

## Revoking vaccination as a condition of deployment across all health and social care

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to respond to Department of Health and Social Care's consultation on *Revoking vaccination as a condition of deployment across all health and social care*. Our key role is to make sure that patients, the public, service users, and carers (PPSuC) are at the heart of service improvement in health and social care. In line with our role, we have focused our comments on:

- Patient and Public Involvement and engagement
- Whether the proposal is responsive to the needs of Birmingham residents

Healthwatch Birmingham are disappointed to see that the consultation has only been held for a week, which has not given the public much time at all to consider such an important subject. We do however respect the short timelines involved given the previous decision to implement vaccination as a condition of deployment across all health and social care.

We also note that the consultation has not been offered in any other format, such as easy read or community languages, excluding those with language or sensory impairment needs from taking part. There is not a phone number or postal address to allow anyone without digital access to easily respond.

Healthwatch Birmingham believe meaningful and appropriate community engagement is key to understanding the concerns and barriers people experience, preventing them from getting vaccinated. The steps set out in the original consultation form a good basis for increasing vaccine take up, however more needs to be done. Learning from successful regional measures should be shared nationally and expanded.

If vaccination as a condition of deployment is revoked, then the focus for engagement with people, health staff in particular, needs to centre on them as individuals and their individual needs, rather than connected to the work that they do. In particular engaging with them outside of the employment and line management structures is key.

Engagement with people about vaccination needs to be as inclusive as possible, by ensuring that engagement is culturally sensitive and accessible to all. More needs to be done to address any concerns raised by particular demographics and dispel any misinformation or rumours that have become entrenched about side effects or safety of vaccinations. This can only be done by showing people that they are being listened to and their concerns are acted on in a timely and sensitive way.

Healthwatch Birmingham has heard from members of the public about their experiences of accessing services during the covid pandemic. Protecting people from covid whilst receiving care from health and social care professionals is clearly key, however people's experiences of that care will be shaped by their perception of protection and safety. We have heard how



important it has been for people to understand the measures being used and seeing a difference in their care.

*“Felt a bit worried being in the room so small for a scan because of covid. Everyone wore masks but didn't know how clean the room is and how often.”*

*“Very good information and support provided. Covid safe place with plenty of masks and sanitizers.”*

*“Overall an excellent service that has since the pandemic started offered clear and straightforward explanations of how their practice has changed and how your patient experience will proceed. I have been particularly impressed at the exceptional level of safe practice that is upheld whilst still maintaining a friendly and welcoming approach.”*

*“The Dr called me went through my symptoms he then advised me to go in to the surgery to be seen later that day a receptionist took my temperature at the door asked me a few questions. I felt very safe in the environment.”*

Patient and public experiences will be key to understanding any concerns the public have and therefore any actions the government and individual settings need to take. Responsibility for assessing feedback and taking action as a response needs to be built in to all levels of the health and social care system. Existing mechanisms can be utilised such as making service users perception of covid and flu safety part of Care Quality Commission regulations for assessment.

Integrated Care Systems need to consider their local populations carefully, and engage with any local communities that are not accessing local health and social care services. They need to be asked if they have any concerns about covid and flu safety and have these acted upon.

It is known through many studies that people with disabilities have been disproportionately affected by the covid pandemic, in particular the mortality of this group, and others such as black African men. Responses to this consultation need to be assessed to see if these groups have been heard from, and if not, further specific engagement needs to be had. Learning from this engagement needs to be shared and acted upon across all services. In ongoing engagement activities experiences from these groups need to be studied carefully, especially their perceptions of safety.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chipiliro'.

Chipiliro Kalebe-Nyamongo

Research and Policy Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah'.

Sarah Walmsley

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