

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

July 2021

Dear Constituent

Thank you for contacting me about health and social care workers receiving the Covid-19 vaccine.

I appreciate your concerns and I know that the Government is encouraging frontline workers in health and social care to be vaccinated. I am told that the Department for Health and Social Care has been working to make the vaccination accessible to people living and working in care homes. Vaccination teams have visited all older age care homes in England. As of 10 June 2021, nearly 84 per cent of staff working in older adult care homes in England had received their first vaccination. Although this is an impressive figure, there remains significant variation at a regional, local and individual care home level. The Social Care Working Group of SAGE has advised uptake rates of 80 per cent in staff and 90 per cent in residents in care home settings are needed to provide a minimum level of protection against further outbreaks. As of 13 June, only 65 per cent of care homes, with residents over 65, in England, are currently meeting this dual threshold for the first dose.

That is why the Government is now taking steps to require care providers to deploy only staff who have been vaccinated within older adult care homes. This measure will protect the people most at risk in our society: around 90 per cent of those who died from COVID-19 were people over 70. The decision follows extensive consultation with care home staff, providers, residents and families.

The new legislation means that anyone working in a CQC-registered care home in England for residents requiring nursing or personal care must have 2 doses of a COVID-19 vaccine unless they have a medical exemption. It applies to all workers employed directly by the care home or care home provider (on a full-time or part-time basis), those employed by an agency and deployed by the care home, and volunteers deployed in the care home. Those coming into care homes to do other work, for example healthcare workers, tradespeople, hairdressers and beauticians, and CQC inspectors also have to follow the new regulations, unless they have a medical exemption.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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The measures have been approved by the House of Commons and are subject to a 16-week grace period. I can assure you that this was debated thoroughly and many Members, including myself, scrutinised the proposals closely.

The introduction of this policy has not been taken lightly. The Government has consulted extensively, including with a wide range of valued stakeholders, and used their feedback to inform the legislation. My Ministerial colleagues recognise that some people feel that workers should have freedom of choice about vaccination, however we must continue to protect some of the most vulnerable members of our society.

Yours sincerely

Rita Cress