

Compassionate Conversations: hints and tips

1. Starting the conversation

Reassure your colleague that this is a confidential conversation to gain clarity over their covid vaccination status and understanding of the impact and implications of the coming legislation, from 1 April. The following is a potential opening question:

“We’re here to have a conversation about the forthcoming legislation regarding vaccination as a condition of deployment. Our employment records show that your Covid vaccination is outstanding, and I would like to find out whether this is correct or not? It would be good to have the opportunity to hear about it from you.”

Be prepared for a variation in response, which could include:

- Their vaccinations are up to date and their ESR needs to be adjusted to reflect this (suggest contacting internal HR team), or,
- If they indicate their Covid vaccination is not up to date, follow up with further open curious questions, such as “Could we have a conversation around why that is?”, “Is there anything in particular that is currently having an impact on your decision not to take up the vaccination?”, “Do you understand the impact of the upcoming legislation?”, or, “Could I offer some suggestions for support and further information?”
- They indicate they don’t want to have this conversation with you (signpost them to your local HR team and make them aware of this).

2. Good practice for compassionate conversations

Compassionate conversations are:

- Caring and compassionate – they give space to enable employees to holistically explore their decision.
- Employee led – they enable the employee to lead the conversation and focus on the most important things to them.
- Supportive – they signpost employees to the most appropriate support.
- Non-judgemental – this helps us to stay neutral and focus on understanding other points of view.

Do not:

- Take a traditional directive and argumentative style.
- Identify and solve the problem for the individual.
- Argue or debate. Make it known that you are there to listen to their concerns.
- Rush through without listening.

3. Identifying support

Use open questions to signpost to further support offers available, such as:

- “Would it be ok to offer some suggestions for support and more information?”
- “Could I provide you with some information based on what you have shared?”

Ensure you are aware of what support is available and how the individual can access it. Your local HR team should be able to help you with this, as well as:

- Internal/National/Regional HWB/HR/Vaccine teams
- National NHS websites/information
- Internal Staff Networks

4. Next steps

Follow up with any links to signposting discussed. You can close the conversation with:

- “Given our discussion, how do you view things now?”
- “I would be happy to revisit this once you have had a chance to think more about it. Would that be ok?”

