



Vaccine Hesitancy Report

Attitudes towards the Covid-19 vaccine

June 2021

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1 Executive summary

In December 2020, the NHS began the biggest immunisation campaign in history as it started the Covid-19 vaccine rollout across the Country. In Derbyshire, this is being managed by the Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Whilst the majority of people have embraced the vaccine, others have been hesitant to get vaccinated. The aim of this project was to gain an understanding of why some people were not taking up the offer of the Covid-19 vaccine, or were saying that they would not do so.

This report, produced by Healthwatch Derbyshire (HWD) and the feedback obtained will be shared with Joined up Care Derbyshire (JUCCD) and Public Health bodies in Derbyshire allowing them to provide specific and directed messaging about the vaccine which will directly address those reported concerns.

2 What people told us

517 people took the survey, 388 had already had the vaccine or were happy to receive it. 129 people had not had the vaccine or had concerns around taking it.

The respondents who indicated that they did not want the vaccine or who were hesitant about having the vaccine (129) were asked:

For what reason would you be unlikely to have a vaccine if it was offered to you?

These respondents were provided with a list of reasons from which they could select one or more which would make it unlikely they would have the vaccine.

After examining the data provided we were able to identify two main areas of concern, worries around the effects on person's own health (2.1) and worries about the safety of the vaccine (2.2):

2.1 Worries around effects on own health

- 65 people indicated they were worried about the long term effects on their health
- 53 people indicated they were worried about the side effects of the vaccine
- 31 people indicated they were worried about the effects on their long term condition.

Those who indicated the reason for their vaccine hesitancy were asked to elaborate on their answer and below as a sample of those responses.

Sample of comments:

"I don't know the long-term affects or what might happen later in my life (if I was elderly/older I wouldn't worry so much)."

"Don't feel like I know enough about the vaccination, it all came out very quickly. I'm scared of what's in the vaccination as I have seen what is in it and also concerns for any future problems it may cause that nobody will know yet."

"I have my doubts about taking the vaccine because I'm worried it will cause problems with my *long-term condition, and I had Covid last year and am still suffering effects from it so I don't want to risk the vaccine making the effects worse than they already are."

"Clotting worries ... high risk of clotting due to other health conditions. Also suffer from a *long-term condition and other sufferers are reporting significant worsening of symptoms after receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine."

"I have a *long-term health condition and there is no information on how safe the vaccine is for me."

“I have a *long-term health condition; I'm hearing of so many people either getting serious side effects after vaccine or even delayed side effects ... The immune response of a person with my *long-term condition doesn't always respond the same way a healthy person does. That is what is putting me off.”

“I have a *long-term health condition which is not currently treated and the clotting issue is too great for me with antiphospholipid syndrome and not being on blood thinners.”

“Basically I'm scared of medication because of side effects so I don't take anything and the thought of having it makes me scared.”

**(The phrase long-term condition has been used to replace specific conditions which may identify respondents).*

2.2 Worries about vaccine safety

- 34 people indicated they wanted to wait to see how the vaccine worked
- 47 people did not think the vaccine was safe
- 26 people felt that Covid-19 was not a personal risk.

Those who indicated the reason for their vaccine hesitancy were asked to elaborate on their answer and below as a sample of those responses.

Sample of comments:

“I do not believe the testing procedures have been robust enough to identify any medium to long-term side effects.”

“I don't feel like I know enough about the vaccination, it all came out very quickly. I'm scared of what's in the vaccination.”

“I feel the trials were too rushed despite being told that they have been checked and found safe.”

“I do not feel it has been tested enough to know any longer term complications it may cause.”

“I just want to wait a while, and not be pressured into having this jab. I've told them I don't want the jab yet, maybe in the future.”

“Very rushed vaccine and not convinced it's going to make any difference.”

“I never see anyone else to catch the virus or to pass it on to anyone else so I cannot see how the jab would be of help to me in my circumstances.”

“Weighing up the potential risks I feel the vaccine is higher risk than getting Covid.”

“As someone who is super fit with absolutely no underlying health conditions and of a healthy weight, I do not perceive Covid to be any risk to me. I am not concerned about Long Covid. Therefore, I would literally just be taking this vaccine for 'the greater good' to protect those not able to have it. Something I will be very happy to do in a few years' time once far more is known about its wider implications for some people.”

“I'd rather wait a few months to see if the population who have had the jab, have any long term side effects.”

2.3 Other common themes

Also worth noting are the following comments from people who said they would not want the vaccine. There is a potential, with further information and data, to enable people to take-up on the offer. Information from Public Health, the CCG and local councils could help to reassure individuals on the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Needle phobia

“Severe phobia of injections and no extra support provided for this.”

“I’m not only very nervous around needles, I’ve read bad things about the Covid jab, I’m really unsure about having it really.”

“I am writing in on behalf of my son. He has a needle phobia. He has been offered the vaccine aged 20 he has no objection to the vaccine. Just the needle”

“Severe needle phobia. Would have the vaccine via nasal spray without hesitation.”

Allergies & reactions to previous medications

“I do not know what is in the vaccine and I have allergies and will not risk anaphylactic shock. There was a statement saying if you have allergies or anaphylactic shock in the past do not have it. I’m not prepared to risk it.”

“My glands swell sometimes for no reason. Once my tongue swelled from a cold remedy. I have read a side effect can be gland swelling.”

“I am highly allergic to vaccines and spent several weeks in hospital when I had the last one. Been advised by medics not to risk anymore.”

“I have already suffered from varicose stasis, bleeds, oedema, rashes caused by medication. After suffering from many years I stopped all medication and my health has improved. My body is sensitive to modern synthetic concoctions - vaccines included.”

Mental health

“I’ve had mental health issues, and now suffer with social anxiety, so the thought of going to the vaccination centre completely puts me off, as I’ve seen people I know mention online how busy it is down there, and that seems to be the only place I can go to get it.”

“I haven’t left my home since March 2020. I can’t imagine leaving my home again apart from a medical emergency. My general anxiety disorder is currently so severe I would panic knowing I had had the vaccine and that I would have to cope with any side-effects by myself as I am always alone now.”

“I’m 50/50 on whether to have it or not, as I said in answer to the previous question. My social anxiety etc. and the fact I have been told I have to go to a vaccination centre are the main reason I’m leaning towards not bothering.”

Pregnancy

Seven people were worried about the effects on their pregnancy and/or future fertility.

“I worry about long term affects as there is no proof to say it could affect fertility and other illnesses.”

“May have another baby in the future. I don’t think the full effects can possibly be understood at this point and under those conditions in addition it’s a high risk of errors.”

“I am concerned about whether it will affect my fertility which I already have concerns about and I am about to start trying for a baby.”

3 Recommendations

Respondents who raised concerns and who were hesitant about having the vaccine were asked:

Is there anything that would make you change your mind about having the vaccine?

Many gave suggestions as to what may encourage them to be more likely to take up the offer of the vaccine.

The following points highlight that there is action for change that may support people to take up the offer of the vaccine.

- More research published with testing and results shown/evidenced over a longer period of time
- Clearer information for people to make their decisions that address their concerns, with consideration given to health literacy and the frequently asked questions highlighted below
- Choice of vaccine
- Choice of venue to receive the vaccine, some prefer hospital settings in case of emergency or complications with existing condition
- Learning disabilities and mental health conditions taken into account and patients offered alternative venues or time slots to suit.

4 Frequently asked questions

Healthwatch Derbyshire has developed the following frequently asked questions developed from the concerns and solutions raised by those who took part in the survey and were hesitant about having the vaccine:

I have a good immune system - why should I get the vaccine?

I don't think I'm at risk of Covid-19 - why should I get the vaccine?

I have had a previous allergic reaction to a vaccine - can I still have the Covid-19 vaccine?

I have allergies and I'm worried about taking the vaccine - who can I speak to?

I'm pregnant or planning to be pregnant - can I still take the Covid-19 vaccine?

I want to choose which vaccine to have - is this possible?

I have a needle phobia - what support is available for me?

I suffer from a mental health condition and can't go to a big centre - can I request my vaccine somewhere quieter?

I declined the vaccine but have changed my mind - how can I book myself for a vaccine?

Where can I find the latest up to date and accurate information on the research and trials on the vaccine?

5 Methodology

This report summarises the findings from our online survey using Survey Monkey. The consultation period for this report ran from 18th March 2021 to 25th April 2021.

The survey was promoted through:

- local media channels, including the Derby Evening Telegraph
- a range of social media platforms including Facebook and Next Door
- HWD's website
- through HWD bulletins and newsletters
- our partner organisations who shared it with their contacts
- HWD volunteers.

We also encouraged members of the public to contact us by telephone or complete a paper survey if they were unable to access the survey digitally.

Once all the data was compiled we performed qualitative analysis on the data to break down the data into various sub-themes for discussion and examining the data for common questions and implications for recommendations.

Of those who had vaccine hesitancy we asked further questions, probing into the reasons asking them to elaborate their reasons where appropriate.

6 Thank you

HWD would like to thank all participants who gave their time to talk to us about the Covid-19 vaccine. We also extend our thanks to the many groups and services who supported and cooperated with this engagement activity.

7 Disclaimer

The comments outlined in this report should be taken in the context that they are not representative of all individuals who are eligible for the vaccine but never the less offer useful insight.

It is important to note that the engagement was carried out within a specific time-frame and therefore only provides a snapshot of patient experience collected then. They are the genuine thoughts, feelings and issues participants, carers and healthcare professionals have conveyed to HWD. The data should be used in conjunction with, and to complement, other sources of data that are available.

8 About us

HWD is an independent voice for the people of Derbyshire. We are here to listen to the experiences of Derbyshire residents and give them a stronger say in influencing how local health and social care services are provided.

We listen to what people have to say about their experiences of using health and social care services and feed this information through to those responsible for providing the services. We also ensure services are held to account for how they use this feedback to influence the way services are designed and run.

HWD was set up in April 2013 as a result of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and is part of a network of local Healthwatch organisations covering every local authority across England. The Healthwatch network is supported in its work by Healthwatch England who builds a national picture of the issues that matter most to health and social care users and will ensure that this evidence is used to influence those who plan and run services at a national level.