

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Date: 20 October 2021

Dear Michael, Raymond, Jenny and Joe

As you will be aware a COVID-19 booster vaccination programme has now started in Northern Ireland. Unlike the original COVID-19 vaccination programme which was partially aimed at protecting the wider Health and Social Care services, The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have advised that the primary objective of the COVID-19 booster programme is to maintain protection against severe COVID-19 disease, specifically hospitalisation and deaths, over the winter 2021 to 2022. The programme will include **frontline** health and social care workers who are recommended to receive a booster dose at a minimum 6 months since their 2nd dose was administered.

The Green Book definition of frontline is set out in Annex A.

For staff working within dental surgeries, opticians and community pharmacies this is likely to mean that only those staff with **direct patient contact** will be eligible to receive the booster dose as part of the frontline HSCW vaccination programme.

Some staff may be eligible in their own right to receive the booster, either due to having an underlying illness or if they are aged 50 years or older, but these staff will be offered the vaccine in due course via their GP or at a community pharmacy but they cannot receive the booster vaccine as part of the staff programme.

I would ask you to now share this letter as appropriate to enable the relevant staff within your discipline who meet the definition of a frontline worker to be identified and ensure they can now seek a booster dose.

I would be grateful if each relevant organisation/store could issue them with a letter on headed paper confirming they are a frontline worker and therefore eligible to receive a booster dose as part of the frontline HSCW programme. A draft template letter is attached at Annex B. These staff will then be able to make vaccination

appointment via a participating Community Pharmacy. They will need to bring their letter and staff ID with them when they attend for vaccination to verify their eligibility.

Yours sincerely

[signed]

PATRICIA DONNELLY
Head of the COVID-19 vaccination programme

GREEN BOOK DEFINITION OF FRONTLINE HSCW FOR THE COVID-19 BOOSTER

GREEN BOOK Chapter 14a - COVID-19 - SARS-CoV-2 16 September 2021

Frontline healthcare staff includes the following groups:

Staff involved in direct patient care

This includes staff who have frequent face-to-face clinical contact with patients and who are directly involved in patient care in either secondary or primary care/community settings. This includes doctors, dentists, midwives and nurses, paramedics and ambulance staff, pharmacists, optometrists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and radiographers. It should also include those working in independent, voluntary and non-standard healthcare settings such as hospices, and community-based mental health or addiction services. Staff working on the COVID-19 vaccination programme, temporary staff, students, trainees and volunteers who are working with patients must also be included.

Non-clinical staff in secondary or primary care/community healthcare settings

This includes non-clinical ancillary staff who may have social contact with patients but are not directly involved in patient care. This group includes receptionists, ward clerks, porters and cleaners.

Laboratory and pathology staff

Hospital-based laboratory and mortuary staff who frequently handle SARS-CoV-2 or collect or handle potentially infected specimens, including respiratory, gastrointestinal and blood specimens should be eligible as they may also have social contact with patients. This may also include cleaners, porters, secretaries and receptionists in laboratories. Frontline funeral operatives and mortuary technicians/embalmers are both at risk of exposure and likely to spend a considerable amount of time in care homes and hospital settings where they may also expose multiple patients.

Staff working in non-hospital-based laboratories and those academic or commercial research laboratories who handle clinical specimens or potentially infected samples will be able to use effective protective equipment in their work and should be at low risk of exposure, and of exposing vulnerable patients.

Frontline social care workers include:

- those working in long-stay residential and nursing care homes or other long-stay care facilities where rapid spread is likely to follow introduction of infection and cause high morbidity and mortality
- social care staff directly involved in the care of their patients or clients

- others involved directly in delivering social care such that they and vulnerable patients/ clients are at increased risk of exposure

DRAFT TEMPLATE LETTER FOR ELIGIBLE STAFF.

Your organisation's logo should be added here

I can confirm that _____ meets the definition of frontline staff working for _____, and in line with the Green book guidance is eligible to receive a booster COVID-19 dose.

Signed by