



healthwatch
Bexley

Care Home Staff Covid-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Report

February 2021

"I believe it's not necessary for now as it's in the experimental stages and I keep safe."

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Introduction

This report presents the views of staff who live or work in the London Borough of Bexley (LBB), who work in a care home, regarding their views on having the Covid-19 vaccine.

Whilst working with the local Care Home Task Force Group (CHTFG), who have been set up to support and guide care homes during the Covid pandemic, it became apparent that vaccine hesitancy amongst local care home workers was high, particularly amongst BAME groups. With many care homes being hit hard with Covid 19 infections (2021, GOV.UK), vaccine hesitancy is a concern due to the duty of care to protect vulnerable care home residents and workers from the virus. Vaccine hesitancy amongst the BAME community is widely recognised with Dan Wellings from the King's Fund (2020) stating that. "...vaccine hesitancy is disproportionately high in some of the communities that have already been hardest hit by the pandemic."

Healthwatch Bexley would like to thank the CHTFG, the care home providers and all staff who took the time to promote and encourage care home workers to complete the survey.

Methodology

The consultation period ran from 21st January to 1st February. Initially, this was intended to be a rapid review into care home workers thoughts about the Covid-19 vaccine. However, due to a lower response rate than expected in comparison to the amount of care home workers in the borough, the survey end date was extended until 9th February.

Healthwatch Bexley worked with the local CHTFG to compile a structured survey that was used to engage with care home staff. The survey was designed to investigate the concerns raised by some care home providers at the CHTFG regarding vaccine hesitancy amongst their staff and what the potential barriers to receiving the vaccine may be.

The survey was produced using a package called "Survey Monkey" and was promoted by our partners at the Local Authority, South East London Clinical Commissioning Group, Local GP's, Care Homes and CHTFG. Healthwatch Bexley promoted the survey on social media platforms, via our website and through community group leaders where applicable, asking them to promote to their service users and staff.

Over the extended consultation period, Healthwatch Bexley had responses from **122** care home workers.

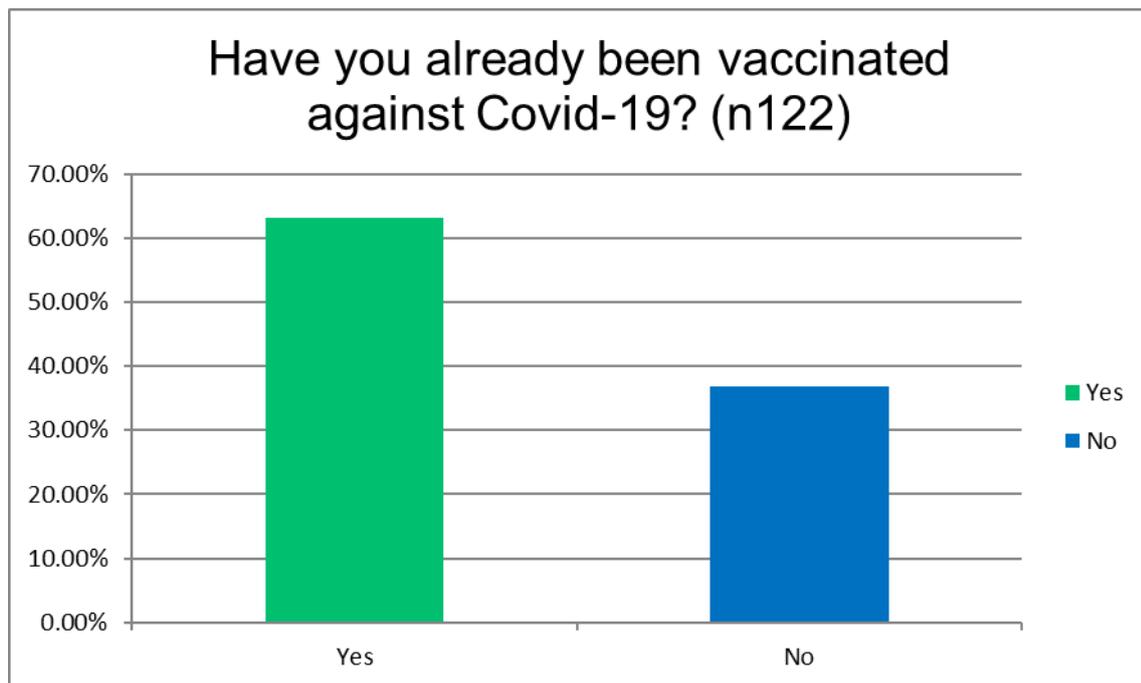
Limitations

The data shows that of the 31 care homes in the borough responses were only received from 14, with three of these homes providing a significant amount of responses. Overall, this is a lower than expected response when taking into consideration the amount of care home staff that work in the borough.

One care home experienced a glitch with the survey which was addressed as soon as it was raised. It should be noted that 88 respondents had already managed to complete the survey when this was identified. The initial end date for the survey was extended to 9th February to maximise the number of respondents.

What You Told Us

Covid-19 Vaccine Uptake Amongst Care Home Staff



77 (63%) respondents have already received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine whilst **45 (37%)** have not. Of the 45 who have not been vaccinated **39 (32%)** respondents either do not want the vaccine or are currently unsure if they will have the vaccine. The remaining 6 either had vaccination times booked or were waiting to get a date and time for vaccination.

Views of those who do not want the vaccine or are undecided about being vaccinated

39 (39%) of those who responded either did not want to be vaccinated or were unsure if they wanted to have the Covid-19 vaccine. The main areas of concern are:

- Wanting to **wait and see** what the effects of the vaccine are before making a decision. There were comments made that the vaccine is still in a trial stage and they did not want to be a 'guinea pig'.
- Concerns about the **long term effects and side effects**.
- Concerns regarding **vaccine safety**.

- A general feeling of **just not wanting the vaccine**, either because they do not believe in vaccines or have the right to choose not to be vaccinated.
- Concerns around **fertility and pregnancy**.
- A belief that they are **not at risk** or can **manage the risk**.

"I have allergies so I am afraid if I do have the vaccine I might react."

"Because I am scared of adverse effects."

"I don't need it because /I am healthy."

"I do not believe in the vaccine or any vaccines."

"I want to have more children and am worried about the effect this may have later."

"I am not interested to take part in a trial of anything."

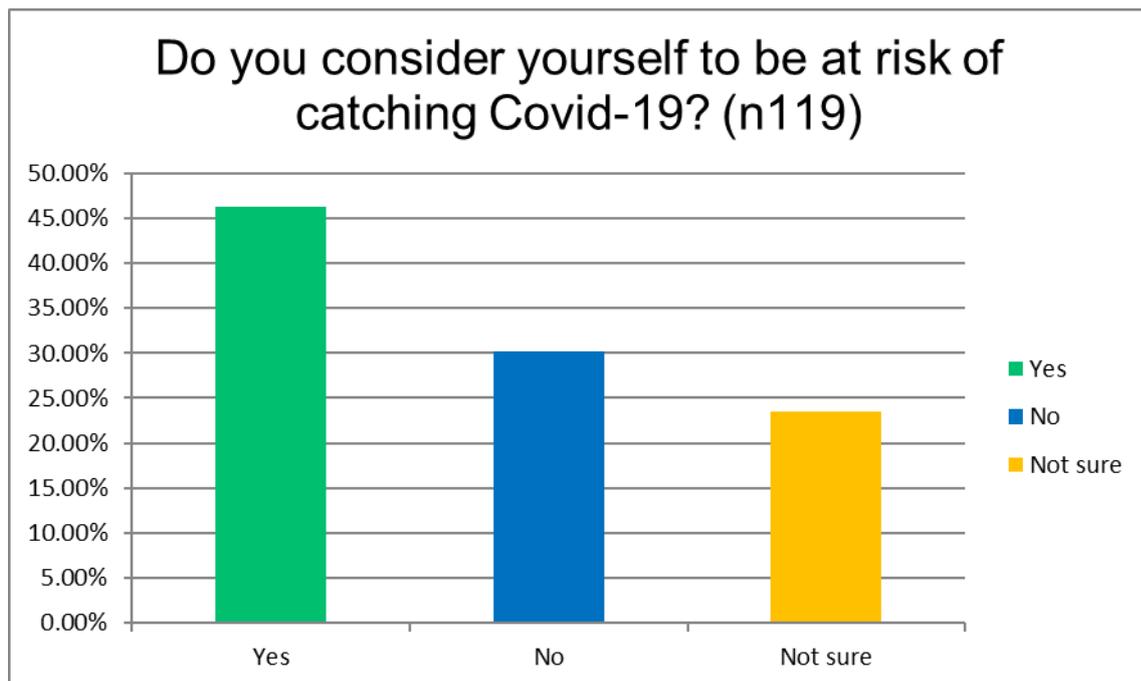
"I believe it's not necessary for now as it's in the experimental stages and I keep safe."

"I do not want to have the Coronavirus vaccine. Believe it should be my choice whether I am vaccinated or not, the vaccine is NOT compulsory."

"I am able to protect myself, I am wearing mask and washing my hands regularly. I am aware of all the information about Covid 19 and I do not wish to have the vaccine just because I am healthy as I am and with all the measures of protection I am not at riskI follow government rules"

"Unsure of side effects of having it and long term effects of the vaccination. I have also already had Covid 19 and feel I have natural antibodies."

Risk Perception of Catching Covid-19 amongst those unsure or not wanting to be vaccinated (n38).



We asked if care home workers considered themselves to be at risk of catching Covid-19. Of the 39 who were unsure or did not want to be vaccinated, **15 (38%)** did not think they were at risk and **9 (23%)** were not sure. **14 (36%)** felt they were at risk of catching Covid-19 and 1 chose not to answer the question.

The comments from those care home workers who felt they were not at risk of catching Covid-19 show they felt that by following Government guidelines, washing their hands regularly, wearing PPE and having regular testing was enough to protect them from the virus. However, there was concern that others not following guidelines may increase risk. Others felt they were protected as they had already had Covid-19 or were generally healthy and looked after themselves which gave them protection.

“I have a strong immune system. I live a healthy lifestyle, eat well and use natural medicinal herbs.”

“I am not at risk because I am very strict with all the measures of protection.”

“I feel safe at work as we take every precaution to keep ourselves safe.”

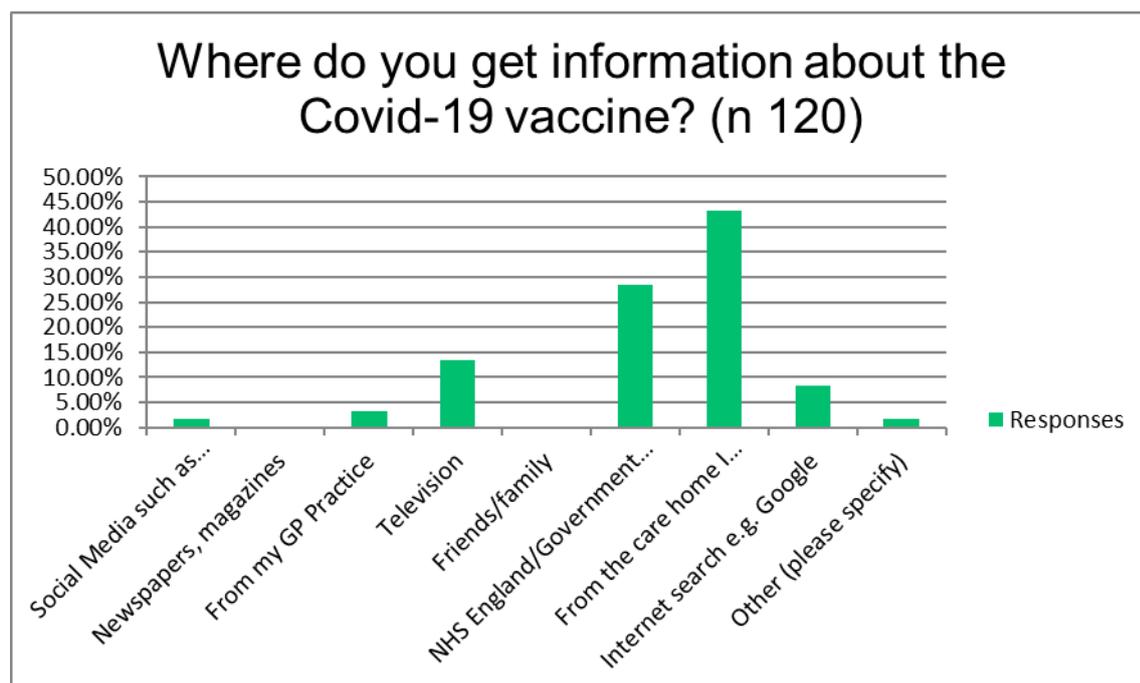
“I am rarely unwell.”

“The home is Covid free and we get tested twice a week...”

“I will continue to follow guidelines from the government about social distancing, wear mask, wash hands frequently and stay at home, only go out if necessary...”

“I have had Covid already so not sure I can get it again.”

Finding Information about the Covid Vaccine (n120)



52 (43%) of care home workers use the care home or agency they work for as the main source for finding out information about Covid-19. **34 (28%)** use NHS England and Government websites, **12 (10%)** use social media platforms or the internet and **16 (13%)** television.

Comments and frequently asked questions

Respondents wanted to know what is in the vaccine, how it was tested, side/long-term effects and if it is safe to have with pre-existing conditions or allergies and how long protection lasts after vaccination.

“Those that get vaccinated and experience adverse effects and unable to go to work, what provision is in place for themWould they be paid by place of work?”

“If the vaccine goes wrong with complications or side effects can pharmacy companies be held liable or accountable by families and individuals in the UK?”

“Will you be restricted without it....?”

“I find it very concerning that several of my own work colleagues have expressed strongly their reluctance in wanting to get vaccinated. I find this very worrying as we are working with some of the most clinically vulnerable people in society and these people need protecting. There are far too many who have expressed this opinion quite openly. Quite frankly it worries me that those of us who have taken this seriously are inevitably exposed to the consequences of what these colleagues have decided. This isn't just a problem in the Nursing home I work in, but I fear is a widespread problem across the country. Something needs to be done as Covid has sadly got into many Homes, some of whom may have to close as many residents have sadly died from the infection.”

Conclusion

This report was carried out to understand the thoughts of care home workers about receiving the Covid-19 vaccine and what the potential barriers may be.

Although the survey was well promoted by all stakeholders the overall response rate was disappointing taking into account the number of care home staff working or living in the LBB. The low response rate may be because care workers are too busy or need help, support and more encouragement to complete the survey. Those who do not want to be vaccinated may not feel happy discussing their views or having to justify the reasons why they do not want to be vaccinated. This is a problem for Healthwatch Bexley who would ordinarily arrange face to face engagement and focus groups alongside our surveys. Due to government guidelines and restrictions, we are currently having to rely on digital means of engagement which does not suit everyone and some carers may have been digitally excluded from completing the survey.

The responses from the survey identified that **32%** of care home staff had not been vaccinated and either did not want to be vaccinated or were unsure about vaccination. Barriers to vaccination included concerns about safety, the potential long term risks and side effects including concerns about fertility and the vaccine affecting the ability to get pregnant. Long term effects may not be known for some time but respondents told us they may have the vaccine, but wanted to wait to see what happens to others before they are vaccinated. Others stated that they just “don't want it” with no explanation why.

The perception of risk amongst those not vaccinated showed that only **36%** considered themselves at risk of catching Covid-19. They felt that they were healthy, looked after themselves, had a strong immune system and were not normally unwell so did not consider Covid-19 a risk. Respondents told us that by following government guidelines they felt protected enough. There was also confusion with respondents feeling protected as they had already had Covid-19 and they did not think they could catch it again.

The main source of finding information about Covid-19 and the Covid-19 vaccine for care home staff was from the care home where they work. This report has shown that specific communications aimed at care home workers could be useful locally to increase awareness about risk.

At the outset, it was felt that the response to the Covid-19 vaccine was low amongst care home staff and therefore an issue. The Healthwatch Bexley Covid-19 report of all Bexley residents, 2021 found that 18% of Bexley residents who responded to the survey said they would not be or were unsure about being vaccinated against Covid-19. In comparison, 23% of care home workers in this survey were unsure or did not want to be vaccinated against Covid-19.

Despite the small sample size of this report, the report does indicate that with only 63% of care workers having had the vaccine, the herd immunity needed to protect staff and care home residents may not be reached in Bexley care homes.

Recommendations

The following should be addressed by care home providers, The South East London CCG, Primary Care, and LBB as soon as possible to encourage vaccine uptake and overcome barriers to vaccination:

The perception of risk should be addressed as those not yet vaccinated felt less at risk of Covid-19. Communication stressing that following government guidelines and keeping yourself healthy is not enough to protect against Covid-19.

Targeted communication and events specifically aimed at care home staff in the care home setting should be provided, to answer questions and dispel myths around vaccination which may address the common barriers to being vaccinated.

References

Gov.uk (2021) Covid 19: number of outbreaks in care homes Available at: www.gov.uk. (Accessed 8th February 2021).

D Wellings (2020), 'Hesitancy about the Covid 19 vaccine is disproportionately high amongst Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.' The Kings Fund. Available at: www.kingsfund.org. (Accessed 8th February 2021).

Demographics

65 (54%) of respondents identified as White British

45 (38%) were from BAME groups

10 (8%) were from other groups

Appendix

Care Home Responses

Care Home Name	Response Rate	
	Number	%
Abbotsleigh Mews	0	0
Adelaide Care Home	1	0.82
Baugh House Care Centre	0	
Cedar Court	0	
Chapel Hill	3	2.46
Elmwood Lodge	0	
Fen Grove	0	
Groveland Park Care Home	4	3.28
Heathfield Court Care Home	18	14.75
Heritage Care at 101 Brook Street	0	
Howard Goble House	0	
Loring Hill	0	
Lyndhurst Nursing Home	2	1.64
Maples Care Home	1	0.82
Marlborough Court	0	
Meyer House Nursing & Residential Home	2	1.64
Mountview	6	4.92
Northbourne Court	0	
Oakdene House	0	
Parkview	6	4.92
Peace Manor Residential Care-Erith	0	
Riverdale Court	0	
St Mary's Nursing Home	0	
The Drive	0	
The Sidcup Care Home	7	5.74
St Aubyns Nursing Home	34	27.87
St Margarets Residential home	1	0.82
Shaftesbury Court Residential Care Home	0	
Sunrise of Frognal	2	1.64
Smyth Lodge	35	28.69
Wadeville	0	
Total responses	122	