

COVID-19 Vaccine Conversation Guidance

You may be concerned about discussing the mandating of the COVID-19 vaccine with individuals in your team due to the different viewpoints and concerns that people may have.

The below guidance had been drafted to support managers in having these conversations. Your role will be to:

- Explain the mandating of vaccine for key roles;
- Encouraging staff to take the vaccination; and,
- Follow up any action that will help alleviate concerns and that helps your team to be better informed on the vaccination.

It is important to note that all conversations should be held in private, and regardless of your own views on the COVID-19 vaccination, the tone of the discussion should be non-threatening and non-judgemental. People will have their own reasons for their decisions with the aim of the conversation being to help alleviate any concerns people may have about the vaccination and encouragement to take it.

Step one: Preparing for the conversation

- Take time to reflect on your own feelings beforehand.
- Think about a previous challenging conversations you may have had; how did it go, could you have done anything differently?
- Think about the outcome you want to get out of the conversation.
- Think through what you are going to say beforehand, and how you will start the conversation.
- Make sure there is sufficient time to talk and you are both comfortable.

Step two: Holding the conversation

- Start from a place of understanding; try to imagine how the other person is feeling and what their concerns might be. Thinking about their past experiences, values and background may help you to understand them better.
- Listen carefully and take the time to find out how they feel.
- Allow the other person the space to talk and finish what they are saying without interrupting them.
- Be sensitive and respectful in how you give information – particularly if it is different to the views the person has. Actively listening and acknowledging the other person's concerns and feelings will help.
- Be comfortable with silence – don't rush to fill it with words.
- Allow them to finish telling you what they are worried or concerned about, and don't interrupt them with counterarguments; people's concerns will be real to them.
- What may be perceived as resistance, could instead be fear; some people may be afraid of having the vaccination

Ask open questions, such as:

- What have you heard about the vaccine?
- What are your thoughts on the vaccine?
- Why do you think that?
- Where did you learn this?
- Where do you get your information about the vaccine?
- What would help you?
- What would help you to be reassured about the vaccination?

Step three: Ending the conversation

- Summarise any key discussions, offers of support and where information is available for staff to access.

During this type of conversation, emotions might be heightened so it's important to allow time for a pause, or even a break and return to the conversation at a later date.

Responding to emotions

- Avoidance – 'Let's bring it back to the issue at hand. We need to acknowledge what's happening'
- Crying/anger - Let's take a moment before we continue'
- Silence – 'It is important we talk about this. It is serious. I'm keen to hear your view and how we can move forward. I don't have all the answers'. Do allow time for silence in the conversation. Often members of staff may need a lengthy pause to explore and formulate thoughts and feelings. Have confidence to hold the silence; resisting breaking periods of silence too frequently or quickly.

Finally, don't forget this is a conversation, not a debate. Be ready for people who are holding tight beliefs and may challenge you. Don't take the challenge as personal, but that you are providing the opportunity for individuals to air their concerns.

For more information and guidance visit the COVID-19 vaccination page on the Trust intranet [here](#), including:

- Frequently asked questions are available [here](#);
- Pregnancy, fertility and the COVID-19 vaccination is available [here](#).

For training or support with challenging conversations please contact the Organisational Development team by email on: OrganisationalDevelopment@uhb.nhs.uk