

Employers unite to encourage over a million staff to get the COVID-19 vaccine

- Many businesses have pledged their flexibility to help staff get the vaccine during work hours
- Government is calling on all businesses, organisations and industry bodies to make a similar commitment to drive vaccine uptake across the UK

Leading businesses, employers and industry bodies across the UK have come together to support the COVID-19 vaccination programme and encourage their staff to get a jab when eligible.

So far, 9 of the UK's biggest national employers have pledged their support in promoting positive vaccination messages and encouraging their 240,000 employees to get the vaccine – including during working hours – to ensure workplaces are safe and staff can play their part in the UK's biggest ever vaccination programme.

IKEA, Asda, Slimming World, Metro Bank, Procter & Gamble UK, Santander, Nationwide, Severn Trent and Merlin Entertainments are among the many businesses that have maintained extensive safety measures to protect staff throughout the pandemic. Now, to help encourage and maintain high vaccine uptake among their employees, they have pledged to promote positive safety messages and signpost staff to NHS-verified advice on vaccines.

Industry bodies, such as the British Beer and Pub Association and Builders Merchants Federation – whose members supply the UK's vital construction industry – have also thrown their weight behind the coalition in a bid to encourage their partners to get involved, totalling over a million people.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Our vaccination programme has so far saved thousands of lives, protecting our loved ones and bringing down infection rates to a point where we can see normality on the horizon.

It's fantastic that employers are prioritising the safety of their staff and doing all they can to encourage people to get vaccinated.

I urge everyone to get their vaccines when they get the call so we can beat this pandemic together.

With more than 54 million vaccines administered so far, people aged 38 and over are now eligible to get their COVID-19 vaccine.

Organisations have pledged to be as flexible as possible when it comes to staff getting the vaccine. Many companies, including IKEA, have also committed to giving paid time off work for employees, in addition to providing sick pay as standard for the minority who experience minor side effects like fever or a headache.

Employers will also use resources from the new national government campaign to run an internal awareness campaign consisting of key messages, vaccine fact sheets, informative question and answer videos, posters and many more resources to ensure their employees get access to reliable and accurate information about the COVID-19 vaccine.

The government is calling on all UK organisations to join the campaign by introducing similar internal awareness campaigns to promote the benefits of vaccination.

Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Vaccines save lives, they protect you and your loved ones from this terrible virus and they are the best way out of this pandemic.

Thank you to all of the organisations which have joined this incredibly important campaign to promote vaccine uptake.

I call on every business in the UK, no matter how big or small, to join the national charge and help your employees to access life-saving jobs when they are eligible.

Faisal Tuddy, Superintendent Pharmacist at Asda, said:

We have been extremely proud to play our part in the vaccine roll-out by hosting NHS vaccination centres in 3 of our stores. Asda was the first supermarket to offer this service and so far our pharmacy colleagues have now administered over 36,000 doses.

We are also encouraging our colleagues to get the jab as soon as they are eligible to, and are supporting them by giving them the time off to attend both appointments to receive the vaccine as well as the time they need to recover if they feel unwell.

Vaccinated people are far less likely to get COVID-19 with symptoms. Vaccinated people are even more unlikely to get serious COVID-19, to be admitted to hospital or to die from it. There is also growing evidence that vaccinated people are less likely to pass the virus to others.

The government has already hit its target of offering everybody in cohorts 1 to 9 – those aged 50 and over, the clinically vulnerable and health and social care workers – a first dose of the vaccine by 15 April and is on track to offer a jab to all adults in the UK by the end of July.

[Find out more about the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine](#)

[Download the COVID-19 Employer Toolkit](#)

Supporting businesses

- Asda
- IKEA
- Merlin Entertainments
- Metro Bank
- Nationwide
- Procter & Gamble
- Santander
- Severn Trent
- Slimming World

Supporting industry bodies

British Beer and Pub Association:

- 600,000 employees in pub sector – 900,000 when you expand it to brewing
- 43% of pub staff are aged 25 or below

Builders Merchants Federation (BMF):

- 760 members have a combined turnover of £38 billion, within the £156 billion total construction industry in the UK
- members employ over 190,000 people in the industry
- BMF merchant members operate from over 5,700 branches throughout the UK and Ireland

Quotes from employers

IKEA

IKEA, which employs more than 11,000 people across its 21 UK stores, has continued to support staff throughout the pandemic, with an extensive set of safe working procedures in place and ensuring that all workers were paid 100% of their contracted hours, regardless of the restrictions in place. IKEA supports the vaccine roll-out and ensure co-workers receive paid time off to attend vaccination appointments and makes sure the most up-to-date information is shared and available.

Peter Jelkeby, Country Retail Manager and Chief Sustainability Officer, IKEA UK and Ireland said:

The vaccine roll-out is an exciting milestone, enabling an eventual return to the togetherness we need and crave. In supporting our co-workers to get vaccinated, our return to normality, to our customers, and most importantly to our loved ones, is a step closer. And for that opportunity we're incredibly grateful.

Merlin Entertainments

Dominic Wigley, Merlin's Group Safety, Engineering and Security Director, said:

'We Care' is one of Merlin's core values, and as part of our role as a supportive employer we want to care for and support our employees, their families and the communities in which we have our attractions throughout this global pandemic.

As our fight against COVID-19 continues, we are encouraging employees to do all they can to keep safe including maintain social distancing, wearing face coverings in appropriate areas (unless medically exempt), and applying high standards of personal hygiene, as well as encouraging all employees to give careful consideration to having the COVID-19 vaccine when invited to do so.

By being vaccinated, employees are taking positive action to help protect their own health, and in doing so benefiting the communities in which they live, work and deliver memorable moments, and we will do everything we can to help support them in that.

Metro Bank

Carol Frost, Chief People Officer at Metro Bank, said:

The vaccine roll-out is crucial to the health and wellbeing both of the nation and the economy, bringing with it hope for a return to normality. We are fully behind the vaccination programme and have encouraged colleagues to get vaccinated in line with government advice, giving them time off, if needed, to get their jobs.

Nationwide

Jane Hanson, Chief People Officer, Nationwide, said:

The safety and well-being of our colleagues and members has been our number one priority throughout the pandemic and will continue to be so as lockdown continues to ease. The vaccine programme is one of the most ambitious and vital ever undertaken in this country and it is important for employers like ours to support in whatever way we can.

That includes offering complete flexibility to all colleagues getting the vaccine. They can take paid time off during work hours to do so, as is the case for any medical appointment. This is an incredibly important time for the nation and we need to be as flexible as we can.

Procter & Gamble UK

Chris Young, Vice President, Human Resources, Procter & Gamble UK, said:

We are fully supportive of the UK government's vaccination programme and see it as an important element in our journey towards a return to normality. The health and well-being of our employees is our number one priority and we continue to support them with flexibility to enable them to book their vaccinations to help protect themselves, their family members, friends and colleagues.

Santander

Elaine Thomas, Chief HR Officer at Santander, said:

We are proud to be playing our part in this essential vaccination campaign to ensure our colleagues can elect to receive their jab during working time. There has been a tremendous effort over the last year to keep each other and our customers as safe as possible, and we would like to pay tribute to the countless volunteers – including our own staff – who are supporting the vaccination programme across communities.

Severn Trent

Neil Morrison, Severn Trent HR Director, said:

Throughout the pandemic and beyond, we'll continue to provide an essential service for our customers and communities, so being able to welcome more and more of our colleagues back into our work places is really important to us. We know that we work best when we're together, and that the vaccination programme is providing hope – not just for more of those great collaboration opportunities, but for a brighter summer for us all.

That's why at Severn Trent we're absolutely supportive of anyone deciding to get vaccinated, and while it's not mandatory for anyone to have their vaccine, for those that do, we're committed in making sure we give them the time needed for it, as we know how important it is when it comes to keeping our colleagues and frontline staff protected.

Slimming World

Jenny Caven, Director of External Affairs, said:

Throughout the pandemic Slimming World has done all that we can to

protect our people – our staff, our self-employed consultants, and most importantly our members. We've adapted our service to be able to continue to offer essential weight-loss support virtually. But we know from our members and consultants that the accountability of stepping on the scales and being in a real-life group and seeing each other face to face is the most effective way to achieve weight loss success.

So we're all extremely keen to get back to being back together again. Having the vaccine is the best way we have of reassuring everyone and having confidence that we are safe when we are together. We've encouraged our teams at Slimming World's head office, most of whom have been working remotely for the past year, that having the vaccine is the best protection. And we've also encouraged consultants to be vaccinated so that members feel safe and protected when returning to our 10,000 real-life community groups.

Quotes from industry bodies

British Beer and Pub Association

Emma McClarkin, Chief Executive of the British Beer and Pub Association, said:

The vaccination programme is key to bringing down infection rates and enabling us to return to normality once more – including at the pub.

The safety of our staff is paramount and I implore everyone working in pubs to get their vaccine as soon as they are asked to do so. I also call on all employers to play their part by giving staff the flexibility they need in order to attend their vaccination.

The sooner we are all vaccinated the sooner we can get back to life as normal.

Builders Merchants Federation

John Newcomb, Chief Executive of the Builders Merchants Federation, said:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, builders merchants and materials manufacturers have done everything possible to protect colleagues and customers whilst maintaining the continuous supply of building products to construction sites throughout the UK.

The vaccination programme is helping us return to normality but its ultimate success depends on everyone participating. We are actively supporting the vaccine programme and urging employers throughout

the building supply chain to do everything possible to ensure colleagues can get their job.

Case study

Megan Jacob, aged 28, Guest Experience Team Leader at the National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham, said:

I am proud to work for an employer that champions our health and safety as employees, especially during this time. The industry and our employers being flexible, supportive and encouraging has a huge impact – we are able to feel empowered to book and get the vaccine when it's our turn, even if that means doing so in office hours.