

RPS Statement on the role of pharmacists in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

The distribution and administration of the COVID-19 vaccination programme will require concerted action across the NHS. With unique insight and expertise in medicines and the delivery of vaccination programmes, pharmacists have a clear role in contributing to the success of this programme. This includes strategic planning, oversight of distribution arrangements, and operational roles in the preparation and administration of COVID-19 vaccines.

Delivering a vaccination programme which incorporates pharmacist expertise will be an effective approach to the COVID-19 crisis. The mobilisation of the profession in the COVID-19 vaccination programme must be undertaken in a way which not only makes the best use of their skills but does not unduly impact on the health and wellbeing of the profession and its capacity to deliver routine care and services.

We fully support a programme where the appropriate resources, infrastructure, procedures and support are put in place. The pharmacy profession must be able to contribute to a COVID-19 vaccination programme that:

- Draws on the appropriate expertise and leadership of pharmacists from all sectors of the NHS
- Utilises the knowledge and skills of pharmacists in helping citizens understand the way the vaccine works and what to expect when they have it
- Fosters collaboration with other health professionals at strategic and operational levels
- Minimises disruption to routine practice and business as usual in all sectors
- Utilises the skills of all pharmacists as part of a networked approach, as appropriate.
- Supports community pharmacies to engage in the vaccine programme
- Ensure processes are in place to clarify the parameters of the role of the pharmacist
- Ensures pharmacists undertake appropriate training and have access to up to date information about the specifications of all COVID-19 vaccines
- Invests responsibility in the pharmacy profession to advise clinical colleagues about the vaccine and provide high quality information to the general public to maximise uptake of the vaccine
- Is underpinned by adequate human and financial resources on par with the support provided to other healthcare professions to allow pharmacists to undertake their roles without compromising patient care or their own wellbeing.
- Guarantees the supply of clinical consumables for appropriate vaccination use.

The safety of pharmacists, their teams and patients must be paramount and must be assured through sustaining COVID-safe environments. Access to priority vaccination is essential for front line pharmacy staff in community, primary care and hospitals at the same time as other professionals who have an equivalent level of potential COVID-19 exposure. The provision of appropriate levels of personal protective equipment to cope with demand must also continue without question.

The role of pharmacists in the COVID-19 vaccination programme must be made clear to the pharmacy profession itself. Professional and representative pharmacy bodies must play a role in cascading vaccination communications to the profession. Steps must also be taken by governments and the NHS to build public confidence and manage expectations in the administration of vaccines from pharmacists and others involved in the vaccination programme.