



**Dear Parent/Guardian,**

We hope you are all keeping safe and well during these difficult times. We want to support you in understanding the COVID-19 vaccination programme for your child and for yourself. We outline here the Barnsley response to assist you in dealing with this situation.

**Re: COVID – 19 vaccination programme**

COVID-19 is a very infectious respiratory disease which can affect anyone but for some people it can make them seriously ill. The risk of serious illness is higher for those who have certain health conditions. One in three people who are infected may not have any symptoms or only have mild symptoms but can still pass on the virus.

This has been the most challenging 18 months many of us can remember. Thankfully, we have a fully-fledged COVID-19 vaccination programme in Barnsley which has been set up to best protect our friends, family and community. More than 80% of people aged 16 and over in the UK have received 2 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. The vast majority of people in Barnsley have already taken up the covid-19 vaccine offer.

The UK's Covid-19 vaccination programme was launched in December 2020 with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation setting out the sequence in which people would be prioritised for vaccination. Since August, 16 and 17 year olds have been offered one dose of the COVID-19 Vaccination. Over half of all 16 and 17 year olds have now received their COVID-19 vaccination. As you may now be aware, school aged children aged 12-15 (recently extended up to those who are aged 17 and 9 months) will now be offered the first dose COVID-19 vaccine in School. The COVID-19 vaccination programme in secondary schools has been set up to help to reduce disruption to face to face education this winter.

**Why should my child get the COVID-19 Vaccine?**

- To give them the best protection from serious illness and long-term health conditions, even for those who are fit and healthy.
- To protect those around them including other family members, friends and their teachers
- To help reduce COVID-19 transmission within school/ college and reduce disruption to face to face teaching
- To help reduce the disturbance COVID-19 can cause to your child and your family's lives on a day-to-day basis and help you all get back to doing what matters to you as a family

## How will my child get the COVID-19 Vaccine?

### **COVID-19 school-based vaccination programme**

All children aged 12 to 17 years and 9 months are being offered a first dose of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as part of the school-based COVID-19 vaccination programme. Like all school-based vaccination programmes, the vaccines will be administered by the local school-based vaccination team (School Age Immunisation Service-SAIS) working closely with the school.

Consent will be sought by the vaccination team from the parent or person with parental responsibility prior to vaccination in line with existing school vaccination programmes. A paper consent form provided by the vaccination team will be given to the School for them to send home with the children for their parent/guardian to sign. The child will then bring the signed consent form back into school.

Due to the nature of the programme which is being rolled out at pace across all secondary schools, the school will advise parents/guardians of when the vaccination team will be visiting the School and will send the child home with a paper consent form to complete approximately 48 hours before the vaccination.

### **16 years and older**

It's not too late to get a COVID-19 vaccination. Anyone 16 and over can attend a walk-in vaccination clinic for their 1<sup>st</sup> vaccination and that does not require an appointment. Details of walk-in clinics are available on <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/find-a-walk-in-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-site/>

You can also keep up to date on upcoming walk-in clinics by following Barnsley Council and NHS Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on social media- Facebook and Twitter so why not take a look at some up and coming vaccine drop in clinics below and see if you can fit one in around the school run or weekend?

You can also book an appointment for your 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> dose if that is easier. Search online 'book a coronavirus vaccination' <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/> or calling 119 from your phone.

### **Further information about the Covid-19 vaccination**

We are aware that there has been a scam email circulating about the school vaccination programme and encourage you to use trusted sources of information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-resources-for-schools>

<https://www.barnsleyccg.nhs.uk/patient-help/covid-19-vaccine-faqs.htm>

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/health-and-wellbeing/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-guidance/>

Please see attached common questions and answers sheet about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Yours Sincerely

Julia Burrows  
Barnsley Council  
Director of Public Health

## **Common questions and answers about the Covid-19 vaccine:**

### **Do you get side effects from the vaccine?**

*Many people do not have any side effects at all after having the vaccine, those that do tend to have a sore arm around where they had the injection, headache, tiredness, and general aches or mild flu like symptoms which can last for 1-2 days.*

*There have been some cases of younger people fainting shortly after having the vaccine. This is not related to the vaccine itself. We advise people to ensure they have had something to eat and drink before they attend the appointment*

*Reports of serious side effects are very rare.*

*There have been reports of an extremely rare blood clotting problem affecting a small number of people who have had the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. For those who are under the age of 40 in Barnsley will be offered the Pfizer vaccine.*

*There have been rare cases of inflammation of the heart reported after the Pfizer vaccine. These reports are extremely rare, and the events are typically mild with individuals usually recovering within a short time with standard treatment and rest*

### **Is the vaccine Safe?**

*Yes, they have been approved by the Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and long-term side effects appear to be very rare. Vaccines for COVID-19 have been monitored in large numbers of people for many months in clinical trials and in the wider population, they continue to be closely monitored.*

### **Is the vaccine safe for younger people?**

*The medicines regulator (MHRA), has confirmed the Pfizer vaccine is safe and effective for 12 to 17 year olds. This followed a rigorous review of the safety, quality and effectiveness of the vaccines in this age group. The UK has also benefited from having data from the US, Canada, and Israel, which have already offered vaccines universally to young people aged 12 to 15 years.*

### **Can I have the vaccine during pregnancy or breast feeding and does it affect fertility/menstruation?**

- *You can have the vaccine if you are pregnant. The vaccine cannot give pregnant women or babies COVID-19. Some pregnant women can get life-threatening illness from COVID-19, especially in the later stages of pregnancy and increase the risk of the baby being born prematurely, the vaccine offers the best protection against this.*
- *You can have the vaccine if you're breastfeeding- You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccines and cannot pass it to your baby through your breast milk.*
- *You can have the vaccine if you're trying for a baby or might get pregnant in the future- There's no evidence the COVID-19 vaccines have any effect on your chances of becoming pregnant. There's no need to avoid getting pregnant after being vaccinated.*
- *There have been some reports that women have had temporary changes to their menstrual cycle after having the COVID-19 vaccine. These revert back to normal quickly.*

### **Why should I get the vaccine if I can still catch Covid-19?**

*Evidence shows that the vaccine:*

- *Reduces the severity of Covid-19 disease.*
- *Reduces the chances of catching and spreading Covid-19.*
- *Reduces the long-term impact of the virus.*

### **Do I still need to get the vaccine even if I have had Covid-19?**

*Yes, it provides the best protection. You should still get vaccinated even if you have had covid-19, or tested positive for covid19 antibodies in the past. Vaccination should be postponed for at least four weeks (28 days) after the onset of symptoms or from the first positive test in those who did not have symptoms.*