

ICARS Newsletter

Immunisation Clinical Advice & Response Service



Issue 134: 9th June 2023

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTERS WITH ALL RELEVANT STAFF INVOLVED WITH THE VACCINATION PROGRAMME

For any COVID-19 vaccination related queries, or to escalate an incident, please contact ICARS at england.swicars@nhs.net.

Please note that this service operates 9am-5pm Monday to Friday

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NEW: Promoting Spring COVID-19 Vaccination for Patients who Have a Weakened Immune System (Ops Note)

An [Operations Note](#) has recently been cascaded to secondary care clinicians. It outlines actions to maximise the use of patient contact opportunities to actively identify anyone under their care who may have a weakened immune system, advise them of their eligibility for a spring vaccination and promote access to local vaccination services. Clinicians and frontline teams are encouraged to observe the [eligibility guidance](#) included and take a permissive approach when vaccinating individuals who present as immunosuppressed. For example, in the absence of evidence, a clinical conversation can suffice. To read in full and access the latest supportive resources, [click here](#).

REMINDER: Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate Supplies Until 30 June 2023

As a reminder, the current batch of Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate (Batch Number FW5101) will expire on 30th June due to the frozen shelf-life of the vaccine being reached. Therefore, all Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate deliveries into vaccination sites up until 16th June will have a shorter than usual thawed shelf-life and will expire on or before 30th June. No stock will be delivered to sites with less than 14 days thawed shelf-life, as per the standard process.

Should your site require a final delivery of Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate in order to complete any remaining Spring or Primary Course vaccinations before 30th June, please where possible place orders between 9th and 14th June. This should be aligned to your normal order cut-off for deliveries in week commencing 12th June. Usage of this shorter shelf-life stock can then be maximised, rather than drawing down longer life stock which could be used in future campaigns. Please note that the minimum order quantity is 20 doses.

To continue to support patients who develop severe immunosuppression, a new batch of Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate will be available for delivery from 20th June. This new batch will have the full thawed shelf-life of circa 8-10 weeks. Due to the low volume of these patients, please only order the mini packs of Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate (20 dose - 2 vials) during this inter campaign period, to reduce the risk of wastage.

Sites planning to pause or close after 30th June must ensure that no COVID-19 vaccine stock becomes stranded. You are required to manage the closure/pausing process to ensure viable vaccine stock is either used or transferred to an alternative active site in advance of your planned closure/pausing. You must also ensure that you record any disposals in Site Stock Manager on Foundry.

A final stocktake must also be carried out against each vaccine type you have held on-site, to confirm all vaccine balances as zero. All the above actions must be completed prior to your site closing/pausing and be marked as inactive on Foundry.

REMINDER: New 12 Dose (2 vials) Pack Size of Comirnaty BA. 4-5

To support vaccination sites in aligning their vaccine supplies with demand as we approach the end of the Spring Campaign, the minimum order quantity for Comirnaty® BA.4-5 is being

reduced from 60 doses (10 vial pack) to 12 doses (2 vial pack). The new smaller pack size will be available to sites from the week commencing (w/c) 5th June. **First deliveries will be made from Tuesday 6th June onwards, dependant on fixed delivery days.**

The 60-dose full-sized pack will also continue to be available for sites. If your site is assured for Comirnaty® BA. 4-5 but does not currently have an allocation on the Supply Planner for w/c 5 June, then you can make a request from your system following your usual allocations process. The decision to approve these requests sits with your system and region.

Order Quantities for Packdown:

The minimum order quantity for packed down Comirnaty® BA.4-5 is **12 doses (1 pack)**. **The maximum packed down order quantity is 36 doses (3 packs)**. Should your site require more than 36 doses, then you will need to order in multiples of 60 doses (whole packs). If the level of packdown volume requested across the programme exceeds the supply chain's overall capacity to packdown, then the national team will automatically increase orders to a full pack (60 doses) where necessary.

At all times, a volume as close to the original order request will be provided whenever possible. Sites won't receive less than they ordered. Due to changing demand levels throughout the year, packdown quantities and vaccine types will be reviewed every 3 months. This will ensure the most suitable combinations are offered to reflect the requirements of the programme.

Linked Vaccine Consumables:

The linked vaccine consumables for packed down Comirnaty BA.4-5 will be supplied in the same quantity as the current full-sized pack (100 combined needles and syringes (CNS), 1 pack of Steret Wipes and 60 Patient Information Leaflets (PILs)). This is due to the pack sizes currently being supplied to the Programme by UKHSA. To mitigate the oversupply of CNS, there is an on/off logic built into the Foundry Ordering Platform system. This checks when a site places an order to see whether it has received an oversupply of CNS in the past 90 days. If it has, then the system automatically reduces or removes the CNS from future orders until the residual stock of CNS is less than 50%.

For example: If a site ordered a 12-dose pack of Comirnaty BA.4-5 and has not received any oversupply in the past 90 days, 100 needles would be sent with the order. No further supplies of CNS would be sent until the site had ordered and received a further 48 doses.

Your site can also choose to deselect the vaccine linked consumables bundle when placing a vaccine order via the Ordering Platform if you already have a surplus supply. PILs will be supplied as standard on all orders, and it will not be possible to deselect them. It is hoped that this new packdown option for BA.4-5 will support your site in ordering vaccine quantities reflecting your weekly expected demand. This should help you to minimise wastage as we near the end of the Spring campaign and the end of the primary dose offer.

UPDATE: End of Primary Course Offer

Throughout the Vaccine Deployment Programme, we have continued to offer a first Primary Course COVID-19 vaccination to anybody who comes forward that has not been previously

vaccinated. It has then been possible to have a second (and, where applicable, third) vaccination as part of the primary course offer within the agreed vaccine intervals.

JCVI guidance ([link](#)) advised that the Primary Course offer should move towards a more targeted offer during vaccination campaigns to protect those at higher risk of severe COVID-19. The government has confirmed the primary course for most people will cease at the end of the Spring vaccination campaign on 30 June. Individuals who develop severe immunosuppression (boxes 1 and 2 of the Green Book) should be considered for catch-up primary vaccination or additional dose(s) of vaccination, before the next seasonal campaign, based on clinical judgement. Going forward, the Primary Course offer will be available to eligible individuals during planned seasonal booster campaigns. Eligibility for vaccination in Autumn will be announced in due course.

Please note, the details below do not apply to COVID-19 vaccination for those individuals aged 6 months to 4 years who are in a clinical risk group, as defined in Table 4 of the [Green Book, Chapter 14a](#). See this System Letter for details applicable to this cohort ([link](#)).

Actions for regions in advance of 30th June 2023:

- **Identifying sites for vaccine supply:** Regions are expected to have plans in place to vaccinate people who become severely immunosuppressed where, following individual clinical judgement, vaccination before the next seasonal campaign is recommended. This might include identification of a limited number of sites to be used as and when needed. Regions can now plan how they will arrange vaccination services to meet requirements.
- **Ensuring accesses and equity:** Regions are asked to work with their systems and local partnerships to identify a local model of provision for the small number of people newly identified as severely immunosuppressed. Local signposting to services should be in place as the National Booking System will not be available between Spring and Autumn campaigns.

Actions for sites in advance of 30th June 2023:

- **Dose schedule:** First primary doses should continue to be offered to eligible individuals up to and including 30 June. Second (and, where applicable, third) primary doses can be offered up to and including 30 June, in line with the time intervals recommended by JCVI and detailed in [Chapter 14a of the Green Book](#). For most individuals, time intervals between primary doses are 8 weeks. People who have presented after 5 May for their first dose will not receive a second dose before the end of the Spring Campaign unless clinically indicated. These individuals can be assured that one dose is still effective ([link](#)).
- **Vaccine Supply Stocktake:** Sites will be expected to complete a stocktake report in mid-June and upload it to the Site Stock Manager on Foundry. Sites should manage the stock to minimise clinical, operational and expiry wastage. A final Spring Campaign stocktake report must then be completed by all sites by 3 July and uploaded to Site Stock Manager on Foundry. Sites that are not continuing to vaccinate after the completion of the Spring campaign, can be formally paused or closed in Foundry by 7 July, using the standard pausing/closing procedures.

Actions for sites after 30th June 2023, until the next seasonal campaign:

- **Eligibility:** Only people who develop severe immunosuppression (i.e. those who meet the criteria for a third primary dose defined in Boxes 1 and 2 of the Green Book [here](#)) should be considered for catch-up primary vaccination or additional dose(s) of vaccination, before the next seasonal campaign, based on clinical judgement on a case-by-case basis.
- **Legal Mechanisms for administration of vaccines:** There will be no Patient Group Directions (PGD) or National Protocols for vaccinating eligible individuals against COVID-19 between campaigns. Vaccination, as detailed above, would need to be provided under a prescriber model, and tailored to the individual.
- **Select and Invite:** There will be no national call/recall for COVID-19 vaccinations until the start of the Autumn Campaign. Final invites for the Primary Course vaccination offer will arrive no later than 9 June and final reminders will arrive no later than 12 June. Regions are asked to ensure there are no local call/recall services or COVID-19 invites again until the start of the Autumn Campaign except for children aged 6 months to 4 years old who are in a clinical risk group as defined by the Green Book Chapter 14a ([link](#)).
- **Bookings:** There will be no National Booking Service (NBS) until the start of the Autumn Campaign. The NBS will close from 29 June. Regions are asked to ensure there are no Local Booking Services or Walk in clinics available.
- **Communications:** There will be no national communications promoting people to come forward for a COVID-19 vaccination in advance of the Autumn Campaign. Regions are asked to ensure there are no promotional campaigns for COVID-19 vaccination in-between seasonal campaigns unless targeted to those who might become severely immunosuppressed.
- **Vaccine supply:** Vaccine will be supplied as required to a limited number of selected sites to enable people who are newly identified as severely immunosuppressed to be vaccinated based on clinical judgement. All sites, including those who will continue to vaccinate the newly severely immunosuppressed, are expected to reduce their stock holding to the lowest possible levels by the 30 June to avoid creating unnecessary waste. Any stock remaining at sites that will stop vaccinations at the end of the Spring Campaign will need to be disposed of locally and recorded as waste. Sites should ensure this is minimal. Regions should work with ICBs and local clinicians to ensure they are cognisant of the processes to obtain vaccines between seasonal campaigns if required.
- **Vaccination Reporting:** VVE reporting will be available to ensure vaccination activity occurring between campaigns can be regionally validated.
- **Vaccinations and immunisations ahead of Autumn:** COVID-19 vaccinations for many sites will continue in the Autumn. Prior to then, regions and systems may consider working with sites to ensure that workforce can be used beneficially, for example by offering catch up for routine immunisations, where appropriate.

UPDATE: Vaccination of Children 6 Months to 4 Years Old in a Clinical Risk Group

Following the publication of the System Letter ([Link](#)) about COVID-19 vaccinations for at risk children aged 6 months to 4 years old from 12th June, this article sets out further details on deployment.

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that:

- Children aged 6 months to 4 years in a clinical risk group (as defined in Table 4 of the Green Book Chapter 14a [here](#)) should be offered two 3-microgram doses of the Comirnaty® 3 (THREE) Concentrate vaccine with an interval of at least 8 weeks between the first and second doses.
- JCVI does not currently advise COVID-19 vaccination of children aged 6 months to 4 years who are not in a clinical risk group.
- JCVI has advised that a third vaccine dose be offered to individuals aged 6 months and above who had severe immunosuppression in proximity to their first or second COVID-19 doses in the primary schedule ([Box 2, Chapter 14a, Green Book](#)).
- Vaccination of those aged 6 months to 4 years for whom mRNA vaccines are unsuitable requires an individual clinical judgement.

This Operational Note is supported by the Comirnaty® 3 (THREE) Concentrate Deployment Guide ([link](#)) is intended to assist regions and systems in delivering the campaign.

Rising 5s:

- The offer of two doses of Comirnaty® 3 (THREE) Concentrate vaccine should also be made to those children who turn 5 on or after 1 June 2023 who have not received a dose of Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate vaccine.
- This will be only a small group of children who either turned 5 after the last round of invitations for Comirnaty® 10 Concentrate and will also include those who were aged 4 when identified for vaccination but have turned 5 before their appointment.

Cohort Identification:

- As defined in the system letter, systems should work with providers to manage call/recall locally, using agreed templates to signpost parents/carers to the appropriate site(s). There are no plans to provide national call/recall. A 6-month- to 4-year-old at risk cohort will be made available in the GP Dashboard for the start of the vaccination campaign to enable practices to identify eligible patients for local call/recall.
- Details provided in the GP Dashboard should be supplemented by local searches to ensure all eligible 6 months to 4-year-olds (and those turning 5 years on or after 1 June who have not previously been vaccinated) are invited to come forward.
- During the campaign, eligible children identified by the national search will continue to be added to the GP Dashboard as they reach 6 months of age.

Inviting At-Risk Under 5s to Receive the Comirnaty 3 Vaccine:

Could the [GP COVID-19 vaccine dashboard – NHS Digital](#) support your PCN/Practice to invite all eligible for the “Under 5’s At Risk” campaign?

Why use the dashboard to identify patients?

The dashboard identifies patients that have been flagged as "At Risk" through [Cohorting as a Service \(CaaS\) - NHS Digital](#). The CaaS data draws on broader data sources than GP practice data, such as hospital data (HES), enabling PCNs and GP practices to identify additional patients who are considered to be ‘at risk’ as per the [Green Book chapter 14a guidance](#)

The NHS Cohorting Service is able to search for relevant clinical codes in patient records. This is no substitute for individual clinical judgement.

All records and data flows take time to update and flow through to national systems. Whilst the dashboard is an assured product displaying patients who are highly likely to be eligible given the entries made to their clinical records, assessment of individual patient eligibility for any vaccine is the responsibility of the clinician at the point of care.

How to use the dashboard:

Access to the dashboard requires you to have the activity code B0360 added to your NHS smartcard. Any queries on NHS smartcard access should be directed to your local registration authority. For more information, go to [this link](#).

Use the tab "Under 5's At Risk" to quickly identify patients eligible to receive the Comirnaty 3 vaccine. The "Uptake - 1st Dose" and "Uptake - 2nd Dose" tabs have also been amended to allow filtering on this cohort.

User guides for the dashboard can be found at [here](#).

Resources:

GPs and specialists who manage the routine care of eligible children are encouraged to ensure parents and guardians are made aware that their child can receive two doses of a vaccine specific to this age group and understand how to arrange their child's vaccinations. [Resources](#) are now available to support the communication of this offer, including a narrative with key messages, an invite template letter for systems, and questions and answers for public facing conversations. Continue to check for updated resources as they become available.

Comirnaty 3 Invitation Letter and Updated PSD:

Please find attached a final version of an Invitation Letter for children eligible for Comirnaty 3 vaccination, which can be circulated to any providers offering vaccination to this cohort.

Providers are welcome to adapt the letter to meet local need, however, we wish to emphasise the importance of making every contact count and using the opportunity to review a child's immunisation history and either signposting for, or administering any missed immunisations.

Also attached is an updated version of the PSD to include updated guidance relating to a third primary dose for immunosuppressed children in this cohort.

As before, please be mindful that this is a draft supporting template for local approval and **clinical assessment should be on an individual basis**. The regional team are not responsible for governance and update control of this copy, and it is not intended as a final approved copy for local use. The content of the PSD using the NHSE template was checked and correct at the time of release.

NEW: Duty of Non-Participating General Practices to Share Information on Eligible Patients

Practices which are not delivering COVID-19 vaccination under the current Enhanced Service specification should share lists of eligible patients with their local commissioner where these patients cannot all be identified by national call /recall, so that the commissioner can arrange alternative provision for these patients from another provider. Patients who cannot all be identified nationally are likely to be immunosuppressed patients and housebound patients as well as patients who are 6- months to 4 years old in a clinical risk group (as detailed in Table 4 of [Chapter 14a of the Green Book](#)), who qualify for the Comirnaty 3 (Three) Concentrate vaccination which will be available this Summer. Practices are required to provide information to the local commissioner under the duty of co-operation requirement in their GMS / PMS / APMS contracts and this request is necessary for reasons of public interest.

NEW: Spring Campaign 2023 HEE e-Ifh - COVID-19 Vaccines Training Updates from 23 May 2023

Please find the new learning and assessment sessions for:

Pfizer-BioNTech Comirnaty 3 (Three) concentrate (3 micrograms/dose) COVID-19 vaccine - suitable for infants and young children from age 6 months to 4 years. (It can, in specific circumstances, be given to a child aged 5 years of age.)

These sessions are both now live via the via the elfh hub, please find link below: [HEE elfh hub](#)

Comirnaty 3 - Update to Core Knowledge from 23 May 2023, for COVID-19 Vaccinators

New vaccinators are required to undertake the Core e-learning session. This has now been updated. The assessment questions were last updated on 11 April 2023.

Individuals who undertook the Core e-learning session between the most recent Green Book update (9 March 2023) and the Core training session update (25 April 2023) must have successfully completed the assessment that was published on 11 April 2023 in order to be able to record completion of the Core e-learning.

The link can be found at [here](#).

The course will cover key information including:

- How the vaccine works
- Which children are eligible
- Contraindications and precautions
- How the vaccine should be stored, prepared and administered
- Potential vaccine reactions

The Core Knowledge session covers key areas including:

- Legal aspects of vaccination including consent.
- This Core Knowledge session must therefore be completed in addition to this vaccine-specific session if you have not already completed it.

There have also been slight updates to the Core learning session.

Further information detailing what is included and general updates can be found [here](#).

NEW: Change Request Process on Foundry Platform Now Live & Closure of NECSU Platform from 31st May

Thank you for your ongoing support with COVID-19 vaccination programme and for your input in helping to shape the new Site Designation and Change Control processes on Foundry. Foundry development has now been completed and functions have been running through Foundry as of Thursday 1st June 2023.

The current Site Designation and Change Control forms were made inactive on Wednesday 31st May 2023. Colleagues are asked to use the Foundry platform for all new requests. If colleagues attempt to use NECSU forms, a redirection box will prompt them to the new process.

The exception is for designation of new HH/HH+ sites: for any new designation requests for this delivery model please email the national team (contacts below) who can assist you with new HH & HH+ designation.

Links to Change Process – for all regions:

- Site Lead Contact Change: [[Ordering Platform \(palantirfoundry.co.uk\)](https://palantirfoundry.co.uk)].
- Link for all other change requests: [[Vaccination Site Change Request Application \(palantirfoundry.co.uk\)](https://palantirfoundry.co.uk)].

Links to Site Designation – for all regions:

- For all regions : The link for the new site designation (excluding new site designation for HH & HH+ sites): [[COVID Vaccine Reporting \(palantirfoundry.co.uk\)](https://palantirfoundry.co.uk)]

Training:

- Site Designation and Site Changes Drop-in Sessions are currently running on Tuesdays at 3pm-4pm and are due to run until 6 June. We can extend sessions if this would be helpful. Please get in touch with the national team with any questions or if you require an invite to the sessions.
- Training materials for new process and platform are now available on FutureNHS : [Foundry - Vaccination Site Change Control - COVID-19 Vaccination Programme - FutureNHS Collaboration Platform](#)

User guides for the Site Change Control and Site designation will be published by WE 9th June 2023 on the above link.

Contact details for Foundry Support:

- For any technical support for foundry access, purpose approvals, foundry issues and guidance please contact the foundry support team at Foundry.Support@england.nhs.uk

NEW: Changes to the NBS and Q-Flow Support Sessions

Due to a decline in the need for Q-Flow support sessions, they will be reduced to once a week only, on Wednesdays at 1.30pm to 2pm.

After June these sessions will be stood down. New support arrangements will be in place for the Autumn Winter season.

More information on Q-Flow help, guidance and issue escalation can be found on the NHS Futures Collaboration Platform [here](#).

REMINDER: Help Improve Point of Care Systems Used to Capture and Report on Various Vaccination Data

Your help is requested to improve systems used to capture and report on various vaccination data (COVID, Flu and other vaccinations), by sharing what you think of some early prototypes for a new system, based on discovery work completed last year.

These systems are being designed for all users but those users from Community Pharmacies and from Maternity practice are particularly sought.

A series of 30-minute research sessions will be conducted over Microsoft Teams soon. If you would like to take part, please complete the short form [here](#).

Further National Links and Resources

Webinar: 'Preparing for a successful Spring 2023 COVID-19 campaign'

You can watch this recent webinar, which set out priorities and next steps for the forthcoming campaign, on FutureNHS [here](#).

Operational notes:

You can find all the latest operational notes on FutureNHS [here](#).

Communications resources:

You can find communications resources on FutureNHS including a [core script and FAQs](#) for the Spring campaign, [a long list of public FAQs](#), and a pack of [posters](#) to use in sites.

Clinical updates:

Previous editions of the clinical updates, before they were merged with this Bulletin, can be found [here](#).

Workforce and Training Bulletin:

Previous editions of this Bulletin, before it was merged with this Bulletin, can be found [here](#).

Workforce support:

[National Workforce Support Offer Toolkit](#) is a practical guide for local vaccination service leads with more detail about the National Workforce Support Offer.

Contact your [Lead Employer](#) to access the National Offer and additional staff and vaccinators, as well as support with your workforce needs.

For more details, please see our FutureNHS page on [case studies/FAQs](#) and recently guidance for [PCN groupings](#) and [community pharmacy](#).

Other Resources:

[Coronavirus vaccinations](#): Our Digital team helps you access up-to-date information, training and onboarding guides related to the tech and data solutions that are supporting the COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccination programmes.

[COVID-19 Vaccination Programme workspace](#) provides members with access to key documents, resources, webinar recordings, case studies and past copies of the LVS Updates. There is also a discussion forum for members.

Equalities Community of Practice [here](#), with bespoke tools, resources and content for engagement and practice in supporting and learning from people and partners within underserved communities and equalities groups.

[Supply and Delivery Hub](#) helps you access key information in a timely way and helps support you to deliver your local vaccination service. Here you will find the latest delivery information alongside the latest supply chain and customer service FAQs and other helpful information.

All COVID-19 vaccination queries for national teams should be escalated via the SVOC/RVOC/NVOC process.