

## COVID-19 mandatory vaccine in the NHS

The Government in England mandated that all social care workers should be vaccinated from 11 November 2021. Now a similar mandate is due to be introduced on 1 April 2022 for all NHS staff health and social care workers who have face to face contact with service users. There is some talk this may be delayed, but this is to be confirmed. This is a controversial measure, and many are questioning this mandate.

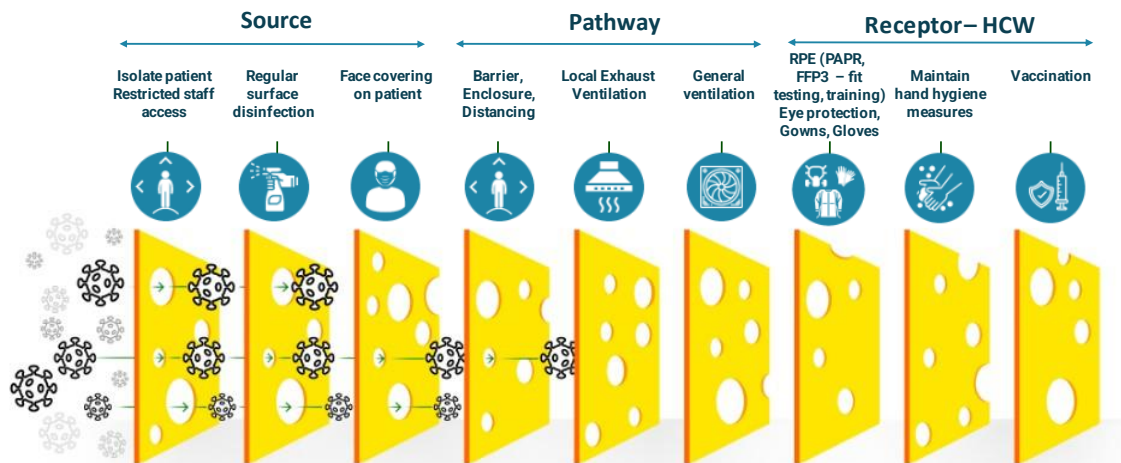
Vaccines are an integral part of the safe systems of work in health care. The COVID-19 vaccine has proved to be effective in reducing transmission, reducing infection rates, and reducing the severity of the illness, with reduced hospital admissions, length of hospital stay, admission to intensive care and death. Vaccines have also been shown to reduce the incidence of Long COVID. In December 2021, Public Health England indicated the COVID-19 vaccination program has directly prevented over 24 million infections, over 82,000 hospitalisations and over 100,000 deaths. It is therefore vital that those working in the health and social care sector should be vaccinated to protect themselves, their families, patients and clients and broader society.

Vaccines are not the only barrier to infection by COVID-19, and it is important that vaccination is used in combination with other control measures. No single measure is 100% effective but using several together we can reduce the likelihood of infection to the lowest possible risk.

This principal is summarised by the Swiss cheese model. A slice of cheese represents each barrier, all slices have imperfections represented by the holes. Multiple layers improve the success in preventing the spread of the virus and potential for contracting infection providing an effective defence overall.

## Minimising Exposure to COVID-19 - the Swiss cheese model

Health Care Workers – Control Options- Select Based on Workplace Health Risk Assessment



Each intervention (layer of cheese) has imperfections (holes). Multiple layers improve the success. The options listed are not in priority order and some layers may not be applicable in certain situations.

The selection of controls should be based on the assessment of risk of infection within each workplace within the NHS, taking account of the tasks involving potential for exposure. Prior to entering into the Health Care environment for non-COVID patients a negative test is a recommended additional measure not represented on the model.

SOM and BOHS therefore urge all those working in health and social care to take the vaccine to protect themselves, their families, and their vulnerable patients, unless prevented for medical reasons.

It is important to remember that, like personal protective equipment, vaccination fails to danger and all other elements of protection against COVID should be reviewed and maintained to assure effectiveness.

**Ref:**

RCN risk assessment tool kit: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/infection-prevention-and-control/covid-19-workplace-risk-assessment-toolkit>

[COVID-19 Hub - British Occupational Hygiene Society \(BOHS\)](#)

[Coronavirus: latest information and advice - HSE news](#)