

## Supporting people with a learning disability and autism to access the COVID-19 vaccine



### Overview

**Reference:** 09

**Location:** England

**Target Group:** learning disabilities and autism

**Initiative type:**  
Information and training

### Contact

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### Top Tip

*Listen to people. Use as many communication channels and information formats as you can because different people will have different needs and will be connected in different ways.*

### Why is this important to us?

We know that people with a learning disability are at more risk of being hospitalised and dying from COVID-19, and that the pandemic has created additional anxiety for autistic people due to rules and information changing frequently. As people with a learning disability and autistic people already face multiple inequalities, having to wait for information that they can access, and more recently for their access needs to be recognised and supported within the vaccine programme, only adds to this disadvantage. We are passionate about supporting people with a learning disability, autism and their carers and we saw an opportunity to help people make informed decisions about having the vaccine and to facilitate them to access it in a way that is suitable for them.

### What are we doing?

We have produced a range of resources, in a variety of formats, to provide people with reliable information about the vaccine. This includes easy read versions of booking letters, a Q&A resource in both plain English and easy read format, co-produced films and easy read information leaflets for Public Health England (PHE). We have also created training packs for vaccinators, volunteers and voluntary sector partners to support them to make the experience of booking and attending a vaccination appointment as good as it can be, with a particular focus on adapting communication and making reasonable adjustments for people with a learning disability or autism. Most recently, we have been encouraging people to contact their GP to ensure that they are on the learning disability register. Everything we are doing is being shared widely through bulletins, social media, webinars, PHE channels and our network of stakeholders to ensure that it is getting into the hands of the right people at the right time.

### Who is involved?

People from all different parts of the system have come together to make this happen, with our team as well as our NHSEI policy and communications colleagues being part of a bigger, diverse network of people supporting this work. A number of us have lived experience of being autistic, having a learning disability or being family carers and we have also teamed up with external self-advocacy groups and organisations. We have also worked closely with our primary care and Public Health England colleagues who are delivering the vaccine programme.

### What works for us?

**The response has been very positive.** It's too early to say how our initiatives have contributed to vaccine uptake, but we do know that **people are now getting the vaccine and are approaching their GP to ensure that they are on the learning disability register.** We will be working with everyone in the system to capture impact as the rollout progresses, whilst continuing to respond to the needs of our community.