

Role of Healthcare Support Workers (HCSWs) in Vaccination Programmes

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Overview

To improve access, the vaccinator workforce has been expanded to include suitably trained and competent HCSWs. HCSWs can play an important role in increasing capacity, particularly in large-scale programmes such as seasonal influenza, shingles, pneumococcal, and COVID-19 vaccination.

However, vaccine administration by HCSWs must be undertaken only within defined boundaries of competence, under appropriate supervision of a Registered Healthcare Professional (RHCP), where a suitable legal mechanism is in place.

Roles and Responsibilities

HCSWs May Undertake the Following:

- **Vaccine administration**, where a suitable legal mechanism is in place, a RHCP is available and the HCSW is trained, competent, and supervised.
 - Suitable vaccines may include influenza, shingles, pneumococcal, and COVID-19 vaccines.
- Check if patient well on the day, and consent to the technical process of vaccination. (If patient feels unwell on day guidance to be sought from RHCP)
 - Clinical assessment of vaccine suitability is the responsibility of the prescriber, who would then document this via the PSD mechanism.
- **Supportive roles** in vaccination delivery, including:
 - Preparation of vaccination areas and equipment.
 - Monitoring and maintaining the cold chain.
 - Ordering, receiving, and stock control of vaccines.
 - Supporting patient flow and observation post-vaccination.
- Participation in school vaccination programmes, particularly in the delivery of the nasal influenza vaccine.
- Communication and support, including reassurance, basic information provision, and escalation of patient queries to a RHCP.
- **Extra Responsibilities** (Dependant on duties within practice.)
 - Audits
 - Stock Checking
 - Infection Control
 - Disposal of sharp bins

HCSWs Must Not:

- Undertake a clinical assessment of vaccine suitability. (This is a RHCP responsibility)
- Work under a Patient Group Direction (PGD).
- Prescribe or authorise vaccine administration.
- Administer injected vaccines to:

- Individuals with complex medical or vaccination histories (unless specifically assessed and authorised by a RHCP).
- Individuals requiring travel vaccinations (which require a travel health risk assessment by a RHCP).
- Respond independently to clinical questions or concerns about vaccination.

Delegation and Supervision

Delegation to an HCSW must be:

- Appropriate, justified, and in the best interests of the patient and service.
- Supported by clear lines of accountability, clinical supervision and a valid PSD.
- RHCPs delegating vaccination tasks must adhere to their professional standards and code of conduct (e.g. NMC, GMC, GPHC, HCPC).

The employer must ensure:

- HCSW's are up to date with all mandatory training such as BLS and anaphylaxis training.
- That the HCSW has attended initial training and attends refresher training.
- Adequate clinical governance and risk management structures are in place.
- Each HCSW has documented evidence of competence and is supervised proportionately to their level of experience.
- All training is in line with national standards to ensure the HCSW meeting the requirements set out in [UKHSA National Minimum Standards for immunisation training 2025.pdf](#)

Training and Competency Requirements

HCSWs involved in vaccine administration should be:

- Educated and trained to Level 3 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) or equivalent. ([Further information on Level 3 can be found here](#))
- Working at Level 3 or above of the NHS Career Framework. ([Further information on the NHS Careers Framework can be found here.](#))

Core Training Programme

Training must include the same topic areas as Registered Healthcare Professionals, tailored to the HCSW's role and responsibilities. HCSWs must undertake a vaccination training course and attend / complete annual updates.

HCSW's should also be up to date with all mandatory training such as BLS and anaphylaxis training.

Competency Assessment

- HCSWs must not administer vaccines until assessed as competent by a qualified RHCP.
- Competence must be recorded, signed, and retained in the individual's training file.
- Annual updates and ongoing supervision are required to maintain competency.

Clinical Governance

- Vaccination by HCSWs must take place under a Patient Specific Direction (PSD) issued by a Prescriber.
- Employers are responsible for ensuring:
 - Clinical policies, risk assessments, and emergency procedures are in place.
 - HCSWs have access to appropriate supervision, clinical support, and escalation pathways.
 - Systems are in place for incident reporting and audit of vaccination practice.

Summary Table of Scope of Practice

Activity	Permitted for HCSW?	Conditions / Notes
Clinical assessment for vaccination	✗	RHCP responsibility

Activity	Permitted for HCSW?	Conditions / Notes
Obtaining the technical aspect of consent	☑	Only if trained, competent, and supervised
Work under a PGD	✗	HCSWs cannot use PGDs
Administer vaccine under PSD	☑	Only if trained, competent, and supervised
Administer injected vaccine to infants/preschoolers	✗	Outside scope of HCSWs
Administer vaccine to adults with complex medical histories	⚠	Only if assessed appropriate by RHCP, and where a valid PSD exists.
Administer travel vaccines	✗	RHCP must complete travel risk assessment
Cold chain management	☑	Must complete relevant training
Record keeping / data entry	☑	Under supervision and as directed
Responding to vaccine queries	⚠	Escalate to RHCP
Vaccine ordering and stock control	☑	In line with organisational procedures