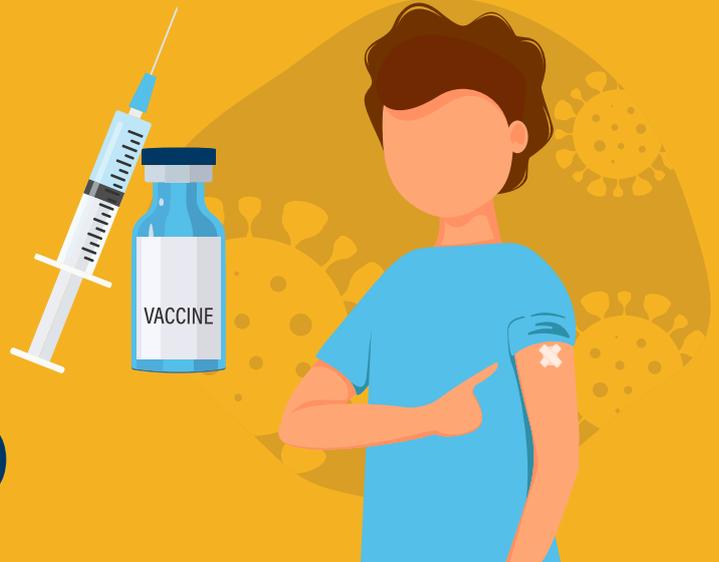


# What you need to know about Vaccination as a Condition of Deployment (VCOD)



This week QCS launches its campaign to provide essential information for customers on VCOD. Abi Spence rounds up why its implementation has, at times, been contentious.

Even as I type the words...VCOD I start to feel uneasy.

It's being talked about, marches have been organised against it, and colleagues have fallen out over it. Even my mother-in-law wanted to know my view on it. 'Well, I try and not broadcast my views, it's a very sensitive and complicated subject,' I awkwardly answer.

## What is VCOD?

VCOD is the mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 for employees who hold certain jobs. Also tastelessly known as: 'No jab, no job'.

## Who does it affect currently?

VCOD has been in place since the 11 November 2021 for regulated nursing and care homes within social care.

**CQC writes** 'The Government has passed new legislation which affects all CQC registered providers and registered managers that provide 'accommodation for persons who require nursing or personal care' in care homes. This means you must ensure that staff and visiting professionals do not enter your indoor premises unless they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. There are exemptions, for example – on medical, emergency or age-related grounds.'

## Who else comes into scope?

New legislation was approved on the 6 Jan 2022 which amended the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, extending the scope to health and the rest of regulated social care in England.

## What does this mean?

It means staff can only be deployed to direct, face-to-face contact with patients and service users if they have been vaccinated with a complete course (2 doses) of approved COVID-19 vaccine (subject to specific exemptions). The VCOD regulations allow a grace period for compliance and the requirement will come into force on 1 April 2022.

Workers who are in scope will have to receive their first vaccination dose by 3 February 2022 (eight weeks are required between first and second doses). Further information can be found for healthcare workers [here](#) and wider social care [here](#).

## What's the contention?

The first issue relates to freedom of choice. This is something that has dogged this controversial issue, whether the state should mandate frontline workers to be vaccinated. Some see what happens to their own body as a private matter of choice rather than a matter for the Government to impose.

## Delay or Scrap

Further friction has been caused as many organisations have asked the Government to delay VCOD for NHS and the wider CQC regulated health and social care workforce. This would mean social care staff in residential homes would have already been mandated to receive the COVID-19 vaccination, have been redeployed or have already lost their jobs, while others, including the NHS could possibly delay or even stop the mandate.

The [Royal College of Nursing](#) says 'vaccines as a condition of employment may further marginalise those who remain unvaccinated, rather than support them to access vaccination. We have also expressed our concerns around the potential impact of mandatory vaccination on many levels, not least on retention of staff which will put further pressure on service capacity during a highly pressured time for the health and care services.'

## What's actually happening?

Good point if I do say so myself! Although a lot of voices in the sector are asking for a delay or for the mandate to be scrapped, there is currently no change to the Government's plans.

## What do I need to be aware of?

It is important to recognise people will be confused and frustrated with the uncertainty which surrounds VCOD.

Here are some top tips during VCOD uncertainty and contention:

**Be open with staff** – Ensure you are talking about the facts, reaffirming what we know rather than letting speculation grow.

**Support Staff** – Regardless of the uncertainty, it is important to give clear, factual information about vaccination and the importance of protecting yourself and the vulnerable people you support.

**Keep an eye on the guidance** – Things change quickly in COVID times! Keep your eye on the Department of Health Guidance for updates and the QCS website! Steer clear of unverified reporting from some media outlets.

**Consider legal and HR support** – If the Government U turns on the mandate for health and wider social care staff, there will be many people who will be extremely upset because they may have already lost their job or made a decision they would not have made otherwise. Seek professional legal and HR support to prepare your own challenge as a provider, or to support staff members if this happens.