

Questions and answers about the Covid-19 vaccination

Below are the answers to some common questions you have been asking about the Covid-19 vaccination.

Do I have to have the vaccination?

The vaccination is not mandatory for any RNLI volunteer or staff member. However, we do strongly encourage everyone to get the vaccination as soon as it is available to you.

You can find out more about the vaccine rollout in your jurisdiction on the [coronavirus page](#) on Volunteer Zone.

Do new starters or volunteers have to have the vaccination before their first day?

No. As above, the vaccination is not mandatory for either existing or new RNLI volunteer or staff role.

Where can I find practical and impartial information about the vaccination?

- [Health Service Executive \(HSE\) Ireland](#)
- [NHS website](#)
- [Public Health England](#)
- [Public Health Agency Northern Ireland](#)
- [Public Health Scotland](#) (download the [Vaccine Information Leaflet PDF](#))
- [Public Health Wales](#)

Are you asking people to let you know when they have been vaccinated?

The RNLI will not be asking volunteers or staff members to disclose if they have been vaccinated, or to have this saved on any central records.

Whether or not you have the vaccination is your own personal choice and is therefore regarded as confidential information. You should not be made to feel pressured or obligated to disclose this information to either your manager or your colleagues.

Will the RNLI restrict duties for individuals that have not had, do not chose to have, or are unable to have the vaccination?

The RNLI will continue to operate within Covid-19 secure working and volunteering environments (following government guidance within your jurisdiction), facilitate remote working where possible, or consider an alternative role.

As part of the risk assessment process, managers may ask about your vaccination status. This is so they can review the suitability of the measures put in place to keep you safe in your role for a particular activity. You don't have to provide this information, even as part of the risk assessment process, however the more information you are able to provide will help the RNLI to ensure the right measures are in place to protect you from the virus.

Do I have to pay for the vaccine?

Anyone receiving the vaccine from their local health service will do so free of charge.

Will the RNLI pay for vaccines for specific employee or volunteer roles?

No, as above, anyone receiving the vaccine from their local health service will do so free of charge.

Can we request that our essential personnel are prioritised alongside other emergency services?

The RNLI will not be seeking for volunteers or staff members to be prioritised. It's important that we support the people in your communities that your government has identified as having the highest priority to receive the vaccination.

I am shielding, what should I do if returning to volunteering?

If you are classed as clinically extremely vulnerable and have been shielding, you will have been advised that, if you've had both doses of the vaccine, you may be able to return to your volunteering role. This is if you're unable to continue in your role from home and your shielding has finished.

In England, advice for those shielding as clinically extremely vulnerable changes on 31 March. You can find updated information on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk).

An individual risk assessment will still be required. Please discuss with your manager and email C19@rnli.org.uk for further advice.

I've been told I can't have the vaccine for medical reasons, what should I do?

Where there is a genuine medical reason that prevents you having the vaccine, we will need to take other steps with regards to your health and safety. These may include reinforcing our Covid-19 secure working environment, facilitating remote working where possible, or considering an alternative role for you.

Please discuss this with your manager and email C19@rnli.org.uk for further advice.

Why do some people refuse to be vaccinated?

Vaccination is a personal choice; people may refuse the vaccine for a number of reasons including women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or people who don't want the vaccination due to cultural, philosophical or religious beliefs.

In some cases, people may be hesitant about the vaccination. For example, they may have concerns about unverified information on the vaccination programme from social media. The RNLI has a role to play in ensuring we provide staff and volunteers with factual, impartial information.

It's important to know that people's personal reasons for refusal could be protected under the Equality Act 2010. Line managers should be mindful of this when discussing someone's reasons for refusing the vaccination.

My colleague hasn't had the vaccine and I don't feel safe volunteering with them?

The vaccine is being rolled out to different people at different times across our jurisdictions. As detailed above, having the vaccination is a personal choice. We need to respect each other's views and decisions, and find ways to work together safely.

Everyone visiting any of our sites will need to follow the Covid-19 secure guidelines. Our decision to lift any restrictions will follow announcements made by the government in your local jurisdiction.

Do I need to let you know if I'm taking time away from volunteering to get my vaccine?

We appreciate everyone has very little control over their appointment slot for the vaccine. We also want everyone to prioritise being vaccinated. Once you have booked your slot, please inform your manager as soon as possible, so they can ensure work and operational demands are covered.

What if I am unable to volunteer the following day due to vaccine side effects?

There can be [side effects](#) from having the vaccine – and these may affect different people in different ways. Please let your manager know if you're unable to fulfil your volunteer duties due to side effects from the vaccine.

My role requires me to travel between the UK, Ireland, Channel Isles and Isle of Man, what should I do?

The RNLI will follow the latest and local government advice for the jurisdictions in which we operate. If you're planning to travel as an RNLI volunteer, please check the latest national government advice both for where you live and where you are travelling to and liaise with your manager.

My role requires me to travel internationally, what should I do?

International travel remains non-essential, with only limited work/volunteer reasons being legally permitted. All international travel requests require director sign-off before bookings are made, and you must complete a safety assessment for travel into the destination country. The RNLI will continue to follow jurisdictional guidance on travel abroad.

More information

We will keep you up-to-date via our [coronavirus page](#) on Volunteer Zone, so keep an eye out for more information.

If you have any questions that aren't answered above, please email C19@rnli.org.uk