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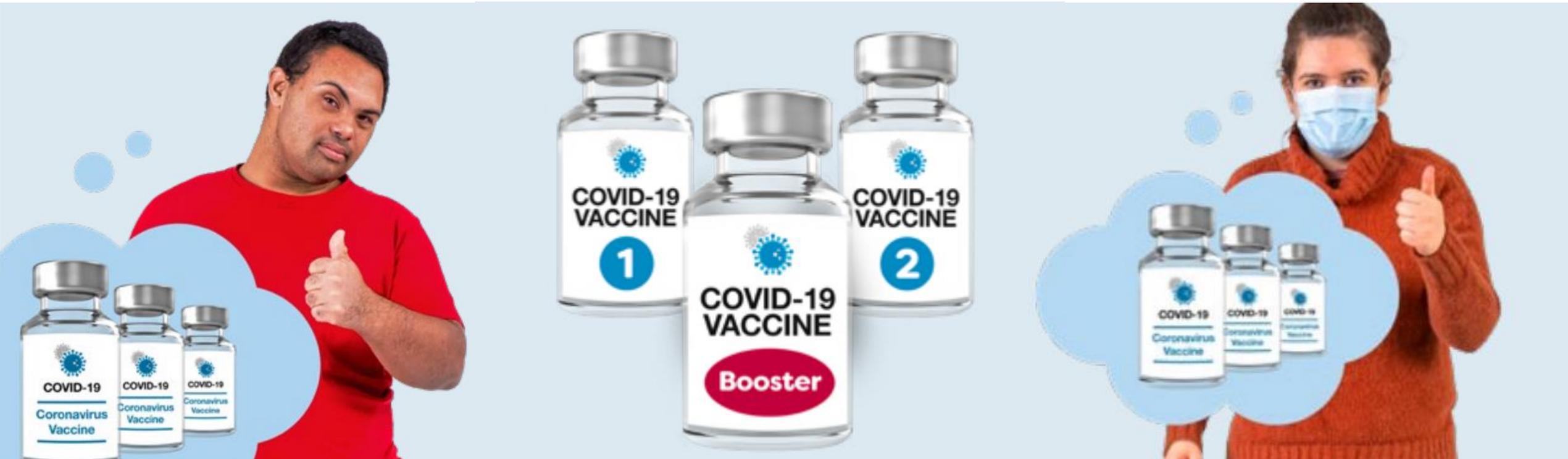
in partnership with

NHS



Confident COVID vaccine conversations: People with learning disabilities

Learning disability associated conditions include **Down's syndrome, Williams syndrome, Autism and Asperger's, GDD and Cerebral palsy** but not learning difficulties such as dyslexia, ADHD or Dyspraxia



For health, public health and social care professionals

Last updated:
17 Feb 2022 FV

People with learning disabilities – Data and insights

Data



COVID-19 deaths for people with learning disabilities was 3.6 times higher than in the general population.

(Source: [COVID 19 deaths of people identified as having learning disabilities: summary - GOV.UK Nov 2020](#))

A recent study found that during the 1st wave in England, people with learning disabilities with COVID-19 **were five times more likely to be admitted to hospital and eight times more likely to die** than the general population.

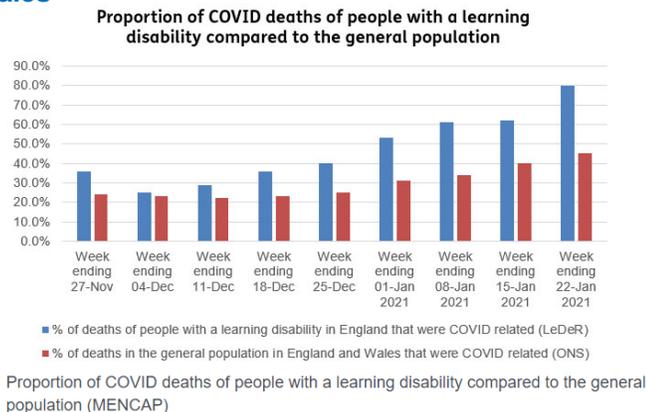
(Source: [COVID 19: People with learning disabilities are highly vulnerable | The BMJ](#))

In England, data from December 2020 and January 2021 **shows that the death rate** from COVID-19 for people aged 18 to 34 **with learning disabilities was 30 times higher** than the rate in the same age group without disabilities

(Source: [Learning disabilities and COVID-19 | Local Government Association - 2021](#))

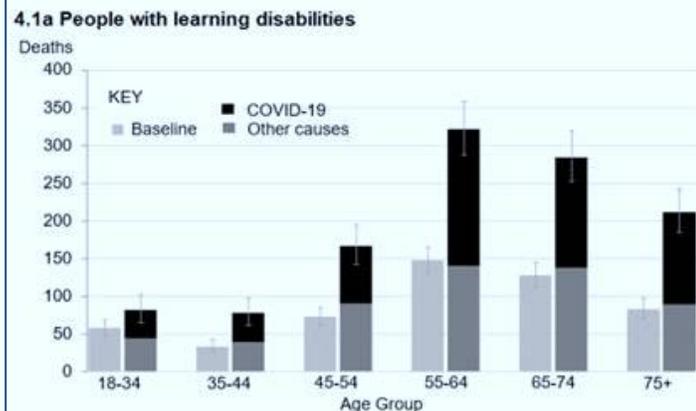


From Dec 2020 to Jan 2021 COVID-related deaths for people with a learning disability were dramatically higher than the general population in England and Wales



(Source: [Learning disabilities and COVID-19 | Local Government Association](#))

Numbers of deaths for people with a learning disability in England and Wales between 21 March 2020, with COVID-19 and from other causes, and average for 2 previous years (baseline).



(Source: [COVID deaths of people with learning disabilities \(- 2020 Gov.uk\)](#))

Insights

People with learning disability have markedly increased risks of hospital admission and death from COVID-19, over and above the risks observed for non-COVID causes of death. **Prompt access to COVID-19 testing and healthcare is warranted for this vulnerable group, and prioritisation for COVID-19 vaccination and other targeted preventive measures** should be considered. *(Source: [people with learning disability: population based cohort study - PubMed](#))*

People with learning disabilities experience **poorer outcomes and poorer access to health and care services** more generally, than the general population and this has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

People with a learning disability **may take longer to learn and may need support to understand complicated information and interact with other people.** *(Source: [Mencap](#))*

[Learning Disabilities Mortality Report 2019](#) found that people with a learning disability were **four times more likely to die of a treatable healthcare condition** than those without a learning disability, and that despite some pockets of excellent practice, **a lack of reasonable adjustments remained one of the biggest reasons why people with a learning disability can still find it difficult to access care.**

People with learning disabilities – Barriers and strategies to overcome them



What care givers and health professionals said.....

"I have concerns about them having the vaccine due to potential side effects & a lack of testing on people with disabilities."

"Their challenging behaviour is a big worry and if they kick off at a vaccine hub it will cause no end of problems as they are big."

"They have a chronic fear of needles – is a nasal spray available?"

"A vaccination centre will be too big, too loud and they will not cope."

Barriers

Anxiety about vaccine and the person's ability to cope

Anxiety if carers cannot accompany people with learning difficulties into vaccination sites (for IPC or capacity reasons)

Anxiety regarding the location, accessibility and environment at the vaccination clinic

Anxiety regarding missing the appointment

Anxiety about the vaccines and their effect on health conditions



Strategies

Involve the person's family and supporters, provide accessible information on the vaccine, the vaccination process and encourage supporters and family carers to go through the information and prepare with the person beforehand.

Make arrangements for support to be provided and communicate clearly so people with learning disabilities and their carers know what to expect.

Deliver the vaccine in a familiar primary care or community setting, with a quiet area for waiting and capacity for support, this will help many who would simply not cope with a large-scale vaccination centre.

Make sure any written information, or contact regarding the appointment, is done in a way the person can understand, and follow up on any missed appointments for people with a learning disability.

Provide Easyread, culturally competent information in multiple languages including BSL

(Source: [Supporting people with a learning disability to access the vaccine- advice for primary care staff - Mencap](#))

(Source: Mencap webinar 2021)



Key COVID vaccine information and useful resources



What are the benefits of COVID vaccinations?

Vaccination allows you to develop immunity in a safe and controlled way, without being ill with COVID-19 and passing it onto others.

COVID vaccines:

- protect against serious illness, **hospitalisation and death** - people who are [unvaccinated are up to eight times more likely to be hospitalised](#) with COVID-19
- reduce **the likelihood of you getting COVID-19**
- reduce the risk of **spreading COVID-19** to others, including people who are more vulnerable
- **strongly recommended in pregnancy** as this is the best way to protect against the known risks of COVID-19 in pregnancy for both women and babies, including admission of the woman to intensive care and premature birth of the baby
- reduce the risk of **developing Long COVID** – a [UK study](#) of double-vaccinated adults showed a 41% lower likelihood of reporting Long COVID than unvaccinated people

Even if you have already had COVID-19, getting the **COVID vaccine will give you extra protection, stimulating a stronger and longer lasting immune response** than natural infection, which will help against any future new variants.

For those who have yet to take up their first or second dose, it is never too late to come forward – every dose counts.



Are the COVID vaccines safe?

- **Billions of people have been safely vaccinated** against COVID-19 around the world .
- Like all medicines and vaccines, the COVID vaccines underwent **extensive and rigorous multi-stage testing** through clinical trials.
- The COVID vaccines are **continually monitored** for safety and effectiveness. In the UK this is done by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).
- Serious adverse reactions and **side effects** are [extremely rare](#) and are investigated. Remember that COVID-19 disease itself can cause serious complications in the short term and Long COVID.
- **COVID vaccines were tested** on tens of thousands of men and women from different ethnic backgrounds and there **is no evidence** any of the vaccines **will work differently in different ethnic groups.**
- COVID vaccines do not contain the live virus that causes COVID-19 and can be **used by everybody**, including immunocompromised individuals or people with autoimmune disease.



How to book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment

Anyone aged 16 or over can book their first, second and booster (or third dose)



[appointment online on the NHS website](#)

Or by calling 119

119

You need to be [registered with a GP](#) to book an appointment online

If you are not registered with a GP you can get a COVID vaccination at a [walk-in or pop-up centre](#), where there are no ID checks and your immigration status is not relevant.

More information and support

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine – NHS](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination guides – UKHSA – translations and easyread available](#)
- [Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines - WHO](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine questions - British Society for Immunology](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine resource links – MECC](#)
- [MECC – Short COVID vaccine conversations](#)
- [COVID-19 fertility and pregnancy - public – RCOG](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy – for professionals – RCOG](#)

People with learning disabilities – Targeted activity and further resources



Targeted activity in London

Following a review of the impact of COVID on people with **learning disabilities** carried out by OHID, NHS and ADDASS, below are some of the actions now in place to support vaccine uptake.

- Bespoke clinics and outreach services to maximise contact
- Extended appointment times with the support of a learning disabilities nurse in vaccination centres
- Vaccination teams visiting special needs schools
- Sedation clinics to help with needle phobia
- Using specialist learning disability pharmacists within community pharmacy
- Ongoing work with MENCAP
- Social housing officers to be trained on the booster programme
- Targeted residential care

(Source: Learning Disability and Autism strategic partnership board meeting - 17/12/21)



Information, guidance and resources

Latest COVID vaccine information

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) vaccine – NHS](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination guides – UKHSA – translations and easyread available](#)
- [Safety of COVID-19 Vaccines - WHO](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine questions - British Society for Immunology](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine resource links – MECC](#)
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Videos

- [Young People Vaccines - social media Q&A video – UKHSA](#)
- [Information about vaccines: For people with a learning disability and autistic people - YouTube](#)

Sign Language resources (BSL)

- [COVID-19 vaccination: British Sign Language resources - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Useful resources

- [COVID-19 vaccination: easy-read leaflets - GOV.UK](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for care staff supporting adults with learning disabilities and autistic adults - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [COVID-19 guide for care staff supporting adults with learning disabilities or autistic adults \(scie.org.uk\)](#)
- [Easy Read Accessible Information About Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) For People With A Learning Disability, Families, Carers and Support Workers | Mencap](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Vaccine | Mencap](#)
- [Kings Health Partners Learning Disabilities COVID-19 resources](#)
- [Covid-19 vaccine - accessibility and reasonable adjustments for individuals with severe learning disabilities whose behaviour challenges \(challengingbehaviour.org.uk\)](#)

