

Professional Visitor Protocol – November 2021

Introduction

From 11 November 2021 care homes must only allow individuals who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (or exempt) entry inside of a care home. This requirement will apply to those visiting a care home in a professional capacity unless exempt.

This edition is dated November 2021 and takes account of the issue of [New Guidance](#) (“**the Guidance**”) published by the Department of Health and Social Care.

NB This policy is specifically for visiting professionals.

How to demonstrate your vaccination status.

If you have been vaccinated by the NHS in England you can demonstrate your COVID-19 vaccination records using the NHS COVID Pass service via the following 3 routes:

- the NHS App
- the NHS website – NHS.uk
- the NHS COVID Pass letter

Your NHS appointment card **cannot** be used as proof of vaccination status.

NHS App

An individual’s vaccination status can be found within the NHS COVID Pass service of the NHS App. The registered person (or those acting on the behalf of the registered person) would be able to take this as proof of the individual’s vaccination status to verify that they have had a complete course of the Covid-19 vaccination.

The NHS App is available to download – more information and how to download it is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-app/>

Web-based solution

The NHS COVID Pass can also be accessed via the NHS website. This displays the same information as is contained within the NHS app via an online web page – and can be accessed via <https://covid-status.service.nhs.uk/>

Non-digital solution: NHS COVID Pass letter

An individual can get an NHS COVID Pass letter sent to them in the post, which shows that they have been vaccinated against COVID-19. They can do this by:

- requesting a COVID Pass letter online via <https://covid-status.service.nhs.uk/>
- calling 119 (for those vaccinated in England only)



This letter can then be presented by the individual to the care home to demonstrate their vaccination status. Individuals may need to wait 5 working days to receive this and should account for this to ensure they are able to demonstrate vaccination status by the time the regulations come into force.

Individuals need to have an NHS number and have been vaccinated in England, but they do not need to be registered with a GP surgery or have an NHS login to get an NHS COVID Pass letter.

If you have been vaccinated in Scotland you can find information on how to obtain a record of your COVID-19 vaccination status at nhsinform.scot. If you have been vaccinated in Wales you can find information on how to obtain a record of their COVID-19 vaccination status at gov.wales.

We are aware some individuals will have been vaccinated outside of the UK. The NHS are working on a solution to this and will provide further guidance on the acceptable evidence for this as soon as possible.

Responsibility for checking that people are vaccinated or exempt

Registered persons (the person registered with the CQC as a manager or service provider) are ultimately responsible for ensuring that everyone who enters the care home is vaccinated or exempt. They are advised to use their professional judgement when delegating these checks to other members of staff.

It is the responsibility of the registered manager to confirm that those entering have correct proof of vaccination or exemption. However, you should ensure you and your staff have the correct proof or you may not be able to enter the care home. The registered care home manager may also request that this requirement is included in any contracts between the care home and your employer.

Exemptions

Vaccination may not be appropriate for you due to clinical reasons. In this case, you will be able to seek a clinically approved medical exemption from this requirement.

There will be a clear process for you to follow if you think you may have a clinical reason to be exempt. This process will be aligned with certification for domestic events, exemptions from self-isolation for confirmed contacts and travel. Guidance for certification is being developed by the Government and we will add a link to this guidance here as soon as it's published.

Scope

A wide range of people not based in a care home may need to enter a care home as part of their work. This includes public servants including visiting healthcare professionals or social care workers, as well as those delivering non-care services such as hairdressing, maintenance, or activities.

Please check with the registered manager at the care home to see if it applies to you.



Emergency visits

The regulations provide an exception where it is reasonably necessary for someone to provide urgent maintenance or emergency assistance with respect to the care home.

The registered manager of the home will be able to determine what would constitute an emergency for their own setting. The exemption applies to all emergency services staff attending the care home in the execution of their duties. The exemption would also apply to someone who is entering the care home for emergency assistance for an incident in the care home itself.

We expect urgent maintenance assistance to only apply where there is a significant impact on the quality of care of residents or risk to life.

Exemptions

Exemptions to the requirement can only apply for a person to provide urgent maintenance or emergency assistance with respect to the care home. It is for the registered manager of the care home to make that decision.

Apprentices (potentially under 18s)

Frontline health and care staff over the age of 16 are eligible for a vaccine. These individuals should make sure they get a full course of an MHRA approved vaccine before they turn 18.

Other visiting professionals will not be able to enter the care home until they've had a full course of a COVID-19 vaccine. All 17-year-olds will be able to book a vaccine, up to 3 months before their 18th birthday.

Apprentices under the age of 18 would be exempt and therefore able to enter the care home without proving their vaccination status. They should however be able to provide evidence that they are under 18 prior to entering the care home.

Surrounding grounds of the care home

The regulations will not apply to any surrounding grounds of the care home. Any visiting professionals who are only working in the grounds, and not entering the building will not have to show proof of vaccination or exemption. However, if you are regularly visiting a care home, we would recommend you obtain correct proof of vaccination or exemption. This is because you may come into regular contact with service care users and staff and you will be asked to provide proof before entering.

PPE

Infection prevention control measures such as PPE are still required in residential care settings. PPE requirements will remain in line with current government guidance on how to work safely in care homes <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-how-to-work-safely-in-care-homes>. We would advise you to check this beforehand to ensure correct compliance.

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West Berkshire
C O U N C I L