



MAKING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS  
FOR THE COVID AND FLU VACCINATIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH  
LEARNING DISABILITIES

# Before the vaccine appointment:

## REMEMBER

The nasal flu vaccination can be used for people with a needle phobia as a reasonable adjustment.

Try and do as much preparation before the appointment as is possible. This will help to reduce vaccination appointment time and thus, also reduce the person's anxiety.

Contact the person and/or their support. What reasonable adjustments need to be made ahead of the appointment?

Now consider the below:

- **Location:**
  - Where is the vaccine being offered? Is there somewhere closer or more familiar for the patient? (GP surgery instead of 'hub'?)
  - *Consider accessibility:* Is there ramps and lifts if needed?
    - Is there accessible parking and toilets?
    - A safe, warm and dry place to wait if clinics are delayed? Consider that people with mobility difficulties may not be able to stand and wait outside for long periods.
    - Is there a private room that is quiet and avoids overstimulation of senses where the person can be vaccinated or wait?
    - Think about the lighting and environment- can the lights be dimmed or turned off? Can posters removed from walls to reduce sensory stimulation?
  - Can an alternative be offered: e.g. Vaccinate through a car window, a home visit or day service?
    - Hospital and GP surgeries can often be busy and noisy environments which can be particularly distressing for someone experiencing anxiety or someone who has sensory processing difficulties.
    - A home visit is a reasonable adjustment.

- Does the person need to be in a room with a bed due to being prone to syncope or other adverse reactions?
- **Preparation:** Consider a visit ahead of vaccination to hub/surgery to familiarise the person.
- **Who:**
  - Who is best placed to administer the vaccine? Is there a practice nurse who knows the person well? Their 'usual' GP?
  - Does support from Community Learning Disability Team need to be sought around needle desensitisation?
  - Does the person have an avoidance of health professionals? If so, consider the removal of stethoscopes and ID badges.
  - Consider cultural preferences.
- **Time and Date:**
  - Does the person require an afternoon appointment due to the medication that they take or routines that need to be fulfilled?
  - Are there certain days that need to be avoided due to day services or the persons other commitments?
  - Can the appointment be scheduled on a day that the person has support?
  - Can they be offered the first/ last appointment of the day when the venue may be quieter, or they could avoid having to wait.
  - Does a double appointment need to be booked so that the person is not rushed?
  - Do you offer weekend or evening appointments?
- **Communication aids:**
  - Consider sending information about the vaccine ahead of the appointment and ensure it is in a format that can be understood by the person. *Remember you can contact your local CCG or Community Learning Disability Team for accessible information and Easyread.*
  - Send Easy read invite letters. Consider how you are inviting people; texts/ phone calls are not accessible for everyone. An interpreter may need to be booked for the appointment; ensure this is done in timely manner.

- Other useful aids might include videos and objects of reference for desensitisation.
  - Pictures of the location of vaccine clinic and staff doing vaccines may help the person prepare. Support might be required to develop a social story/ now and next plan for the person.
- How does the person say yes/no/stop?
- **Capacity, consent and best interests:** If the person does not have capacity to consent to the vaccination (Mental Capacity Act 2005); a best interest meeting may be arranged prior to vaccination.
  - If all above reasonable adjustments have been made, vaccination is unsuccessful, and the person does not have capacity- consider; is vaccination in the person's best interests? If so, all best interest decisions must be the **least restrictive**.
- **Additional measures:**
  - **Understanding the person and their support:** Before the vaccination it may be helpful to obtain additional information such as the person's allergy status so that the consent forms and health questionnaires might be pre-populated before the appointment.
  - Discuss with the person, what things make them feel more relaxed or distracted- could they bring along their phone, ipad or magazines?
  - Is there music that can be played?
  - Tell the person or their support to come in clothing that is easily accessible.
  - Instruct about where to wait if there is no waiting room- eg. 'Do not turn up early for your appointment as there may be nowhere indoors to wait'.
  - Consider Carer's needs.
  - Consider advising the need for Pre-emptive paracetamol
  - If topical lidocaine cream is needed- ensure this is prescribed and applied before vaccination

## **On the day:**

### **Important**

Have all the previously agreed reasonable adjustments been made? If not, contact the person before their appointment in case it needs to be re-arranged or alternatives need to be put in place.

Remember- some people with a learning disability/ Autism may be exempt from wearing a face covering.

- **Rewards:** are agreed incentives available? Stickers, ice cream etc.
- **Distraction techniques:** tv, ipad, magazines, arm massages, phone, other items of comfort- make sure these are available on the day.
- **When:** if there are delays- can they wait in car and staff member call them in when their turn to avoid waiting room? During the 15 minute post-COVID vaccine observation, can they wait in a car or quiet area?
- **Who:** ensure arrangements have been made for the person to bring someone to support them for their appointment (family, staff member, friend).

**If unsuccessful:** review and try again another day. Consider a referral to Community Learning Disability Team for additional support.

### **For more information**

- Contact the **Community Learning Disability Team**

**Address:** Grenoside Grange- West Wing

Salt Box Lane. Sheffield. S35 8QS.

**Telephone:** 0114 226 1562

- Go to:

<https://www.sheffieldmentalhealth.co.uk/learning-disabilities-your-health/gps-learning-disabilities-and-autism>