and that we truly believe the KAT community will derive benefit from the COVID-19 vaccination.

We hope that by providing you with the facts and arming you with the knowledge that the COVID-19 vaccination take up is the only available option to do everything that we can to protect the vulnerable people we support and return to normality that this may help you to make an informed choice to have the COVID-19 vaccination, if you are not one of the very few exceptional people who cannot have the vaccination.

Please, help us to keep safe and Covid secure.

**Donna Newell**

**Head of HR and IT**