

ICARS Newsletter

Immunisation Clinical Advice & Response Service

NHS
England
South West



Issue 125: 3rd February 2023

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTERS WITH ALL RELEVANT STAFF INVOLVED WITH THE VACCINATION PROGRAMME

For any COVID-19 vaccination related queries, or to escalate an incident, please contact ICARS at england.swicars@nhs.net.

Please note that this service operates 9am-5pm Monday to Friday

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NEW: Covid 19 Vaccine Stock Management

1. Expiry date extensions and good practice tips:

Throughout the programme periodic updates to the ultra-low temperature (ULT) frozen vaccine shelf-life of COVID-19 vaccines have been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Within the Vaccine Programme supply chain these updates are applied by our Specialist Pharmaceutical logistics (SPLs) partners prior to distribution with no direct action required by sites. Consequently, there is no need for any site to keep expired stock in case an expiry date extension is applicable.

Recently the ICARS/programme team have identified a pattern of clinical incidents where inadvertent administration of expired stock has occurred.

Good practice tips:

- Ensure at point of receipt supporting paperwork is reviewed and information cascaded to the whole team. Expiry notices will be attached directly to the outside of the vaccine box, including the Direct Healthcare professional letter from the manufacturer.
- Affix any expiry extension documentation to the outside of the fridge where vaccines are being stored to support the team cross check expiry information.
- Highlight the vaccine expiry information through local safety huddles / team handovers.
- Sites should always adhere to the post thawed expiry date at 2°C to 8°C as displayed on the post thaw label on the outer carton.
- Any vaccine stock being moved should be transported in the original carton provided from the SPLs. Movement in the original packaging ensures that vaccinators can check the post thaw expiry information prior to vaccination.
- Ensure expired stock is disposed of as soon as practically possible.
- Expired stock should be disposed of locally in line with your standard operating procedure and recorded on the site wastage return.

All expired stock disposal must also be recorded in Site Stock Manager in Foundry. All fields should be accurately completed including batch number, expiry date, quantity (in either doses or vials) category and reason. To reduce clinical risk this action should be taken as soon as possible following expiry.

If any expired vaccine has been administered to patients, this would constitute a clinical incident and should be reported to ICARS at england.swicars@nhs.net to provide further support/follow up.

Any vaccine movement must be performed in accordance with the [policy transfer of COVID-19 vaccines between NHS Vaccination Sites](#) and be recorded on the Foundry Vaccine Transfer application. Movement of vaccine to support housebound / outreach services or to facilitate booked appointments by exception should be supported by appropriate cold chain oversight.



2. Changes to the way we inform vaccination sites about frozen shelf-life updates to COVID-19 vaccines:

Periodically the Vaccine Programme is informed by UKHSA about ultra-low temperature (ULT) frozen shelf-life updates that have been approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) for specific Covid-19 vaccines.

These frozen shelf-life updates are applied for by the vaccine manufacturers and once approved by the MHRA can be applied to all future batches. In addition, the updates can also be applied retrospectively to batches already manufactured, which have been stored in appropriate ULT conditions. Within the Vaccine Programme supply chain these updates are applied by our Specialist Pharmaceutical Logistics (SPLs) partners upon receipt of the frozen vaccine from UKHSA and prior to delivery to sites. As a result, there is no requirement for sites to take any action.

As the method of applying these shelf-life updates has been in place for a year now and there is no action required by sites, we have made the decision to reduce the level of communications sites receive from the National team about these frozen shelf-life updates.

Going forward, these updates will only be communicated by the SPLs via a noticed attached directly to each box of vaccine sent out, including a copy of the Direct Healthcare Professional letter. The National team will continue to issue a short message within the Operational Bulletin at the point the update is applied.

Please ensure you review all the paperwork sent with vaccine deliveries so you are aware of any updates that have been applied and can ensure your team are fully informed. Good practice is to place a copy of the notice on the outside of the fridge where the vaccine will be stored, enabling your team to check any expiry queries they may have due to the differences between the carton and vial expiry dates.

For all frozen shelf-life updates the following applies:

- Sites are not required to update any expiry dates on the carton or vials upon receipt of vaccine deliveries.
- It is always the thawed expiry date at 2°C to 8°C as displayed on the post thaw label on the **carton** that must be adhered to by sites.
- Sites may find that the expiry date on the post thaw carton label is later than the expiry date printed on the vial of vaccine. Please be assured that the vaccine is safe to use until the expiry date on the post thaw label on the carton.
- Sites are not permitted to update the shelf-life of any vaccine already held on-site.
- All Direct Health Care Professional letters are also posted under the relevant vaccine type on the Specialist Pharmacy Service website [here](#) or in the case of Moderna on its [website](#).

If you have any questions about frozen shelf-life updates these can continue to be escalated to the national supply or clinical team via the SVOC/RVOC route.

3. New Frozen ULT Shelf-Life Updates for Comirnaty 30 Concentrate and Comirnaty Original/Omicron BA.1:

From Monday 30 January all deliveries to vaccination sites by our Specialist Pharmaceutical Logistics (SPLs) partners of **Comirnaty 30 Concentrate** and **Comirnaty BA.1** will be subject to a frozen shelf-life update. This update will be applied by the SPLs prior to delivery and **sites do not need to take any action.**

This shelf-life update means that frozen vials of both vaccine types, can now be stored at -90°C to -60°C, for up to 18 months if appropriate conditions have been maintained.

Sites are not permitted to update the shelf-life of any Comirnaty 30 Concentrate or Comirnaty BA.1 vaccine already held on-site.

Sites must always adhere to the thawed expiry date as displayed on the post thaw label on the carton when using the vaccine. If this date has passed, the product has expired and must be disposed of immediately in line with your site's expired vaccine disposal procedure.

NEW: JCVI Guidance: The End of the Autumn 2022 COVID-19 Vaccine Booster Campaign

Further to the statement issued by [JCVI](#), and as outlined in the COVID-19 vaccination deployment programme operations [bulletin on 25 January 2023](#), the current Autumn 2022 booster offer for COVID-19 vaccination will cease on **12 February 2023**.

In preparation for this offer end date, it should be noted that:

- All booster vaccinations will continue up to and including **12 February 2023**. Thereafter ALL booster offers will cease; this includes first boosters after primary course vaccinations and boosters offered via specialist allergy clinics.
- The current primary course evergreen offer will continue for all cohorts – there is no change to current arrangements.
- The current cohort eligibility document is available [here](#).
- National invitations and reminders for boosters will end with last invites/reminders landing **no later than 4 February**.
- Sites should ensure there is sufficient capacity to accommodate final booster vaccination bookings in advance of 12 February.
- Sites should not publish any booster appointments after 12 February until further notice. Where possible, appointments after the 12 February should be brought forward to before 12 February.
- New appointments for all clinics including pop-up, outreach and mobile clinics should only be offered on or before 12 February.

- Sites should review their walk-in site finder and outreach offers and ensure further booster clinics are not offered beyond 12 February.
- Any unfilled clinics already scheduled for booster vaccines on or after 13 February should be deleted.
- The current Patient Group Directions (PGD) and National Protocols (NP) can be used to administer booster vaccinations to eligible individuals up to the end of the Autumn 2022 booster campaign.
- Sites should not order any further booster vaccine from central COVID-19 vaccine stock from 2 Feb onwards (unless pre-approved by national team).
- Detained estates arrangements do not change.
- Aligned with guidance on eligibility for primary course doses, supply will continue to be provided to support this as required.
- Sites should be supported by systems to manage their vaccine stock in line with the stock management guidance detailed here: [Stock Management Guidance](#)
- Sites that are paused must not continue to offer COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Individuals eligible for a booster vaccination (initial or seasonal) should continue to be encouraged to take up the offer, up to and including 12 February 2023.

NEW: Contractual Arrangements Ahead of Spring/Summer 2023

There is likely to be a need for a smaller network of COVID-19 vaccination sites in spring/summer 2023. Despite this, a spring 2023 seasonal campaign remains under consideration by JCVI. Regions and systems should ensure they have plans in place to deliver this and a 'surge' response should this be required, as well as ensuring sufficient capacity for evergreen primary course vaccinations.

As part of discussions between regions and ICBs about the delivery model mix needed for 2023/24, regional teams will run a fair and transparent process to determine which sites would continue to deliver COVID-19 vaccination services in a potential spring/summer 2023 to satisfy local needs.

In preparation, regions will extend some provider contracts to August 2023. Where it has been agreed that a provider would continue to support a spring 2023 campaign, the following will apply:

- **General practice providers:** some enhanced service specification will be extended until 31 August 2023. Commissioners will agree and confirm in writing with practices whose ES will be extended beyond 31 March 2023. For the avoidance of doubt, either all or none of the ESs for General Practices in a PCN Grouping will be extended – NHS England will not interfere in the make-up of a PCN Grouping.

- **Community pharmacy providers:** some enhanced service specifications will be extended until 31 August 2023. Pharmacy Contractors will be asked by commissioners to sign a Contract Variation for this extension.
- **NHS trusts and vaccination centres delivering vaccinations to wider public cohorts:** for hospital hub+ and vaccination centres, regions will confirm which contracts will be extended to 31 August 2023. Regions will reissue contracts to these providers.
- We will confirm shortly the contractual arrangement for hospital hub sites following the ongoing [consultation](#).

Updated service specifications will be available shortly, along with further guidance on extending contractual relationships in line with service requirements subject to usual discussion with professional bodies.

NEW: Increasing COVID-19, Flu or Pertussis Vaccination Uptake in Those who are Pregnant

The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme Improvement team is requesting any shared learning from systems who have successfully increased the COVID-19, flu or pertussis (whooping cough) vaccination uptake among those who are pregnant and in a group that is more difficult to reach.

Examples of successful work will highlight improvements within pregnancy vaccination services and show how they achieved increased uptake within the relevant cohorts.

If you would like to develop any relevant work into a case study, or have a written example ready, please get in touch with sarah.heneker1@nhs.net.

NEW: Same Day Cancellation on NBS has been Released

NBS now enables same day cancellation for COVID-19 vaccine appointments. This is an improved function. Previously vaccine appointments could only be cancelled up to the day before the individual's appointment, which contributed to DNA's and poor user experience. Further communications to sites will be shared through the normal route.

NEW: St John Ambulance (SJA) Contract

The national contract with St John Ambulance (SJA) for vaccination volunteers comes to an end on 31 March 2023., after two incredible years and well over a million volunteer hours St John's work supporting the NHS to vaccinate the nation. The national team have a number of supporting pieces of work underway to support systems and providers with this transition. This includes the production of a volunteer's toolkit to support the management of sourcing and deploying volunteers at system level. A communication plan will be issued for providers on how they can access support from their lead employer and will include a mechanism for SJA volunteers to continue working with the NHS should they wish to do so. Further information on the detail of this plan will follow in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, SJA have begun to communicate the contractual changes to their volunteers. This includes an expression of gratitude from the NHS with a commitment to retain volunteers in the NHS where volunteers wish to continue working with us.

If you have any queries pending further information on the above steps, please don't hesitate to contact england.workforceandpmo@nhs.net

UPDATE: Notification of Vaccination Invites, Prompts and Reminders

The below notifications are due to arrive in the current period. Sites are asked load NBS and LBS appointment slots and walk-in capacity to accommodate potential increases in demand, ensuring adequate capacity outside of school hours for younger cohorts.

Cohort	Volume (national)	Date	Regional detail
AW Booster 2nd Reminders + 1st reminders	C88.8	03/02/2023	All regions
Autumn Winter Boosters 1 st Reminders	C0.8k	03/02/2023	All regions
5-15 (at risk) & 16+ booster 1 st and 2 nd Reminders	C56k	01/02/2023 to 04/02/2023	All regions
4 th Dose Invite for 12+ severely immunosuppressed	C260	01/02/2023 to 04/02/2023	All regions
2 nd Dose overdue reminder for 12+ and 5-11 at risk	C18.4k	03/02/2023 to 08/02/2023	All regions
Autumn Winter Booster Reminders	C30k	03/02/2023 to 06/02/2023	All regions

Look ahead (may be subject to amendment):

Cohort	Volume (national)	Date	Regional detail
2 nd Dose Prompts 5-17 at risk include severely immunosuppressed	C320	08/02/2023 to 11/02/2023	All regions
2 nd Dose Prompts 18+ and 5-17 Not at risk	C6.5k	08/02/2023 to 11/02/2023	All regions
Evergreens 1 st Dose	C63k	13/02/2023	All regions

Useful Links

All key programme information is available on the [C19 Vaccinations FutureNHS Workspace](#). Sign up to receive a weekly summary of all new uploads [here](#).

Ops Notes:

You can find all the latest operational notes on FutureNHS: [Operational notes](#)

Communications Resources:

The national Campaign Resource Centre includes designed campaign resources for the current [public-facing winter campaign](#) as well as for encouraging uptake [among frontline staff](#).

You can find further scripts and communications resources on FutureNHS including toolkits on [seasonal flu and COVID vaccines](#), [for pharmacies on flu](#) plus a [poster](#), [for people with a weakened immune system](#) and [a communications pack for primary care](#) with template letters to adapt locally.

Clinical Updates:

See the latest [clinical updates](#)

Other Resources:

[Coronavirus vaccinations](#): NHS Digital helps you access up-to-date information, training and onboarding guides related to the tech and data solutions that are supporting the COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccination programmes.

[COVID-19 Vaccination Programme workspace](#) provides members with access to key documents, resources, webinar recordings, case studies and past copies of the LVS Updates. There is also a discussion forum for members.

[Supply and Delivery Hub](#) helps you access key information in a timely way and helps support you to deliver your local vaccination service. Here you will find the latest delivery information (vaccine and vaccine consumables as well as non-vaccine consumables, equipment, and PPE), alongside the latest supply chain and customer service FAQs and other helpful information.

[Latest Operational bulletins](#)

[Equalities Community of Practice](#)

[Workforce and Training update](#)

[COVID-19 Vaccination Improvement Hub](#)

National Workforce Support Offer – more details:

[National Workforce Support Offer Toolkit](#) provides more detail about the National Workforce Support Offer and is a practical guide for local vaccination service leads.

Contact your [Lead Employer](#) to access the National Offer and additional staff and vaccinators, as well as support with your workforce needs.

For more details, please see our Futures NHS page on [case studies/FAQs](#) and recently guidance for [PCN groupings](#) and [community pharmacy](#)

All C19 vaccination queries for national teams should be escalated via the SVOC/RVOC/NVOC process.