

Regulations making COVID-19 vaccination a condition of deployment to end

- Regulations requiring COVID-19 vaccination to work in Care Quality Commission registered care homes to be lifted from 15 March
- Legal requirement for health and social care staff to be double jabbed from 1 April to be removed
- Health and Social Care Secretary reminds the minority of unvaccinated health and care workers of their professional responsibility to be vaccinated

Regulations making COVID-19 vaccination a condition of deployment in health and social care will be revoked on Tuesday 15 March, the Health and Social Care Secretary has confirmed today (Tuesday 1 March).

Following a public consultation, where 90% of responses supported the removal of the legal requirement for health and social care staff to be double jabbed, the government is revoking the regulations.

In January, the government confirmed its intention to revoke vaccination as a condition of deployment, subject to consultation.

When the original decision was taken to introduce COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of deployment, Delta was the dominant variant. This has since been replaced by Omicron which is less severe, with the percentage of those requiring emergency care or hospital admission approximately half that of the Delta variant.

Thanks to our hugely successful vaccination programme, the immunity built up in the population and our new antiviral and therapeutics tools, we are now in the strong position of learning to live with COVID-19. The latest data from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) shows that five to nine weeks after getting a booster, you are at least 85% less likely to end up in hospital than if you are unvaccinated.

With the population better protected and lower levels of hospitalisations and mortality, it was right to revisit the balance of risks and benefits that had guided the government's original decisions to introduce vaccination as a condition of deployment in health and social care. The number of restrictions, rules and regulations are now being reduced – including this requirement.

While the vast majority of NHS, social care and other healthcare staff have been double jabbed, the government is clear those working in health and social care who remain unvaccinated still have a professional responsibility to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and Get Boosted Now.

The government's priority is to ensure the most vulnerable to COVID-19 remain

protected through vaccinations, antivirals and therapeutics.

The government is continuing to work closely with Royal Colleges and professional regulators to strengthen guidance and consult on updating the Code of Practice on the prevention and control of infections in relation to COVID-19 requirements for CQC registered providers of health and social care in England.

The lifting of these regulations and the easing of restrictions as we learn to live with COVID-19 will help us to continue to chart a course back to normality.

NOTES TO EDITORS