

## COVID-19 Vaccine Protocol

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this protocol is to set out the Company's expectations in relation to the COVID-19 vaccine programme being rolled-out by the Government.

The protocol details what the Company expects from employees, and what an employee can expect from Qualasept Pharmaxo Holdings Ltd and any of its group or affiliated companies (referred to in each case as the Company) in the event that:

- they, receive the COVID-19 vaccine
- they, cannot have the COVID-19 vaccine due to a recognised medical reason
- they, refuse to have the COVID-19 vaccine for no recognised reason

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, it is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who might be affected by their business. Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this.

In defining this protocol, particular consideration has been given by the Company to the following facts:

- The Company has certain workers who cannot have the vaccine through no choice of their own, and the Company has a duty to protect those employees.
- We have a duty to the patients we support - to minimise the risk associated with them being in contact with members of our workforce. We also have a duty to ensure we are able to produce and supply the medications patients require.
- There will be a point at which it would simply be unreasonable to expect the Company to maintain the costs and lost productivity associated with enhanced COVID-19 protection measures.

In order to protect our staff, patients, and the local community, we want to ensure, with limited exceptions, that all employees, receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

This protocol explains why we are pursuing this approach, and how we will manage any employee who raises a concern about receiving the COVID-19 vaccination.

We believe this approach strongly aligns with the Company's overarching Values, particularly "Where patients come first", and "Our commitment to you".

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We understand that until everyone has been vaccinated this will be a worrying time, and it is our intention to work with the NHS so that our employees can receive their vaccinations earlier than they would under the government programme as we are keyworkers.

## 2. Scope

People considered to be in scope of this protocol include:

- All personnel employed by the Company whether permanent or temporary

## 3. COVID-19 Vaccine information

Over 280 different COVID-19 vaccines are in various stages of development. Some have been made using currently used vaccine technology, whilst others have been made using completely new approaches. While it normally takes several years to develop a vaccine, scientists across the world have worked collaboratively and rapidly to achieve the same amount of work in a few months in order to make a safe and effective vaccine available as soon as possible. Although clinical trials have been carried out more rapidly than they have for other vaccines, this has been achieved by conducting some of the steps in parallel rather than sequentially and vaccine safety has not been compromised. The vaccine trials have been subject to all the usual strict trial and regulatory requirements.

In the UK, three COVID-19 vaccines have been given authorisation for temporary supply by the MHRA for use in the UK national COVID-19 vaccination programme to date. The COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine BNT162b2 (manufactured by Pfizer BioNTech) was given authorisation for temporary supply by the MHRA on 2 December 2020. The COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca, was given authorisation for temporary supply by the MHRA on 30 December 2020 and the COVID-19 Vaccine Moderna was given authorisation for temporary supply by the MHRA on 8 January 2021. but is not currently available in the UK.

### COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine BNT162b2 (Pfizer BioNTech)

The COVID-19 mRNA Vaccine BNT162b2 is an mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid) vaccine. It contains the genetic sequence (mRNA) for the spike protein which is found COVID-19 vaccination programme: Information for healthcare practitioners 14 on the surface of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, wrapped in a lipid envelope (referred to as a nanoparticle) to enable it to be transported into the cells in the body. When injected, the mRNA is taken up by the host's cells which translate the genetic information and produce the spike proteins. These are then displayed on the surface of the cell. This stimulates the immune system to produce antibodies and activate T-cells which prepare the immune system to respond to any future exposure to the SARS-CoV2 virus by binding to and disabling any virus encountered. As there is no whole or live virus involved, the vaccine **cannot cause disease**. The mRNA naturally degrades after a few days.

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## COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca

COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca is a viral vector vaccine which uses a weakened adenovirus as a carrier to deliver the genetic sequence for the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. The adenovirus has been modified so that it cannot replicate in human cells and therefore cannot cause any disease. Once it has delivered the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein genetic code, the adenovirus is destroyed by the body. The genes that encode for the spike protein on the SARS-CoV-2 virus have been inserted into the adenovirus's genetic code to make the vaccine. When the vaccine is injected, the modified adenovirus binds to the surface of human cells and delivers the genetic code (mRNA) for the spike protein. The cells then process the mRNA and manufacture the spike protein. This then stimulates the immune system which reacts by producing antibodies and memory cells to the SARS-CoV-2 virus **without causing disease**. If the SARS-CoV-2 virus is later encountered, the immune system should be able to respond rapidly.

### 4. Expectations

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the Company has continually invested in ensuring processes and protocols have been put in place to protect our workforce, our community, and to ensure we are sufficiently staffed to provide vital medicines to patients. The Company has a legal duty to protect you all, and this protocol has been put together to support that objective, as well as supporting local public health.

It is the expectation of the Company that employees will accept the COVID-19 vaccine when offered to them.

This expectation will be written into all new contracts of employment issued by the Company.

If an employee declines to be vaccinated, and is able to evidence a medical or other reason that can be substantiated, this will be managed in the manner set out below.

#### 4A. Proving you have received the COVID-19 vaccine

The Company will expect all employees who have received the COVID-19 vaccine to evidence the fact they have been vaccinated.

The Company will not tolerate employees bullying colleagues in relation to vaccination status, and any such conduct will be dealt with under the Company's Harassment and Bullying Policy.

#### 4A. Refusal to have the COVID-19 vaccine due to a medical reason

If you believe you are unable to have the COVID-19 vaccine due to a medical reason, then we will invite you to a meeting to discuss this. To validate a medical reason, we will ask you

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to disclose sufficient details that will allow it to be substantiated, and we may seek medical advice to help us substantiate the medical reason.

Upon substantiating a medical reason, we would discuss how we can continue to support you at work, including ensuring measures are in place to minimise your risk of contracting COVID-19 whilst at work.

This process may be relatively simple as you may have a condition excluded under the SmPC's of the available vaccines.

If we are unable to substantiate the medical reason, we would proceed with the steps set out in 4C below.

#### **4B. Refusal to have the COVID-19 vaccine due to a non-medical reason**

The Company has taken legal advice on the areas where employees might have a substantiated non-medical reason to refuse the vaccine. We have been advised that a refusal based on religious or belief grounds may be substantiated where certain criteria are met.

We would like to emphasise that in order to rely on the grounds of a belief, the belief must be genuinely held. It must relate to significant aspect of human life and be serious in nature. It should also be persuasive, clear, or based on science.

If you believe you are unable to receive the COVID-19 vaccine due to a non-medical reason, then we will invite you to a meeting to discuss this. To validate your non-medical reason, we may ask you to disclose certain details/ evidence, and we may seek expert advice to help us substantiate the validity of your non-medical reason. This could include obtaining legal advice.

Upon substantiating your non-medical reason, we would discuss how we can continue to support you at work, including ensuring measures are in place to minimise your risk of contracting COVID-19 whilst at work.

If we are unable to substantiate the non-medical reason, we would communicate this to the employee, and proceed with the steps set out in 4C below.

#### **4C. Refusal to have the COVID-19 vaccine for no substantiated reason**

If, after investigating an employee's reason for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine, we are unable to substantiate the reason, we will let the employee know.

It may be that for a certain period of time we are able to tolerate unvaccinated staff members due to the extensive COVID-19 safety measures put in place by the Company. However, as

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we step down our COVID-19 safety measures over time<sup>1</sup>, these protections will cease to be available, and we will expect employees without a substantiated reason to proceed to vaccination.

We will consider this to be a reasonable instruction.

It is the Company's expectation that each employee will have considered their position on whether they intend to be vaccinated by the time:

- (i) the Government's national vaccination programme has been made available to them; or
- (ii) the vaccine has otherwise been made available to them by the Company.

If an employee continues to refuse to be vaccinated after this time point, the Company may:

- Require Surveillance Testing to continue
- Require the employee to only use certain social areas of the building for breaks
- Require the employee to work from home
- Remove the employee from Company sick pay (non-contractual) if COVID-19 related sickness (a statement of fitness to work note would be required for the whole period to advise why you were sick, any cost implications for obtaining this would be covered by yourself)
- Remove the employee from the Company bonus scheme (non-contractual)
- Consider dismissing the employee on grounds relating to safeguarding the health and safety of vulnerable employees and/or patients<sup>2</sup>

As applicable, the above measures would stay in place until the employee had received the vaccine, or the Company felt that the risks associated with unvaccinated staff members had fallen to a tolerable level.

The Company will at all times ensure that individuals are supported to understand the available science relating to vaccination.

Before the Company gives consideration to dismissing an employee on grounds relating to safeguarding the health and safety of vulnerable employees and/or patients, the Company will always take the following steps:

- i. Discuss the employee's concerns and reasons for their refusal, and investigate what reasonable alternatives to dismissal exist.
- ii. Support employees with information of the available science relating to vaccination
- iii. Give employees reasonable time to consider their stance.

<sup>1</sup> We would always remain in line with Government guidance as a minimum.

<sup>2</sup> In this scenario, the Company would rely on the grounds of "some other substantial reason" to justify the dismissal, as set out in section 96 of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

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If an employee is dismissed in circumstances where they refused to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, but later decides to receive the vaccine, the Company will offer the employee their job back on the same terms and conditions, and honouring the previous length of service, where:

- within 4 weeks of the dismissal, the individual can provide the Company with evidence that they have had the vaccine (or are booked in to receive the vaccine<sup>3</sup>); and
- their position is still available.

The Company will review and, as appropriate, update this policy where the position with regards to having unvaccinated employees presents a negligible risk to employees who cannot be vaccinated and our patients.

## 5. COVID-19 Vaccine Processes

1. Staff will be provided the link to the NHS COVID 19 Vaccination booking portal.
2. This link will allow staff to book both appointments for their first and second doses.
3. Staff will need their NHS number in order to complete their booking. If they do not know their NHS number, they can access it at the following website: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/online-services/find-nhs-number/>.
4. When attending for their appointment, staff will need to take the following with them;
  - a. Work ID
  - b. Company eligibility letter from PeopleHR
  - c. Disposable face mask
5. Appointments should be booked prior to planned days off or scheduled annual leave.
6. If you are contacted by your GP surgery and offered a vaccine then you should follow their protocol and accept this invitation.
7. Staff should inform HR and their line manager of the dates of their planned vaccinations

Once you have had your vaccine you will be required to send a photo of your vaccination card to [hr@qphl.co](mailto:hr@qphl.co) so that this can be recorded on your personnel file. This data will be kept for COVID use only.

## 6. Where to ask questions

If you have any questions about the interpretation of this protocol, please contact: [hr@qphl.co](mailto:hr@qphl.co)

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<sup>3</sup> and subsequently receive it.

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