



Department for  
Business, Energy  
& Industrial Strategy



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

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By email to: [meghilliermp@parliament.uk](mailto:meghilliermp@parliament.uk)

03 March 2021

Dear Meg,

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 February on behalf of your constituent, , , about vaccination against COVID-19.

I understand your constituent's concerns about accessible vaccination for those with sight loss.

I am pleased that the charity Guide Dogs has been jointly working with other organisations to provide guidance and support for staff administering the vaccine to blind and partially sighted people. This is yet more proof that the vaccination programme is truly a national effort at the heart of our communities, and I welcome their efforts.

Before turning to the specific concerns outlined in your letter, I would like to set out that we are doing all we can to ensure that the Coronavirus vaccination process is accessible to everyone, which includes people who experience sight loss.

The Government is committed to ensuring that people have access to accurate information about the virus and vaccines. The Department for Health and Social Care is leading extensive communications activity to reassure the public, providing advice and information to support those who have been prioritised to receive a vaccine and anyone who has questions about the vaccination process. The Department has been working closely with Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England and Improvement to provide authoritative information to the public on COVID-19 vaccination.

Turning now to the specific concerns you have helpfully outlined:

### **Information in accessible formats**

The Department has been working closely with Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England and Improvement to provide authoritative information to the public on COVID-19 vaccination. A braille version of the published leaflets is also available.

For people with various degrees of sight loss, PHE has published British Sign Language, braille, and large print versions of guidance. Further information is available here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination).

Simple text, video and audio versions are also being developed to support messaging to the blind and partially sighted, hard of hearing, disabled and BAME communities which will be published in due course.

### **Location of Vaccination Centres**

The NHS National Booking Service (NBS) is used to invite and book people in for their vaccination, and they provide information on the location of vaccine centres. Patients booking vaccination appointments can choose a site that meets their accessibility needs and transport requirements and will be informed of the distance of the site from the postcode they have entered.

The NBS letters are sent in large print (size 16-point font as standard). As well as providing an option to book on the NHS website, these letters also provide calling 119 as a booking option. 119 has BSL and text relay services.

Booking information will be available in braille, audio, larger print and easy read soon. We are currently also translating this booking information into 16 different languages. This is in addition to what GPs and Primary Care Networks are doing locally.

Vaccination Centres publish their own directions on the National Booking System, and some have their own website to support visitors. Site managers are responsible for updating accessibility and transport information about the site they manage, including longitude and latitude details, which will be made available through the booking service. Further details can be found on the following link: [digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/vaccinations/q-flow-guidance](https://digital.nhs.uk/coronavirus/vaccinations/q-flow-guidance).

### **Accessibility of Vaccine Centres**

Vaccination centres are subject to the same standards as all other healthcare services to support people with accessibility needs, including visual impairment. This includes ensuring good lighting and clear signage. In addition, marshals and staff will help people attending vaccination centres to navigate through the centre safely.

Due to variations in location, some vaccination centres may be less accessible for people with a disability. The public may choose the most appropriate vaccination service to suit their needs, which may be best met by their GP. When sent an invitation for vaccine by letter, the public are directed to the location's individual details on accessibility. The letter also provides links to guidance and advice which can be enlarged on a screen and provided in accessible formats, as well as provided in hard copy.

### **Appropriately Trained Staff for those with Visual Impairments**

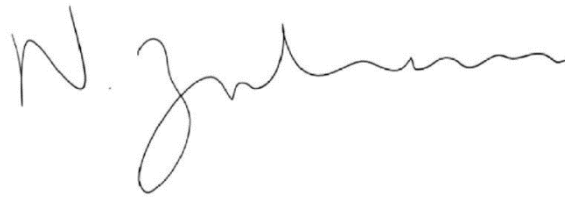
All NHS staff including those located at vaccination centres are required to undergo equality, diversity and inclusion training which equips healthcare workers with the basic skills and necessary awareness to support blind and partially sighted people. In addition, vaccination centres have shift supervisors who can oversee and instruct staff to best support patients.

Sites also have trained Royal Voluntary Service volunteer stewards who can act as way finders for all those who require assistance. Vaccination centres are also working closely with volunteer marshals and the St Johns Ambulance to provide additional support to those who may have accessible needs.

I can assure you that vaccine deployment takes account of disabled people in various care settings, as accessibility is part of the assurance process for all delivery models for the COVID-19 vaccine. All vaccination venues are and will be accessible and they meet the needs of blind and partially sighted people.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and I hope that this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', written in a cursive style.

**NADHIM ZAHAWI MP**  
Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment  
Minister for Business and Industry