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Dear Colleagues

## COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME: NATIONAL POLICY ON OFFERING COVID-19 VACCINATIONS TO MIGRANT SEAFARERS IN SCOTLAND

This letter provides a further update on the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

### KEY OBJECTIVES

1. To advise on recently approved national policy to offer Covid-19 vaccinations to migrant seafarers in Scotland.
2. To set out the national approach and clarify operational guidance to support this policy.

### COVID-19 VACCINATIONS FOR MIGRANT SEAFARERS WHO HAVE NOT YET BEEN VACCINATED OR WHO HAVE RECEIVED ONE DOSE

3. As part of the current Covid vaccination programme, Scottish Ministers have decided on a national policy to offer Covid-19 vaccinations to all migrant seafarers in Scotland.
4. This can be a first and/or second dose of the vaccination, as required in individual circumstances.
5. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has published advice encouraging vaccination of seafarers as critical key workers who “underpin global trade and mobility and are key to a sustainable and socio-economic recovery”. [Joint Statement on prioritization of COVID-19 vaccination for seafarers and aircrew \(who.int\)](#)
6. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has not provided specific advice on vaccination of migrant seafarers and different approaches have been taken across the 4 nations for vaccinating seafarers.

### From the Chief Medical Officer

Dr Gregor Smith

2 September 2021

SGHD(2021)22

### Addresses

#### For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards  
Medical Directors, NHS Boards  
Primary Care Leads, NHS Boards  
Directors of Nursing & Midwifery, NHS Boards  
Chief Officers of Integration Authorities  
Chief Executives, Local Authorities  
Directors of Pharmacy  
Directors of Public Health  
General Practitioners  
Practice Nurses  
Immunisation Co-ordinators  
Operational Leads

#### For information

Chairs, NHS Boards  
Infectious Disease Consultants  
Consultant Physicians  
Chief Executive, Public Health Scotland  
NHS 24

### Further Enquiries

#### Policy Issues

COVID Vaccination Policy Team  
[VaccinationsDelivery@gov.scot](mailto:VaccinationsDelivery@gov.scot)

#### Medical Issues

Dr Syed Ahmed  
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#### Pharmaceutical and Vaccine Supply Issues

NHS NSS National Procurement:  
[NSS.fluvaccineenquiries@nhs.scot](mailto:NSS.fluvaccineenquiries@nhs.scot)



7. Seafarers are a unique group who may be considered more at risk due to the nature of their work and potential limits on vaccine supply in their home countries. The term “seafarer” covers a range of different groups, including cruise ship, ferry, freight and fishing fleet workers as well as those arriving as a stop off en-route elsewhere. Some of these workers are classified as temporarily resident in Scotland (i.e. resident for less than 3 months), but others are not.  
[Registering with a GP practice | NHS inform](#)
8. The total number of migrant seafarers in the cruise sector is not known, because we do not record the number of vessel calls at port. However, we estimate approximately 1,000 migrant seafarers work in the fishing sector in Scotland.
9. Migrant seafarers form a key part of Scotland’s critical national infrastructure. They are a specialised workforce vital to support National and International supply lines for critical items and general trade. Utilising potentially unvaccinated staff in key roles exposes Scotland to a situation where our critical national infrastructure is compromised and also presents a public health issue.
10. Unvaccinated staff on cruise liners increases the potential for a spike in cases within local communities, until the vessels leave port, and exposes large numbers of passengers to potential infection whilst at sea.
11. Our COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Plan published in July 2021 stated: “it is vital our current COVID-19 vaccination programme is designed to reach everyone and no-one is left behind, to protect individuals and the wider population”.  
[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): vaccine deployment plan: update - July 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

## Action

12. Health Boards should now start accepting seafarers for vaccination, if they are not already doing so. The nature of these appointments – drop-in clinics or pre-arranged appointments – is at the discretion of individual Health Boards. Health Boards are encouraged to operationalise vaccinations locally and to exercise flexibility where deemed necessary. Health Boards are encouraged to engage with local shipping companies, cruise liners and Fisherman’s Missions to communicate agreed messaging which will direct individuals to contact the helpline, where they can be signposted to the appropriate health board.
13. Health Boards should accept seafarers for vaccination even if they are not registered with a GP, do not have CHI, a home address or a NVSS username to record on via NHS Inform portals. There is no one-size-fits-all approach as, for example, seafarers will reside in Scotland for different periods of time and some of this group will have already been vaccinated.
14. All age appropriate UK Licenced vaccines can be offered. These include Pfizer BioNTech (Cominarty), AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria) and Moderna (Spikevax), according to the age-specific advice provided by JCVI.
15. The Green Book Chapter 14a lists the process to follow for second doses if a seafarer has already been given a first dose, or an alternative vaccine dose, either in the UK or elsewhere.

16. It is expected that vaccination of migrant seafarers will remain a live issue during Tranche 2 of the vaccination programme. This approach should be reviewed after two months to evaluate its effectiveness and reassess in the context of potential boosters in the future.
17. It is important for Health Boards to alert the Scottish Government of any increasing trends in demand, which could indicate companies routing through Scotland for purposes of vaccination and/or an increase in vaccination tourism.

## **Communications and Messaging**

18. Health Boards will be able to access a list of FAQs to support this approach. Please find the FAQ attached at Annex A. Other communication resources are being developed.

## **Record of Vaccination**

19. Details of the vaccine records policy with the Common Travel Area (CTA) Ministers and wider international ministers is currently being finalised. Vaccine certification is not unique to migrant seafarers and officials continue to work on a wider solution.
20. If an individual is receiving a single dose of the vaccine in Scotland they can go online to print a copy or request one via the national contact centre. Similarly, if they are in port long enough to receive both doses they can print this off or request one.  
[Get a record of your coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination status | The coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine \(nhsinform.scot\)](#)
21. Currently, the priority is on administering vaccinations for the safety of the individual and the wider population.

Thank you for your continued support in delivering the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Yours sincerely

*Gregor Smith*

Dr Gregor Smith  
**Chief Medical Officer**

## Annex A

### Seafarers

The Maritime industry forms a key part of Scotland's critical national infrastructure, providing vital supplies, trade and passenger transport.

Seafarers who work in the industry are an international workforce who live on-board vessels with other individuals, often in compact conditions. Seafarers cannot be viewed as a single group for whom one vaccination approach will be appropriate. Some will be on vessels which carry out short regular journeys involving only UK ports, while others will be required to staff long distance journeys of up to months at a time involving foreign ports. Companies have different approaches to how they manage disembarkation of crew at UK and non-UK ports.

Extending Scotland's vaccination programme to include seafarers coming to Scotland from overseas will help minimise the risk to them and it helps protect the health and safety of the nation. It is an example of Scotland's inclusive approach to vaccination, where possible.

This document sets out some frequently asked questions to help services providing vaccination to this important group.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### 1. Who are seafarers?

The term "seafarer" covers a range of different groups of personnel employed on vessels including cruise ship, offshore support vessels, ferry, freighter and fishing fleet workers as well as those arriving as a stop off en-route elsewhere. Some of these workers are classified as temporarily residents in Scotland but others are not.

#### 2. Does it matter if the individual receiving the vaccine is not a UK Citizen?

All seafarers on vessels arriving in a Scottish port, irrespective of nationality, can request to be vaccinated by the local Health Board serving the geographical region of the port. Alternatively, this may be organised between their employer and the local Health Board. This offers seafarers protection and reduces the risks to others, whilst also contributing to the protection of services and trade.

#### 3. Can seafarers be vaccinated without being registered with a Scottish GP?

Yes, they can be vaccinated without being registered with a GP or having a NHS Scotland Community Health Index (CHI) number and a permanent address. NHS Scotland Health Boards will manage vaccinations of migrant seafarers on a local basis.

#### 4. What vaccines will be offered?

All UK licensed vaccines can be offered, subject to vaccine age restrictions and advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). These are Pfizer (Cominarty), AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria) and Moderna (Spikevax).

**5. In terms of the vaccines e.g. AstraZeneca or Pfizer, can seafarers choose which vaccine to have?**

The individual will be offered a vaccine which is appropriate for them and will be based on clinical recommendations. It is not possible for individuals to choose which vaccine they wish to receive.

The vaccine which is offered will depend on the individual's age, whether they are pregnant, vaccine availability and any clinical reasons specific to the individual.

**6. If a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine has been received outside of Scotland, can a second COVID-19 dose be given?**

If a person received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine outside of Scotland and the vaccine is also available in the UK they should receive the same vaccine for their second dose. If the vaccine they received for their first dose is not available in the UK, the most similar alternative should be offered.

Not all vaccines which may have been given overseas are available in the UK. Therefore, if the vaccine received overseas is not approved in by the UK, a full course of the appropriate vaccine recommended for the individual in the UK, depending on the JCVI advice, should be given. [COVID-19 programme guidance for healthcare workers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91421/covid-19-programme-guidance-for-healthcare-workers.pdf) (appendix 1)

**7. Does being vaccinated in Scotland entitle seafarers to receive a COVID-19 certificate?**

A seafarer can receive a copy of their COVID-19 vaccination status if they have received both doses of the vaccine in Scotland.

If the seafarer has only received a single dose of vaccine in Scotland they can also request a single vaccine status report.

Their vaccination status records can be accessed online by viewing the record and printing it or it can be posted to an address by making a request online at [Get a record of your coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccination status | The coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine \(nhsinform.scot\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/vaccination-status/) or by calling the phone line, or via the COVID-19 Status Helpline on 0800 196 8565.

**8. Do seafarers need to isolate if vaccinated?**

Contacts of COVID-19 cases identified in Scotland, who are fully vaccinated (have completed a course of approved vaccine at least 14 days prior to the date any contact took place) don't have symptoms, and who have a negative PCR test from an NHS or Lighthouse laboratory will no longer be advised to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case. If they become infected, then isolation will be required.

[When and how long to self-isolate due to coronavirus | NHS inform Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): international travel and managed isolation \(quarantine\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/topics/health/coronavirus-covid-19/international-travel-and-managed-isolation-quarantine)

However, the requirement to isolate remains under review and is dependent on current pandemic conditions, as such, it may be subject to change.

**9. Is the Janssen one dose vaccine available in the UK?**

Although authorised for use by the MHRA for COVID-19 vaccination, the JCVI has still to provide advice on its deployment within the vaccine services in the UK.