

Delivering COVID-19 vaccine to adults with learning disability/autism

1. Introduction

The Learning Disability CCG Clinical Leads Group is established since 2018 and is made up learning disability clinical leaders (GPs and Advanced Nurse Practitioners) representing the CCGs from the North East & North Cumbria ICS.

The North East & North Cumbria Learning Disability CCG Clinical Leads Group met on 11 November 2020 and discussed issues relating to adults with learning disability/autism receiving a COVID vaccine following announcements that a vaccination programme is currently being designed for roll out from early December 2020.

This paper is written as a result of that discussion to provide a perspective and advice from clinical leaders & experts in learning disability/autism to those with responsibility for leading the planning of the vaccination programme.

The advice within this paper draws on learning from many years of leading, co-ordinating & delivering the flu immunisation programme for people with learning disability.

2. Issues to be considered to deliver a reasonably adjusted vaccination programme for adults with learning disability/autism

2.1 **Workforce** – there is full acknowledgement of the complexities & enormity of the task to ensure there is enough manpower to deliver this vaccination programme.

The Learning Disability Clinical Leaders group suggest that some vaccination staff are identified as having specific expertise that includes explanation & issues of consent, Mental Capacity Act and Best Interest Decision making to vaccinate adults with learning disability/autism. Additional time for explanation & gaining consent is highly likely for adult with learning disability/autism.

Community Learning Disability Nursing Teams could be used to deliver vaccinations to adults with learning disability (there are already some good practice examples of where they deliver flu vaccine as a reasonable adjustment for those people with learning disability who are 'hard to reach' by General Practice).

2.2 **Environment** – whilst acknowledging the challenges of securing appropriate clinical space for delivery of the vaccination programme it would be advisable that this includes some space that is completely free from other distractions, noise, people etc.

- 2.3 Identifying adults with learning disability** – the Primary Care Learning Disability QOF Registers are the most comprehensive lists of people with learning disability. When identifying people to receive the vaccination GP registers will flag those patients with learning disability. These patients should be offered a reasonably adjusted vaccine delivery including, for example easy read materials/video of explanation, additional time for explanation & observation post vaccine, delivered by a clinician with expertise in learning disability.
- 2.4 Communication** – following a very successful communication programme to highlight the importance of flu immunisation this season (1. Who should get the flu jab? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhGGscMesPM>, 2. How do I get the flu jab? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eW0bt9dYZo>, 3. Why do I need to get the flu jab? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHDRh9gOAXE> 4. Can the flu jab give you the flu? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MRcnjeFLKqM> 5. Does the flu jab hurt? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nI7HRhCEuU> 6. How can I help other people from catching the flu? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZKHM4VPovb0>) we suggest similar short films are made explaining the COVID vaccination process. During the pandemic we have seen a significant increase in use of film to explain complex information that has been viewed 1000s of times by people with learning disability. These short films should include importance of the vaccine, consent, what will happen before, during and after vaccination, how to keep safe etc. These films would likely benefit other vulnerable groups and should form part of a major communication/media campaign including television, radio, social media etc.

In addition to the short films, high quality easy read materials should also be available (that include the links to the films) and circulated to all adults with learning disability/autism who are invited to be vaccinated.

All communications materials for adults with learning disability are needed as soon as possible.

- 2.5 Aftercare** – as some vaccines are delivered in 2 separate doses it will be important to ensure adults with learning disability and those that support them are fully aware that a second dose will be required. A positive experience of the first dose will be hugely important in them returning for the second.

Family carers, social care workers, personal assistants or anyone else who provides day to day support to adults with learning disability should be provided with clear information about what to look out for, what to do and how to quickly seek help in the event of adverse reactions, high temperature or any other side effects. Community Learning Disability Nursing Teams could provide surveillance/support.

3. Conclusion

The Learning Disability Clinical Leaders Network offer this advice in good faith as pragmatic and realistic support to a hugely challenging logistical vaccination programme. It is intended to provide learning disability advice to those with responsibility for planning & delivering the programme.

If the North East & Cumbria Learning Disability Network can provide any further advice or clarification, or provide any practical support in the development of the communications materials please contact Judith.thompson1@nhs.net.

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