



COVID 19: Mass vaccination volunteers

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This guidance has been produced in partnership between St John Ambulance, NFCC and the Department of Health and Social Care.

What is the COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Programme?

To address the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has asked the NHS to deliver a vaccination programme, so that those who need protecting most will be able to access vaccinations as soon as they are available.

Detailed planning has been underway for months, building on the expertise and strong track record the NHS already has in delivering immunisations like the annual flu vaccination programme, to ensure that the COVID-19 vaccination programme does not impact on other vital services.

The NHS is working closely with a number of partners across Government, each with their own roles and responsibilities and plans have now been finalised based on decisions made by those bodies, including what vaccines are approved and who should receive them first.

NHS England and NHS Improvement has asked the Fire and Rescue Service to support its mass vaccination programme.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Fire and Rescue Service staff have already given thousands of hours of time to support the national effort to protect and support our communities throughout the pandemic.

All of that work continues, and the sector has now been asked to support the workforce needs of the vaccination programme, in particular with volunteers ready to help with the administration of COVID-19 vaccinations.

The expertise and the skills of Fire and Rescue staff means that we are ideally positioned to support the delivery of a vaccination programme. We are an Emergency Service and delivery of the COVID-19 vaccine is a national emergency.

By building capability and capacity with our existing volunteers and training additional people, we will be ready to support COVID-19 immunisations as soon as training has been agreed and provided and it is safe to do so.

What will the volunteers be doing? What roles are available?

There are roles specific to the vaccination programme: Volunteer Vaccinator, Vaccination Care Volunteer and Patient Advocate. Some people, specifically the volunteer vaccinators, will be able to give vaccinations, but others are there to support people as they go through the process of having a flu or COVID-19 vaccination. This is a frightening time for people and there are groups of patients who are going to need one-to-one support, for example people with a visual impairment or other disability.

What training will you receive?

All volunteers will meet strict selection criteria, mandated by the NHS, and receive appropriate clinical training, including official courses developed in partnership with and approved by NHS England. As well as extensive training, they will be subject to assessments and clinical supervision to ensure their own safety and that of everyone receiving the vaccine.

We are an emergency service with a track record of delivering Fire and Rescue response and first aid to the public. We also bring our reputation as people who can be trusted in a crisis.

Do you need any previous experience?

No, you can apply for any of the roles without prior experience as all the training you need will be provided.

You will be asked a series of qualifying questions as some groups of people are more at risk of complications should they contract COVID-19 and these people may not be able to volunteer straight away. The Volunteer Vaccinator role will require you to have at least 2 A Levels or the equivalent.

We are working to NHS England's specifications and our volunteers will meet the same criteria as NHS people who will be doing this work and will have gone through the same training if they're fulfilling the same role.

All roles agreed will be subject to nationally agreed risk assessment.

Is it safe for someone with no previous medical experience to be involved with this programme?

We are working to NHS England's specifications, and as well as the extensive training with a pass/fail assessment, they will be subject to assessments (observed vaccinations) and clinical supervision at each of the vaccination sites by a health care professional to ensure the safety of patients and that of the volunteers.

How long will training take and where will I have to go to be trained?

Training requirements for vaccination volunteer roles vary from 21.5 hours for a Volunteer Vaccinator to 12.5 hours for a Patient Advocate. Training is a blend of online learning and COVID-secure, face-to-face training, over a period of four weeks. This will be agreed with NHS and communicated clearly prior to commencement of any role.

How does recruitment work?

This is down to local determination. Once this is agreed locally, [click here to start your journey](#). St John Ambulance system will help you understand which role(s) you may be suitable for, so that you can complete an application.

Once you have applied, you'll book an interview with a member of St John Ambulance Welcome Team, so you can discuss whether you are right for the role.

Very soon after this, you'll receive log-in details so you can begin your virtual training. Depending on your current skills and the role you have been assigned to, you will receive between two hours and a full day of classroom training. All our classroom training is COVID-secure.

When the vaccine is ready and you're able to sign up for shifts, you will be invited to your volunteering location for your final training with the NHS.

How many shifts can I do?

We need a commitment of at least two shifts per month from the time the vaccine is available, but you can do more. We will always take volunteers work-life patterns and wellbeing into account. Shifts will last up to eight hours.

Can I volunteer if I have a health condition?

There are many health conditions that put someone at higher risk from COVID-19, and we are committed to reducing that risk of harm as much as possible. When you [start your journey](#), we will ask some questions about your health.

If you cannot start volunteering straight away, we will keep your details for later. We hope that once the vaccine starts working it will become safer for you to volunteer.

What support will I get?

You will have a Vaccination Volunteer Lead who will keep in touch with you. You'll first hear from them shortly after your recruitment is complete. They'll stay in touch before the vaccine is ready, and keep in touch while the vaccination programme is going on.

Will volunteers wear PPE?

Yes, all those in close patient contact will be required to wear PPE in line with the current guidance from Public Health England and NHS England and agreed Fire and Rescue Service Instructions and Risk Assessment