

A Message from Parents & Carers for Vaccination Staff:
How to Work Together for a Successful Vaccination Experience

Hello, we have compiled this short help sheet for staff and volunteers working at Vaccination Centres who will be involved in administering vaccinations to children who are clinically extremely vulnerable. Our children may have physical disabilities, medical conditions &/or learning disabilities. You may already have direct experience (or be a parent carer or relative) but if you haven't, we thought it would be helpful to share this information, to hopefully give some useful guidance, answer some questions you may have and show you how committed we are to working together for a successful vaccination for our children. Here we go!

We may have laid the groundwork. - Check if there is information around the child's needs (and best approach) that's been shared in advance by the parent carer. If not, it's ok to ask if there's anything that you need to know (this can be covered during the initial baseline safety checks).

Greeting - Say hello and give your name too. Some children will be chatty, but others are quieter and some may not be able to verbally communicate. But be assured that our children are always listening and their understanding may be more than their communications suggest!

Being around our children - Follow our lead. We'll show you how to 'be' around our child. If we stay calm, it really helps our child. So it's best if a child is hearing just one voice at a time. Listen to how we talk to our child - use the same levels of language - we'll show you if language needs to be more simplified, otherwise please use age appropriate conversation. A warm but low key tone of voice is usually the best.

Invitations not instructions - Some children may be 'demand avoidant' so invite our children rather than direct them. "Shall we go this way" rather than "Follow me".

Gentle & patient - Please don't rush us, as this is more likely to induce further anxiety for us as well as our children! Some of us may already be feeling levels of anxiety about whether we're going to be able to get the vaccination done successfully. Getting to you may already have been a logistical challenge.

If things get tricky - Pause - give some space for us to rethink. We may suggest a slight tweak to what's going on, so that the job can be done.

If things get really tricky - If we, as Parent Carers say that this isn't working, or ask you to stop, please respect this and stop immediately. For some of the children you'll be meeting over the coming weeks, medical interventions and past experiences may have resulted in a high levels of anxiety or trauma. Parents & carers must weigh up how far to go within a child's safe physical and emotional thresholds. This is especially important as we will be returning for a follow up vaccination or our child may need essential interventions to manage their ongoing medical needs.

Teamwork - We don't expect you to be experts in our children - that's our job! But we are keen to help you to help us - together we can keep our children safe. Thank you for listening and for your support.

Extra information about my child/young person that you should know:
