How to Feel Confident While Having COVID Vaccine Conversations

for health, care and public health professionals

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Speakers biographies

Dr Leonora Weil

Dr Leonora Weil is a Public Health Consultant in the Regional Operations Team at Public Health England London working on COVID Response and COVID-19 vaccination including uptake, hesitancy, engagement, mitigating inequalities and evaluation of the London vaccine programme.

Building on local experience working as a medical doctor, she has worked on a number of programmes at a local level to increase vaccine uptake for childhood immunisations and in 2020 led the COVID-19 public health response for children and young people for Camden and Islington's Public Health Team.

Dr Tehseen Khan

Dr Tehseen Khan is a GP in Stamford Hill, Hackney. He is Clinical Director of Springfield Park Primary Care Network and Vaccine lead in City and Hackney. Tehseen joined the London NHS Team as a Senior Clinical Advisor to the COVID Vaccine Programme in April.

He qualified as a Population Health Fellow in Lambeth in 2017, completing his Public Health Masters at Kings College London. He has experience working on childhood immunisation and cancer screening uptake and became involved in the vaccination programme when it was launched.

Dr Oge Ilozue

Dr Oge Ilozue is a GP Partner and Trainer based in Barnet, North London and is working with NHSE&I as a Senior Clinical advisor on the COVID vaccination programme London region. A proud Londoner with Nigerian roots, she grew up in London and trained at Imperial College London.

Barnet has a high number of care homes and Dr Ilozue has been involved in holding Q&A sessions as well as 1-1 conversations with care home staff about the Covid-19 vaccine over the last seven months.

Graham Rushbrook

Graham is the Director of RBE Associates, a consultancy providing support around training, engagement and development to organisations across health and social care. He has worked in health and social care settings for 30 years, both as a social worker and subsequently a public health specialist.

He has recently been working with the Royal Society for Public Health to support both the design and the delivery of the organisation's new Level 2 Award in Encouraging Vaccination Uptake.

Top Ten Tips
on how to facilitate effective vaccine conversations
(from Royal Society of Public Health)

1. Acknowledge concerns

2. Recognise the right to refuse advice

3. Keep it neutral

4. Recognise the level of trust placed in the health and care services

5. Keep the focus on the client/patient

6. Have conversations in a place/space the individual is comfortable in

7. Try not judge as people base their views on genuine beliefs

8. Avoid terms like anti-vax/concern/hesitancy unless the patient/client uses them

9. Offer information, not judgement

10. Actively listen and use open questions to better understand their rationale

Top Tips
to support conversations

To support your conversations with patients, it might be helpful to run through the following list of 'Top Tips' that can help you prepare in advance of an appointment / call, or when you're supporting at a vaccination centre / GP practice; there are also tips about ensuring you are supported too!

1. **Develop your confidence;** it may feel like a big responsibility to support people through the vaccination process. Read all the trusted resources available to you.

2. **Use Motivational Interviewing techniques;** ask simple and non-judgemental questions "How do you feel about the COVID-19 vaccination?"

3. **Explore peoples worries and concerns;** appreciate that these are their feelings and fears. Talk through the possible causes.

4. **Help find solutions;** what is stopping them from attending an appointment? Help to find ways around what the issues may be i.e. transport, family pressures, fear of needles etc.

5. **Planting the seed – introduce information;** if people continue to be hesitant, provide them with information and resources they can return to in their own time. Sometimes people need more time to reflect and decide once they have more knowledge.

6. **Have information to hand;** create your own pack of resources that will make you feel prepared. You may need to relay a lot of information to people about the vaccination process, or need to know where vaccination sites are etc. Your local area may also have COVID-19 vaccine community champions or connector schemes you can link in with, these may be managed by your local authority or voluntary and community services (VCS).

7. **Take the opportunity to get to know people;** such as your colleagues and patients.

8. **Keep connected;** ensure to keep in contact with your peer support group, manager and/or supervisor. Maintaining communications with your colleagues and peers is important, don't struggle – reach out.

9. **Talk through your own concerns;** if you are worried about the vaccine or experience similar challenges to those of your patients, speak to your GP for further information and reassurance.

(Source: London Social Prescribing COVID Vaccine Resource Pack - healthylondonpartnership)
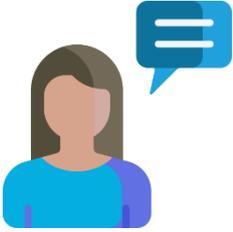
Key messages

Overall
Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic and are the best way to protect people from coronavirus and have saved thousands of lives.

Protection
Vaccinated people are far less likely to get COVID with symptoms and even more unlikely to get serious COVID-19, to be admitted to hospital, or to die from it and are less likely to pass the virus to others.

Two doses
To get maximum protection everyone must get a second dose, so we are urging all people to come back when they are contacted or if they have an appointment booked.

No more quarantine
From 19 July, arrivals who have received two doses of an NHS administered COVID-19 vaccine in the UK, at least two weeks before, returning to England from amber list counties will no longer need to quarantine.

No need for self-isolation
From 16 August, people who have received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

How to book
All those aged 18 and over can book their vaccination through the NHS booking service. You can also call 119 free of charge, anytime between 7am and 11pm seven days a week.

Inclusion
COVID-19 vaccination is completely free to everyone. You don't need to be registered with a GP and can get a vaccination at a walk-in or pop-up centres, where there are no ID checks, no immigration checks and your immigration status is not shared.

To find out more go to: www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/how-get-vaccine/getting-covid-vaccine-if-you-are-not-registered-gp

COVID Vaccine Facts and FAQs

How was the vaccine developed so quickly?

Medicines, including vaccines, are highly regulated – and that is no different for the approved COVID-19 vaccine.

1. The different phases of the clinical trial were delivered to overlap instead of running sequentially which sped up the clinical process;

2. There was a rolling assessment of data packages as soon as they were available so experts at the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) could review as the trial was being delivered, ask questions along the way and request extra information as needed – as opposed to getting all information at the end of a trial;

3. Clinical trials managed to recruit people very quickly as a global effort meant thousands of people were willing to volunteer.

How can I trust any of the vaccines?

All four vaccines approved for use in the UK have met strict standards of safety set by the MHRA, including clinical trials and safety checks. The MHRA follows international standards of safety.

The vaccines have been developed and trialled in the same way as other medicines and vaccines available in the UK.

Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases – it's much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching the diseases and treating them. So far, millions of people have been given a COVID-19 vaccine both here and around the world.

Reports of serious side effects have been very rare.

Are vaccines safe for everyone?

The vaccine is inactivated and can be used even by immunocompromised individuals or those with autoimmune disease. Those in clinically vulnerable patient groups are high priority for the vaccine.

New recently published data shows that the COVID-19 vaccines used in the UK are as effective at preventing symptomatic disease in the majority of people with underlying health conditions compared to the rest of the population

If you have a history of heparin induced thrombocytopenia and thrombosis (HITT or HIT type 2), you may be recommended a specific vaccine.

It is important that everyone else gets vaccinated to reduce the amount of COVID-19 infection in the community.

I'm young and healthy, why should I take the vaccines given that my risk of serious illness or death is very small?

For young people, as for people of all ages, having the vaccine is important to:

- protect you from COVID-19 (while younger people are *less likely* to be seriously ill with COVID, they still can become very unwell)
- protect you from Long COVID
- protect those around you, your friends and relatives who are more at risk of serious illness from COVID-19 due to age or underlying conditions
- help us get back to normal; including being able to travel abroad, meet friends and attend festivals and events.

The vaccines have been shown to:

- keep people out of hospital
- prevent death

which allows the NHS to treat people with other diseases or illnesses that require hospital care more effectively

Vaccines:

- teach our bodies how to fight infection, to both protect us from illness and to protect those around us from catching it from us
- prevent up to 3 million deaths worldwide every year
- reduced or removed diseases like smallpox, polio and tetanus that used to kill or disable millions of people – but if people stop having vaccines, it's possible for infectious diseases to quickly spread again
- are the most effective way to keep ourselves and other people safe from COVID-19

How effective is the COVID-19 vaccine?

Full protection kicks in around two weeks after that second dose, which is why it's also important that when people do get invited, they act on that and get themselves booked in as soon as possible.

Can the vaccine give you the COVID-19 infection?

No, none of the vaccines contain the actual COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2), they are synthetic ingredients that have been designed to replicate the virus.

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine but it is possible to have caught COVID-19 and not realise you have the symptoms until after your vaccination appointment. Although a mild fever can occur within a day or two of vaccination, if individuals have any other COVID-19 symptoms or their fever lasts longer; they should stay at home and arrange to have a test.

Can the vaccine affect people with allergies?

Checking for allergies is a routine part of the process before giving any vaccine or new medicine. If you have allergies to any ingredients of the vaccine, you may be referred to a hospital allergy service to receive vaccine in a controlled setting. Ask you GP about this.

Can you give COVID-19 to anyone if you have had the vaccine?

The vaccine cannot give you the COVID-19 virus, and a full course will reduce peoples chance of becoming seriously ill.

Studies have already demonstrated that being vaccinated against COVID-19 significantly reduces your risk of being infected and if you do become infected, you will be less likely to pass it on. This research shows that those who do become infected 3 weeks after receiving one dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech or Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine were between 38% and 49% less likely to pass the virus on to their household contacts than those who were unvaccinated.

Protection was seen from around 14 days after vaccination, with similar levels of protection regardless of age of cases or contacts. Click here for more information. It is still important to follow social distancing guidance in local areas to protect family, friends and the community.

What is the evidence to show the vaccine is safe for Black and minority ethnic communities?

The Public Assessment Reports contain all the scientific information about the trials and information on trial participants.

- Each of the vaccines are tested on tens of thousands of people across the world. They are tested on both men and women, on people from different ethnic backgrounds, representative of the UK population and of all ages between 18-84.

- Pfizer/BioNTech trials took place in the US, Europe, Turkey, South Africa and South America. Approximately 42% of global participants and 30% of U.S. participants had racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds

- AstraZeneca trials took place in the UK, Brazil and South Africa. The non-white demographic in the UK trial was 7.1%. In the Brazil trial it was 31.4% and in South Africa it was 87%.

- There is no evidence either of the vaccines will work differently in different ethnic groups.

Is the vaccine safe for me and my baby? How do you know?

COVID-19 vaccines offer pregnant women the best protection against COVID-19 disease which can be serious in later pregnancy for some women.

COVID-19 vaccines do NOT contain live coronavirus or any additional ingredients that are harmful to pregnant women or their babies. Other non-live vaccines (whooping cough, influenza) are considered to be safe for pregnant women and their unborn babies.

[Real-world data from the United States](#) shows that around 90,000 pregnant women have been vaccinated, mainly with mRNA vaccines including Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, without any safety concerns being raised.

[Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Royal College of Midwives combined info sheet and decision aid](#)

Speak to a healthcare professional about any concerns about your health before you have the vaccination.

Will having the vaccine affect my ability to have children in the future? How can you be sure?

There is absolutely no evidence or reason that any of the vaccines can affect the fertility of men or women.

People of reproductive age should get a COVID-19 vaccine when they receive their invitation, including people who are trying to have a baby or thinking about having a baby in the future.

People undergoing fertility treatment can be vaccinated during treatment.

Those who are donating their eggs or sperm for the use of others can still have a COVID-19 vaccine. There is no reason to postpone having your COVID-19 vaccine as it will not affect your risk of having a miscarriage.

[Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Royal College of Midwives FAQs COVID-19 vaccines, pregnancy and breastfeeding](#)

Is the vaccine vegan/vegetarian friendly?

There is no material of foetal or animal origin, including eggs, in either vaccine. All ingredients are published in healthcare information on the MHRA's website.

Can the vaccine alter your genetic material?

There is no evidence to suggest that individual genetic material will undergo an alteration after receiving the vaccine.

Are there any known or anticipated side effects?

These are important details which the MHRA always consider when assessing candidate vaccines for use. For these vaccines, like lots of others, they have identified that some people might feel slightly unwell, but they report that no significant side effects have been observed in the tens of thousands of people involved in trials. Very common side effects include:

- Having a painful, heavy feeling and tenderness in the arm where you had your injection. This tends to be worst around 1-2 days after the vaccine

- Feeling tired

- Headache

- General aches, or mild flu like symptoms

- Although feeling feverish is not uncommon for 2 to 3 days, a high temperature is unusual and may indicate you have COVID-19 or another infection.

- You can take the normal dose of paracetamol (follow the advice in the packaging) and rest to help you feel better. Do not exceed the normal dose.

These vaccines are safe and effective for the vast majority of people – they have been tested on tens of thousands of people and assessed by experts. However we are aware of extremely rare side effects, but vaccination staff know the symptoms to look out for and how to treat them.

How long will the vaccine be effective for?
The vaccines are expected to work for at least a year – if not longer. This will be constantly monitored.

To protect the most vulnerable ahead of the winter, the government is preparing for a booster programme based on clinical need to ensure people have the strongest possible protection against COVID-19

How do I get the COVID-19 vaccine?
The easiest and quickest way for you to get the COVID19 vaccine is through a GP.

- **If you are registered with a GP:** make sure your contact details (or the details of someone who usually supports you) are up to date. Wait to be contacted.

- **If you have no identification:** You do not need an address or ID to register with a GP. Your immigration status does not matter.

- **If you do not want to go to a GP:** You don't need identification to get your COVID-19 vaccination completely free at walk-in or pop-up centres; where there are no immigration checks and your immigration status is not shared.

- Patients and NHS staff **do not require an NHS number or GP registration** to receive a vaccination and should never be denied one on this basis, either in person when presenting for a vaccine, or through the design of booking systems.

- **If a patient has not been issued with an NHS number**, then providers should **vaccinate now**, **record locally via a paper system** and ensure that the vaccination event is **recorded on Outcomes4Health/Pinnacle at a later date.** (NHS England and NHS Improvement)

Further support and resources

Key vaccine resources

We have put together all the links to key resources produced by trusted health sources, such as NHS, PHE, Doctors of the World etc which are available in various languages and formats - downloadable leaflets, recorded webinars and videos with local medical staff answering questions. All to support working with key community groups.

Find what you need here: https://www.mecclink.co.uk/london/covid-19-vaccination-resources/

Bureau of Speakers

PHE have been working with NHSE to develop a bureau of speakers to talk about COVID-19 vaccinations. Our speakers come from Public Health, medical and health professions and include a diverse range of specialisms, ethnicities, languages and organisations. Let us know your specific needs so we can provide you with the right people for your local event and engagement.

Contact london.ops@phe.gov.uk

Make Every Contact Count (MECC)

The COVID-19 3 'A's Tool helps practitioners and volunteers have short conversations (deliver very brief interventions) with people to encourage uptake of a COVID-19 vaccine. Some people may need to feel more confident about receiving a vaccination and the Ask, Assist, Act structure to a conversation helps us to navigate conversations with people who may have questions and concerns. It also ensures we listen to peoples' concerns, reassure them and, as a minimum, keep them open to the idea of getting a COVID-19 vaccine.

Try it yourself MECC Link
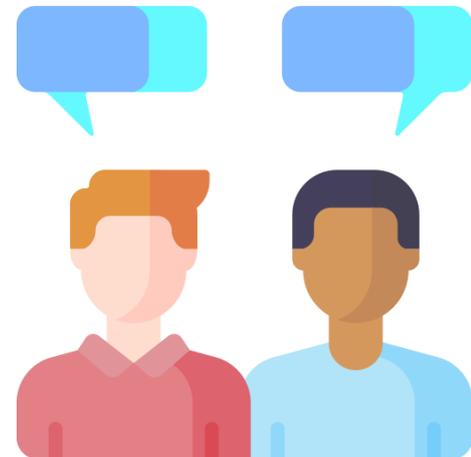
Useful links

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination - NHS

- London Social Prescribing COVID Vaccine Resource Pack – Healthy London Partnership

- COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation Toolkit - DCMS

- NHS Vaccine Facts | Home

- https://www.mecclink.co.uk/london/covid-19-vaccination-resources/