

Preparing for the COVID vaccine

Guidance for families and staff supporting adults with learning disabilities

It is important that the correct procedures are followed when considering a person's capacity to consent for the COVID vaccine. If the person is not able to make this decision for themselves, it is important the right people are involved in making the decision on their behalf.

It is the responsibility of the person giving the vaccine to assess and record the person's capacity to make this decision but partnership working between families, care homes and health practitioners is key to getting this right.

It is not your responsibility to make the decision, but you can help to prepare for it.

COVID vaccinations are an intrusive procedure. It is essential that the practitioner administering the vaccine is satisfied that:

- A) The individual has been provided with accessible information about the COVID vaccination and has shown that they are able to understand, retain and weigh up that information and can communicate their decision to the vaccinator

Or

- B) An appropriate capacity assessment has taken place (as above) but the individual was found to lack the capacity to make this decision and therefore a practitioner-led best interest decision has been made for the individual to receive the vaccine.

This process will be easier if people with learning disabilities are given information about the vaccine in advance (for example this Easy Read leaflet by Public Health England https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951000/PHE_11843_Covid-19_Easy-read_leaflet.pdf or this helpful video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=M3Wh23PDnfE>).

It would also be helpful to have a conversation about the pros and cons of having the vaccine. Ideally this should be done more than once.

There are some very helpful Frequently Asked Questions and answers to support this conversation here: https://www.keepsafe.org.uk/vaccine-questions?fbclid=IwAR3XT2mIKAvQ1LBq0WgqFEtopO_GqEfztyQDKmsOO5j1E0aoqUnEwzTJ9FQ

It is important to remember that previous capacity assessments, or consent sought for other vaccines, CANNOT be utilised for this COVID vaccination as the assessment of capacity is always time and situation specific.

It is also important to remember that next of kin, family members or friends MAY NOT consent to COVID vaccination on behalf of the individual.

If the person is not able to understand, remember or weigh up the pros and cons of having a vaccine, or if they are not able to communicate their wishes, this may mean that they do not have the capacity to make the decision for themselves.

In this case it is important to identify whether the person has someone with the position of Lasting Power of Attorney / Deputy for Health and Wellbeing who can support the decision?

If so, a conversation with them about their wishes would help, ideally before the person is called for their vaccine.

If there is no-one appointed who can support the decision, it will fall to the health practitioner giving the vaccine to determine whether or not the vaccine can be given under a Best Interest decision.

Where a Best Interest decision is likely to be needed, it is helpful to have an idea of who might be relevant to participate in those discussions, for example family members or health professionals who know the person well. If there is no-one who knows the individual well and can champion their wishes within this process, referral for an independent advocate to act on their behalf may be considered.

In residential or supported living settings it would be helpful to have a list of residents who may require Best Interest decisions to be made so that this can be shared with the health practitioner makes contacts about arranging vaccinations.

These templates might help with recording your discussions:

Information to record to support the capacity assessment:

Name:	Date One	Date Two
I have been given information about the COVID vaccination		
I have talked with _____ about the COVID vaccination		
I was able to ask questions about the COVID vaccination		
I would like to ask the following questions now:		

Information to record to support a best interest decision:

Name:	Date One	Date Two
Information about the COVID vaccination has been shared		
_____ has been given the opportunity to talk and ask questions about the COVID vaccination		
People who know _____ well and should be consulted in the Best Interest decision process (to include Lasting Power of Attorney / Deputy for Health and Well-being and / or other family members, friends or advocate)		
Name:	Relationship:	Contact Number: