

VACCINATIONS POLICY

OUTCOME 14, REGULATION 23 (Supporting Workers)

Name: Anonymous Care Ltd.

Purpose and Scope

This policy on vaccination applies to all employees who might contract an infectious illness through the course of their work, which is preventable through immunisation.

Aims

The aims of the vaccination policy are:

1. to protect the company's staff, their families and friends, from infections contracted at work
2. to protect the people receiving the services of the company from contracting infections from the company's staff, particularly those who do not respond well to their own immunisations
3. to protect other employees who are in contact with infected employees
4. to help the company to deliver its services without disruption.

Policy Statement

The company also accepts that it has a responsibility under the *Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002* to take all possible steps to protect its employees from any infectious illness or hazardous substances to which they are at risk from contracting during the course of their work.

It exercises its responsibilities by ensuring that risk assessments have been or are carried out wherever there is a possibility of an employee contracting any infectious illness from their work.

The company does not consider that vaccinations to be a ready substitute for adequate risk assessments and good infection control procedures as described in its infection control policy.

Depending on the outcome of the risk assessment it will then take all necessary steps to protect its staff from contracting the identifiable illness or illnesses.

The first step will be to agree a risk management plan with all concerned and which employees will be expected to implement.

In the case of new service users, the risk assessment and any management plan will be part of the initial assessment and agreed with service users and commissioners or care managers.

Where risks are identified at a later stage, the company will discuss how to control any risk by reviewing the situation with service users, commissioners and care managers.

The company expects to be fully informed of any risks from infectious illnesses, which have already been identified from the original needs assessment. It will discuss with the service commissioners or case managers in the contractual process how any continuing risks are to be assessed and managed. It will ensure that the risks continue to be monitored through the care plan and are kept under review.

As a general rule the company recommends to all of its employees that they are vaccinated against any infections or infectious illnesses they are at risk from within the general population. It then expects its employees to have maintained their vaccinations against such common illnesses as are provided through the NHS.

Routine vaccinations, which all employees should keep up to date through the NHS include tetanus, diphtheria, polio and measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). Department of Health guidance states that the MMR vaccine is especially important where there is a risk of transmitting measles or rubella infections to children or adults.

Vaccines that may be offered on a selective basis following a risk assessment include Hepatitis B and Varicella.

Hepatitis B

In line with Department of Health guidelines the company recommends vaccination against Hepatitis B for any of its care workers, who have direct contact with service users' blood or blood-stained body fluids. This includes anyone at risk of injury from blood-contaminated sharp instruments or of being deliberately injured or bitten.

Varicella

The company recommends care workers who are proven through screening or testing not to have had chicken pox or herpes zoster to be given the Varicella vaccination.

Influenza

The company also follows Department of Health guidance in recommending to its employees that they have annual vaccinations against influenza. The guidance states that influenza immunisation for health and social care staff is likely to reduce the transmission of influenza to vulnerable people, some of whom may have impaired immunity and reduced protection from any influenza vaccine they have received themselves.

Employment Procedures

On appointment each new employee completes a pre-employment health questionnaire, which should give information about previous illnesses and immunisation against relevant infections (or refusal to give consent to immunisation). This enables the company to review with the employee any new immunisation needs, which can be identified from the company's general health and safety risk assessments.

To protect service users and other employees, staff are also asked to report episodes of possible infectious illness to the company particularly if contracted after travel abroad. When necessary, the company might need to exclude employees, who have been infected, from work until they have recovered or the results of specimens are available.

Where the risk assessment indicates this, the company will support affected employees to have any vaccinations that are recommended and pay for these or reimburse any costs to the employee. Where appropriate and reasonable to do so, the company will then negotiate any costs it incurs with the service purchasers or commissioners.

Consent

The company asks that employees give their consent to vaccination voluntarily and freely. All employees who are being considered are informed about the process, benefits and risks of immunisation and their decision is recorded.

It also respects the rights of employees to take their own decisions on whether to be vaccinated and recognises that some employees will not wish to be vaccinated for their own reasons. It will then fully discuss the implications with those individuals and the further risks that will need to be managed.

Vaccination Procedures

Where vaccination is the most effective way to protect against an infectious illness the company will follow these procedures.

1. The company will make clear to all employees affected the reasons for supporting and recommending vaccination, including the extent of the risks involved.
2. The company will outline any measures to be taken to protect employees who agree to vaccination during the period before vaccination and between vaccination and the onset of immunity.
3. The company will outline any measures to be taken to protect employees who do not give their consent to being vaccinated and who will be exposed to any risks of contracting the illness in consequence.
4. The company will need to consider the position of any employee, who refuses not only to be vaccinated but also to work in the at-risk situation(s), as this might create problems of equity and fairness in relation to other staff members. If the staff member has good reasons for withholding consent, eg they are allergic to the vaccination, all measures will be taken to reduce the risks to that person or they might be transferred to other care situations.
5. The company will keep a record on the employees' files of any vaccinations carried out in relation to the work situation including monitoring the need for follow ups, boosters etc.

Staff Training and Information

1. The company encourages all of its employees to have access to occupational health advice.
2. It seeks information and advice as needed from its local occupational health service and infection control units.
3. It provides employees with up to date information it receives on vaccination guidance.
4. Staff receive information on the company's policy on appointment and during their induction programme. They receive further training on selective vaccination issues as required and are encouraged to raise specific concerns in supervision.

Further Information

The Department of Health's (updated 2008) *Immunisation Against Infectious Disease* — "*The Green Book*" presents latest information on vaccines and vaccination procedures for all the vaccine preventable infectious diseases that may occur in the UK. Relevant chapters can be downloaded from the Department of Health's website www.dh.gov.uk.

Signed:

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