

VACCINATIONS / OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

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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 as advised by the Code of Practice for Health and Adult Social Care on the Prevention and Control of Infections and Related Guidance issued by the Department of Health.

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 own 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 to which they are at risk from contracting during the course of 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 the identifiable illness or illnesses. The first step will be to agree a risk management plan with all concerned, and which staff will be expected to implement.

In the case of new residents, the risk assessment and any management plan will be part of the initial assessment and agreed with residents 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 residents, 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 needs 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 general 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 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.

- a) **Hepatitis B:** In line with Department of Health guidelines the organisation recommends vaccination against Hepatitis B for any of its member of staff who have direct contact with residents' 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.

- b) **Varicella:** The organisation recommends that staff who are proven through screening or testing to not have had chicken pox or herpes zoster should be given the Varicella vaccination.
- c) **Influenza:** The company also follows Department of Health 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.

Employment Procedures

On appointment each new employee completes a post-job-offer 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 residents 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.

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 is 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 to work in any at-risk situations, as this might create problems of equity and fairness in relation to 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.

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.

Further Information

The Department of Health's (updated 2013) Immunisation Against Infectious Disease — "The Green Book" presents latest information on vaccines and vaccination procedures for all the vaccine-preventable infectious diseases that may occur in the UK. Relevant chapters can be downloaded from the Department of Health's website: www.dh.gov.uk/government/publications

Related Policies

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH)

Infection Control

Recruitment and Selection