

## Healthwatch Lambeth Covid Webinar Q&A 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Should people with underlying health issues have the vaccine?** There are very few conditions which would mean you shouldn't have the vaccine. The only contraindications are if you have a clotting disorder and are not within range or have had a severe anaphylactic reaction to drugs before. It is very important that people with underlying health issues who are considered clinically extremely vulnerable and have been shielding have the vaccine when it is offered to them. Please speak to your GP for further advice.

**Is the vaccine safe for people from the BAME Community?** Both the vaccination trials included people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic group. The results showed that the vaccines worked the same for people from all ethnicities and races. There was no evidence of increased side effects for people from the BAME community. We all know about the disproportionate impact on BAME communities, so it is strongly recommended that people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic group have their vaccine.

**How will people who are housebound or unable to get to vaccination centres get their vaccine?** Vaccines can be administered by GPs. There are logistical issues with storing and moving the vaccine that make it difficult to administer it in people's homes, but GPs will look at individual cases.

**Can women who are pregnant/breastfeeding have the vaccine?** People who are pregnant are excluded from medical trials. So we don't have data about this but there is no evidence that it is harmful. The vaccine will be given if the potential benefits outweigh any risks.

**How will the vaccine affect women's reproductive health?** There is no evidence of the vaccine having an impact on fertility or reproductive health. There is no evidence of any women who have been vaccinated going on to have fertility problems.

**Can carers (paid/unpaid) have the vaccine at the same time as the person they care for?** Currently, carers fall into Group 6 and the advice has been to follow the schedule according to the priority groups. Where a carer is also vulnerable, or elderly, they may be vaccinated at the same time. You can contact your GP to highlight if you have caring responsibilities.

**What precautions should people take once they've been vaccinated?** Continuing following the same measures, wash your hands regularly, socially distance and wear a mask. Take full precautions even if you've had both doses. No vaccine is 100% and there is some evidence that people can have the vaccine and still carry the virus without becoming unwell themselves.

**How effective is the vaccine against the new strain?** We don't know for sure. Advice is to continue with the current vaccinations until we know more but early evidence is that the current vaccines are effective against the UK strain.

**Will lockdown lifting stop the vaccine working?** As we lift lockdowns, people will mix more so there will likely be more virus transmission. This won't stop the vaccine from working but

there is a balance. The hope is the vaccine will reduce the R number which gives us some space to lift the lockdown.

**Do you have any information regarding the possibility of any side effects to the vaccine as yet?** Common side effects include a sore arm at the injection site, feeling tired, a headache, feeling achy, and feeling sick. All patients are given information on the vaccine they have received and how to look out for any side effects This includes reporting them to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory agency (MHRA)

**Why has the dose schedule been changed for the second dose?** One dose of either vaccine provides a high level of protection. The decision to update the dosing interval is based on advice from the JCVI and MHRA to maximise the impact of the vaccination program and save lives . The priority is to give as many people as possible in at risk groups their first dose.