

To: GP Practices
Community Pharmacies
HSC Trusts

23rd March 2026

Dear Colleague,

Spring 2026 COVID-19 vaccination programme

Following the [letter](#) issued from the Department of Health on 26th January 2026, we are writing to you to provide some early operational detail in relation to the Spring 2026 COVID-19 vaccination programme.

As noted in the HSS(MD) letter, enhanced services are currently being developed for the provision by GPs and community pharmacies, and these will be issued in due course.

1. Eligible cohorts & delivery model

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) issued a [statement](#) regarding the spring 2026 programme. The eligible cohorts are as follows:

- adults aged 75 years (by 30 June 2026) and over
- all residents in a care home for older adults registered with RQIA
- individuals aged 6 months and over who are immunosuppressed (as defined in tables 3 or 4 in the COVID-19 chapter of the Green Book)

In Northern Ireland, the spring programme is expected to begin on **20th April 2026**, with an indicative completion date of **30th June 2026**. Information on the delivery model and the eligible groups each expected provider will vaccinate is outlined in table 1 below:

Table 1: Main delivery partners for each eligible cohort

Eligible Cohort	Patients identified by	Patients expected to be vaccinated by
Care home residents	Care Home	Paired Community Pharmacy
Aged 75 yrs. and over	GP	GP / Community Pharmacy / Trusts
18 yrs. + immunosuppressed	GP	GP / Community Pharmacy / Trusts
5 yrs. – 17 yrs. Immunosuppressed	GP	Trust clinics
6 mths. – 4 yrs. immunosuppressed	Trusts	Trust clinics
Housebound patients	GP (referral to Trusts)	Trust teams

2. Vaccine Type

The following vaccines will be available for the Spring 2026 programme:

Table 2: Available vaccines by eligible cohort and delivery partner

Provider	Eligible Cohort	Vaccine	Characteristics	Expiry/Storage
GP Practice (HSC Trusts [†])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 yrs. and over 18+ IS* 	Spikevax (Moderna) LP.8.1 Dose: 50 micrograms (0.5mL)	Multi-dose vial (5 doses)	Thawed 30 days / 2°C to 8°C
Community Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 yrs. and over 18+ IS* Care home residents 	Nuvaxovid (Sanofi) JN.1 Dose: 5 micrograms (0.5mL)	Pre-filled syringe (single dose)	9 months / 2°C to 8°C
HSC Trusts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 yrs. and over 18+ IS* 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12-17 yrs. IS* 	Comirnaty 30 (Pfizer-BioNTech) LP.8.1 Dose: 30 micrograms (0.3mL)	Pre-filled syringe (single dose)	12 months / 2°C to 8°C
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-11 yrs. IS* 	Comirnaty 10 (Pfizer-BioNTech) LP.8.1 Dose: 10 micrograms (0.3mL)	Single-dose vial (single dose)	Thawed 10 weeks / 2°C to 8°C
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.5-4 yrs. IS* 	Comirnaty 3 (Pfizer-BioNTech) LP.8.1 Dose: 3 micrograms (0.3mL)	Multi-dose vial (3 doses)	Thawed 10 weeks / 2°C to 8°C

¹

Further information on the vaccines can be found in appendix 2.

*IS = “immunosuppressed” as defined in table 3 of the [COVID-19 Green Book chapter](#).

[†] See section 2.1 Special Population Groups regarding immunosuppressed **and** pregnancy

2.1 Special Population Groups

Pregnancy is **not** an indication for COVID-19 vaccination during the Spring 2026 campaign.

However, those who are **immunosuppressed** (as defined in the [Green Book](#)), and are pregnant, planning pregnancy, or are in the immediate postpartum period should be offered the vaccine. They should receive a suitable product according to their age.

As per table 1, immunosuppressed patients aged between 5 – 18 years and over are identified by their GP practice. Table 3 below outlines the provider and vaccine available according to patient age.

Table 3: Provider and available vaccine for the Special Population Group according to age

Immunosuppressed + pregnant OR Immunosuppressed + planning pregnancy OR Immunosuppressed + immediate postpartum period:	Vaccine:	Provider:
Adult (18 years and older)	Spikevax (Moderna) LP.8.1 Dose: 50 micrograms (0.5mL)	GP*
Young people (aged 12-17 years)	Comirnaty 30 (Pfizer-BioNTech) LP.8.1 Dose: 30 micrograms (0.3mL)	HSC Trust

The vaccines can be administered at any stage of pregnancy.

Studies following the use of COVID-19 vaccine in pregnant women have shown the vaccines to be safe and highly effective in preventing serious complications.

Vaccination against COVID-19 can take place at the same time as, or at any interval before or after, other vaccines offered in pregnancy (pertussis, influenza, RSV vaccines). The pertussis (whooping cough) and RSV vaccines should be given at the recommended gestation.

Routine questioning about last menstrual period and/or pregnancy testing is not required before offering COVID-19 vaccine.

Resources for pregnant and breastfeeding women are available from the [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists \(RCOG\) website](#).

***NB:** In the event where eligible patients (*i.e. immunosuppressed pregnant adults aged 18 years and over*) choose to get vaccinated at the Trust instead of at their GP practice, a small quantity of Spikevax (Moderna) vaccine can be allocated to HSC Trusts. Please contact pha.immunisation@hscni.net to confirm when required.

3. Ordering and Delivery Dates

Vaccines are expected to be available to order from **13th April 2026** from Movianto. Orders placed by 12pm on any working day will be delivered within 3 working days. However, in the initial stages it may take up to 5 working days to receive delivery.

*****Please ensure you are ready to accept your orders, once an order is placed with Movianto*****

We reiterate that orders should only be placed **within 2 weeks of clinics** taking place. Please note that once thawing has been initiated by Movianto, Spikevax JN.1 (Moderna) has a shelf life of 30 days. Movianto will add a new thawed expiry date.

We encourage GPs holding clinics later in the programme to order vaccines closer to the clinic dates and no more than 2 weeks before they are due to take place. This is to maximise vaccine shelf life and to avoid vaccine loss due to cold chain incidents.

In order to manage the stock appropriately and in line with incoming deliveries to NI, quotas will be placed upon orders according to the provider's previous uptake.

Due to the 30-day shelf life of the Spikevax vaccine, the majority of each practice's quota will be available to order in the first instance, with the reserve held for mop up clinics. This is to reduce over-ordering and holding large amounts of vaccines in practice. If your practice is planning a large mass vaccination clinic, or mop-up clinic, please contact PHA pha.immunisation@hscni.net and the additional vaccine can be released and available to order the next working day.

*****Over-ordering leads to vaccine waste and increased programme costs*****

- Additional uplift requests can be made to PHA and will be considered once all vaccine has been administered and recorded on VMS.
- For split practices, quotas have been divided equally between each practice. If your practice requires a different split of the quota, please contact PHA pha.immunisation@hscni.net to make amendments.
- For Community Pharmacies, uplift requests can be made to SPPG CPVS (Community Pharmacy Vaccination Service) and will be considered once all vaccine has been administered and recorded on VMS.

A guidance document for GP practices on ordering vaccine is included in appendix 1.

NB: for providers using Nuvaxovid, please note that this vaccine comes as a pre-filled syringe. Providers should therefore bear this in mind in relation to ensuring sufficient fridge space for storage of this vaccine, as it will require more space than other Covid-19 vaccines.

Nuvaxovid ten-pack carton dimensions = 154 x 46 x 123mm

4. Housebound patients

All eligible housebound patients should be referred by GPs directly to Trust vaccination teams as soon as possible, and no later than **8th May 2026**. GP's are reminded of the following:

- Referrals should include all eligible patients who are housebound and not only those aged 75 and over.
- Referrals should be for genuine housebound cases only; it is important that the Trust vaccination teams are not used as a 'mop-up' for other eligible patients who have not attended the GP practice for vaccination. Participating community pharmacies and Trust vaccination clinics are alternative vaccination providers for patients in these circumstances.

Late housebound referrals to Trusts can have an impact on the patient's ability to receive the next seasonal dose within appropriate campaign timeframes.

5. Recording Vaccinations

VMS will continue to be used to record vaccinations. When recording on VMS you must include the eligibility criteria the patient falls under. VMS has been updated to improve data quality and users will be asked to select the appropriate eligibility criteria when recording the vaccine. Accurate recording on VMS informs planning and vaccine ordering for future campaigns.

The writebacks for the COVID-19 vaccines, Comirnaty LP.8.1 for Infant and Paeds is currently live for both EMIS and Vision practices. This will ensure that vaccines recorded during the Spring campaign will be written back instantly and will be available on the respective practice's system the following day.

The following COVID-19 vaccine products are yet to be tested with EMIS and Vision practices:

- Spikevax (Moderna) LP.8.1
- Nuvaxovid (Sanofi) JN.1
- Comirnaty 30 (Pfizer-BioNTech) LP.8.1

GPs will be notified once the VMS team has successfully tested the writeback for the new COVID-19 vaccine products via email and the Alert Section visible on VMS as seen below:

HSC Vaccine Management

HSC Public Health Agency

Important updates from the VMS team
Writebacks are operational for all vaccines except:
• Vision: aIIV, IIVc
VMS should be checked before administering these vaccines.

Merlok-Z00995

Enter health and care number (optional)

Or enter at least 3 of the following

First name

Last name

Date of birth

Protect

6. Training

Training and supporting materials will be available from the PHA (via link below) prior to the start of the programme.

[Information for healthcare and other professionals | HSC Public Health Agency](#)

7. RSV

As you may know, the RSV programme is being expanded to include those over the age of 80 from 1st April 2026, following the [letter](#) issued by the Department of Health.

As per the updated [Green Book](#) guidance, the RSV vaccine **can now be safely co-administered with the COVID-19 vaccine**. GP practices may therefore wish to consider offering RSV and COVID-19 at the same appointment to eligible cohorts. GP practices should follow existing RSV vaccine ordering processes with support from their local HSC Trust Pharmacy and consider local storage capacity when planning clinics.

Referrals can also be made for co-administration of COVID-19 and RSV to HSC Trust vaccination teams, in line with usual processes.

8. PGD & VGD

A Patient Group Direction (PGD) and vaccination protocol are usually both issued to service providers in advance of COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. It is planned that a PGD will be issued as usual in advance of the Spring 2026 Campaign.

Vaccination Group Direction (VGD): The Department of Health (DoH) is working with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to jointly progress UK-wide amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations (2012) which will introduce a number of permanent legislative provisions that will replace time-bound measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and which are due to expire on 1st April 2026. Subject to approval in the UK Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly, these amendments will replace the current vaccination protocol with a new legal mechanism known as a Vaccine Group Direction (VGD). VGDs will permit specified registered healthcare professionals to clinically assess, obtain informed consent and administer vaccinations to individuals without the need for them to be prescribed, and will allow some tasks within the vaccination process, such as vaccine preparation, administration and record keeping, to be delegated to suitably trained registered and non-registered healthcare workers.

Each VGD will specifically state which tasks can be delegated and to whom and this may vary between VGDs for different vaccination programmes. It is anticipated that VGDs will be utilised in Northern Ireland to enable vaccination by **staff who would previously have been authorised under the vaccination protocol**, mostly those who are not covered under the PGD, such as healthcare assistants, pharmacy technicians etc (see current [Covid-19 protocol](#) section 2).

Given the introduction of VGDs remains subject to parliamentary and Assembly approval and the tight timescales involved, **it is possible that the new VGD will not be ready in time for programme start date of 20th April.** Therefore, service providers may be wise to postpone the use of protocol/VGD-dependent vaccinators until slightly later in the programme. We are hopeful that a VGD should be available to facilitate this from the start of May.

As a reminder, the following groups of staff will be eligible to vaccinate under the COVID-19 PGD, which should be available as usual in advance of programme start date:

- nurses and midwives currently registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)
- pharmacists currently registered with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- chiropodists/podiatrists, dieticians, occupational therapists, orthoptists, orthotists/prosthetists, paramedics, physiotherapists, radiographers and

speech and language therapists currently registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)

- dental hygienists and dental therapists registered with the General Dental Council
- optometrists registered with the General Optical Council.

9. Sessional vaccinator support

As with previous programmes, the sessional vaccinator workforce is available from PHA to support the Spring Vaccination Programme. To request support, please contact PHAvaccinesitrep@hscni.net.

The latest JCVI statement can be found at:

[JCVI statement on COVID-19 vaccination in 2025 and spring 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

Should you have any further questions please contact pha.immunisation@hscni.net

Yours sincerely,

PHA Immunisation Team






GP Practice - Guidance on Ordering Vaccines

- **Quotas:** These have been based on previous uptake (recorded on VMS). Due to vaccine availability, vaccines will not be available for all eligible individuals in your practice/clinics as this does not reflect uptake.
Please do not request vaccines for all patients invited as these will not be approved.
- **Timely ordering:** Only order vaccines 2 weeks from the date of arranged clinics. A large amount of vaccines should not be stored in fridges as this increases the risk of vaccine wastage and can create vaccine shortages if large quantities are ordered and not used. Currently there is no mechanism in N.I. to transfer stock between or to other providers. Please also note the vaccine for the spring programme has a shelf life of 30 days.
- Please plan clinics appropriately. Arrange clinics based on amount of vaccines available to your practice and only order quantities that were reflective of previous years uptake. Extra clinics can be arranged after all vaccine has been used and you can place an additional order via PHA.
- If you use all vaccines you can contact PHA. These will be reviewed on an individual basis however vaccines will only be approved when all vaccines ordered have been used and recorded on VMS.
- **Cold chain failures:** There have been a large number of cold chain failures over the past number of vaccination programmes. We must try to minimise these moving forward. Please also see the [Guidance on vaccine handling and storage in GP practices](#) for information. For Community Pharmacy specific guidance please refer to the [BSO website](#).

- **Emergency orders:** As Spikevax is a frozen vaccine, we are unable to facilitate emergency orders due to the thaw time. Practices should therefore ensure that they plan accordingly.

- **VMS Recording:** Please ensure all vaccines administered are recorded on VMS promptly. VMS is used to monitor uptake and also how we calculate quotas. It is also important that all records are up to date to ensure the completeness of the patient vaccination record and reduces the risk of double vaccination.

Appendix 2 – Visual Guide to COVID-19 Vaccines (NI Spring 2026 Programme)

Spikevax Moderna LP.8.1 50 micrograms/dose Multi-dose vial	Nuvaxovid Sanofi JN.1 5 micrograms/dose Pre-filled syringe	Comirnaty 30 Pfizer LP.8.1 30 micrograms/dose Pre-filled syringe	Comirnaty 10 Pfizer LP.8.1 10 micrograms/dose Single-dose vial (Ready to use)	Comirnaty 3 Pfizer LP.8.1 3 micrograms/dose Multi-dose vial (Dilute to use)
<p>GP (& HSC Trust*) ONLY</p> 	<p>Community Pharmacy & HSC Trust ONLY</p> 	<p>HSC Trust ONLY</p> 	<p>HSC Trust ONLY</p> 	<p>HSC Trust ONLY</p> 
<p>Eligible Cohort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 years and over Immunosuppressed 18 years+ 	<p>Eligible Cohort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 75 years and over Immunosuppressed 18 years+ Care Home Residents 	<p>Eligible Cohort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immunosuppressed 12–17-year-old 	<p>Eligible Cohort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immunosuppressed 5-11 years old 	<p>Eligible Cohort</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immunosuppressed 0.5 - 4 years old
<p>Dose 0.5mL (50 micrograms) by intramuscular injection</p>	<p>Dose 0.5mL (5 micrograms) by intramuscular injection</p>	<p>Dose 0.3mL (30 micrograms) by intramuscular injection</p>	<p>Dose 0.3mL (10 micrograms) by intramuscular injection</p>	<p>Dose 0.3mL (3 micrograms) by intramuscular injection</p>
<p>Number of doses per unit 5 (vial)</p>	<p>Number of doses per unit 1 (pre-filled syringe)</p>	<p>Number of doses per unit 1 (pre-filled syringe)</p>	<p>Number of doses per unit 1 (vial)</p>	<p>Number of doses per unit 3 (vial)</p>
<p>Dilution required? No – ready to use once thawed</p>	<p>Dilution required? No – ready to use</p>	<p>Dilution required? No – ready to use</p>	<p>Dilution required? No – ready to use once thawed</p>	<p>Dilution required? Yes with 1.1mL sodium chloride 0.9% solution for injection</p>
<p>Pack size 10 vials</p>	<p>Pack size 10 single-dose pre-filled syringes</p>	<p>Pack size 10 single-dose pre-filled syringes</p>	<p>Pack size 10 vials</p>	<p>Pack size 10 vials</p>
<p>Shelf-life (Refrigerated storage) Thawed and unopened: 30 days at +2°C to +8°C</p>	<p>Shelf-life (Refrigerated storage) 9 months at +2°C to +8°C</p>	<p>Shelf-life (Refrigerated storage) 12 months at +2°C to +8°C</p>	<p>Shelf-life (Refrigerated storage) Thawed and unopened: up to 10 weeks at +2°C to +8°C</p>	<p>Shelf-life (Refrigerated storage) Thawed and unopened: up to 10 weeks at +2°C to +8°C</p>
<p>Room temperature stability Unopened vials may be stored for up to 24 hours up to +25°C</p>	<p>Room temperature stability Data not available: remove syringes from the vaccine fridge just before use</p>	<p>Room temperature stability Unopened prefilled syringes may be stored for up to 12 hours at temperatures up to +30°C</p>	<p>Room temperature stability Unopened vials may be stored for up to 12 hours at temperatures up to +30°C</p>	<p>Room temperature stability Unopened vials may be stored for up to 12 hours at temperatures up to +30°C</p>
<p>Stability after first puncture** May be stored between +2°C and +25°C; use within 6 hours</p>	<p>Stability after first puncture** N/A</p>	<p>Stability after first puncture** N/A</p>	<p>Stability after first puncture** May be stored between +2°C and +30°C; use within 12 hours</p>	<p>Stability after first puncture** May be stored between +2°C and +30°C; use within 12 hours</p>
<p>Appearance A white to off-white dispersion</p>	<p>Appearance A colourless to slightly yellow, clear to mildly opalescent dispersion free from visible particles</p>	<p>Appearance A white to off-white dispersion</p>	<p>Appearance Prior to mixing: the thawed dispersion may contain white to off white opaque amorphous particles After mixing: clear to slightly opalescent dispersion with no particulates visible</p>	<p>Appearance Prior to dilution: the thawed dispersion may contain white to off-white opaque amorphous particles Diluted vaccine: clear to slightly opalescent dispersion, no particulates visible</p>

All products except Nuvaxovid contain Polyethylene Glycol (PEG); Nuvaxovid contains Polysorbate 80. For additional information refer to the SmPC for each vaccine product.

*HSC Trusts may access Spikevax in the event where immunosuppressed pregnant adults (aged 18 years and older) chooses to be vaccinated at the Trust instead of their GP practice. Please contact pha.immunisation@hscni.net to confirm when required.

**Use as soon as possible to minimise the risk of microbial contamination. All vaccines should be used in accordance with Green Book and PHA/HSC operational guidance.