

Dear community pharmacy colleague,

Deployment of Pfizer BioNTech vaccine in community pharmacy-led COVID-19 Local Vaccination Services (LVS) sites

Most pharmacy sites have previously used the AstraZeneca vaccine. However, as the available supply for first dose vaccines changes there is a need to increase the Pfizer BioNTech capacity. This will become increasingly important as the programme prepares to vaccinate cohorts of people who are recommended to receive alternatives to the AstraZeneca vaccine as first preference.

There are differences between the vaccine brands, including storage, preparation, handling and administration volume. Pfizer BioNTech (and Moderna) brands require a 15-minute post-vaccination observation period. Superintendent Pharmacists and Responsible Pharmacists for designated vaccination sites must ensure that their teams can competently handle, administer and monitor any vaccines that they are supplied. They must also ensure that they plan and take action to reduce the risk of inadvertent errors caused by the additional complexity of two different vaccine brands being used within the system.

There is a wealth of resources to support LVS site teams to make this shift in practice. We will hold a webinar on Wednesday 5 May at 6pm to provide additional context and information. A link to join the MS Teams Live webinar will be sent via email to all existing and new LVS sites ahead of the session

1. Guidance

The Specialist Pharmacy Service (SPS) has prepared [information relating to safe storage and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and oversight of vaccine handling and preparation](#) for use by community pharmacy LVS sites. This includes advice on how to reduce the risk of errors where multiple vaccine types are available. Information specific to [Pfizer BioNTech vaccine](#) has also been published by SPS. A [handling and preparation video](#) and poster has been produced by Pfizer BioNTech.

Information relating to the operational aspects of running a community pharmacy LVS site can be found in the Mobilisation guide that was sent to you when your site was approved and on the [FutureNHS Collaboration Platform Letters page](#). This includes information on who to contact to get help on various aspects of the programme.

2. Readiness checklist

We have produced a checklist to be used by community pharmacy LVS sites and/or Superintendent Pharmacists to assess their readiness to receive the new vaccine (see attached document). The Superintendent Pharmacist remains responsible for ensuring that overall governance, systems and processes are safe. Your NHS England and NHS Improvement regional team will give you further guidance on any assurance they may require before delivery of vaccine is made, so you must not publish appointments until you have had specific confirmation from your regional team that you can do so.

3. Vaccine deliveries

Vaccine deliveries will be made on your fixed delivery day. You may receive Pfizer BioNTech and Astra Zeneca vaccine within the same delivery.

Pfizer BioNTech vaccine will be delivered in a thawed state and once delivered must be stored at 2-8°C. Thawed vaccines will arrive at the destination sites with less than 120 hours / 5 days remaining shelf life, and expected to have between 3 days 14 hours and 4 days and 4 hours until expiry. Your regional team will work with you to determine an appropriate volume of vaccine that can safely be administered by your site within that time.

If there are any exceptional circumstances in which you require further support or are worried that you will not be able to take delivery of your vaccine as set out, please speak to your regional team as soon as possible. We will not be able to make alterations to the timing of vaccine deliveries for 10 May.

Vaccine deliveries will be made between 08.00 and 18.30, Monday to Friday. An estimated delivery window for the arrival of your vaccine will be emailed to you the day before your vaccine is due to arrive – usually by lunchtime. This provides you with a 2.5 hour estimated delivery window. Colleagues should be on site at the start of the ETA to receive vaccine and to prevent delays to the remainder of the transport plan. Sites should plan to start vaccinating patients from the day after your scheduled vaccine delivery date.

To facilitate smooth delivery of the vaccine to your site, please ensure that your named, registered Health Care Professional (HCP) who will receive the vaccine is there on the day.

4. Prevention of vaccine wastage

Sites must make all reasonable endeavours to avoid vaccine waste. This is especially important when working with vaccine that has short expiry. To ensure that vaccine is not wasted, you must schedule Pfizer BioNTech clinics as soon as you have final confirmation from your regional team that all aspects of sign-off for use of this new vaccine are completed and you have final confirmation of the volume and delivery time of your vaccine. Depending on your site circumstances, there may be a need to reschedule patients who have scheduled second dose appointments for AstraZeneca vaccine to enable you to hold a Pfizer BioNTech clinic instead.

Vaccination teams should be prepared to contact patients within eligible cohorts to ensure that all vaccine doses can be used. If, and by exception, you have vaccine at the end of a clinic which may be wasted, you may bring forward second doses (as per Green Book) as a first step. However, this should be as close to 12 weeks as possible and as a minimum at least 8 weeks after the first dose as recommended by JCVI.

5. Consumables

Your Pfizer BioNTech vaccine will be accompanied by different consumables than those that would usually accompany the AstraZeneca vaccine. You must ensure that consumables for different vaccine are stored separately and marked clearly to minimise the risk of errors. A table that compares consumables for each vaccine type can be found on the [FutureNHS Collaboration Platform Vaccine Supply Chain page](#).

The table below outlines supporting materials and consumables that will be supplied alongside your vaccine. Items tagged as ‘delivered separately’ will be delivered to you automatically.

	Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine		Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine	
	Supplied with vaccine	Delivered separately	Supplied with vaccine	Delivered separately
Post-vaccination record cards	✓		✓	

Manufacturers' Product Information Leaflets	✓		✓	
Vaccine-related consumables	✓			✓
PHE patient-facing leaflets		✓		✓

6. National Booking Service

a) For sites who have not yet received a supply of AZ vaccine:

You will need to start using the National Booking Service so that eligible individuals can [book a coronavirus vaccination](#) at your vaccination site. The NBS CP Onboarding pack attached is a step-by-step guide of what you need to do. Please read and follow this carefully, using the links provided to access relevant resources. We recommend that you attend one of the upcoming training sessions (calendar invites will be sent to your nominated IT administrator), either:

- Tuesday 4th May 10:00 - 11:15 (NBS)
- Thursday 6th May 19:00 - 20:30 (Outcomes4Health and NBS)

Calendar invites will be sent to your nominated IT administrator next week or can be accessed on the [FutureNHS Collaboration Platform IT training calendar](#)

Previous webinars have been recorded and can be accessed on the [FutureNHS Collaboration Platform LVS webinars page](#)

b) For sites who have already started administering vaccinations:

Setting up calendars for more than one vaccine type needs to be considered carefully. Please see the guidance attached. For further support, you are invited to attend the following sessions:

- Thursday 6th May 10:30 – 11:30 Webinar/ Q&A
- Friday 7th May 10:30 – 11:30 Drop-In

Calendar invites will be sent to your nominated IT administrator next week or can be accessed on the [FutureNHS Collaboration Platform IT training calendar](#)

7. Workforce

Sites should review the need for additional workforce to support their clinic. Community Pharmacy LVS sites have access to [National Workforce Supply Routes](#) and volunteers for stewarding, signposting and check-in support from the Royal Voluntary Service can be requested directly through the GoodSAM app <https://www.goodsamapp.org/nhsreferral>.

8. Finance

If additional equipment or costs are anticipated as a result of preparations for using the Pfizer vaccine then these must be agreed and approved by your Regional Team before any expense is incurred. Claims will be made in the same way as initial start-up costs.

9. Accurate records

To assist with accurate allocations, payment, and to reduce the risk of clinical errors, it is important that all vaccine events are recorded in Pinnacle on the day of vaccination.

All sites must also complete the weekly stock take web form ([web form \[ppds.palantirfoundry.co.uk\]](https://ppds.palantirfoundry.co.uk)) through which all sites should record their stock position on a weekly basis and record any wastage. Each site is asked to complete the web form on a Monday morning to reflect stock held at close of day on the Sunday preceding and recording wastage during the previous 7 days. This will help ensure all future allocations are based on the correct data.

We would like to thank you for your participation in the COVID-19 vaccination programme and wish you every success in making these necessary preparations to receive the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. We look forward to continuing to work with you and to welcome you to the webinar on Wednesday 5 May.

Yours faithfully

Caroline Temmink

Director of Primary Care Vaccination