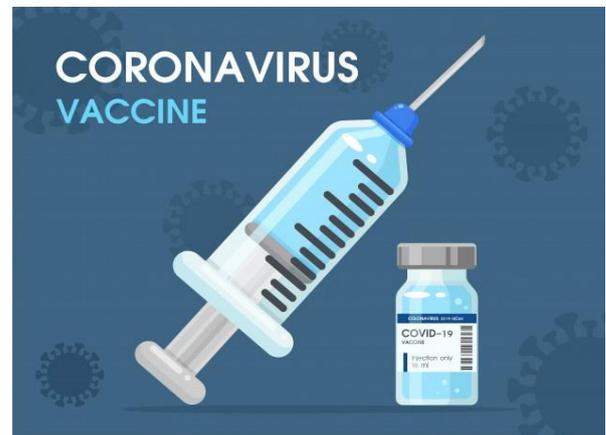


Healthwatch Cheshire Citizens Focus Panel

Views on Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations - February 2021



As part of our statutory role, Healthwatch Cheshire gather the views of local people on health, care and wellbeing. We feed back people's experiences to decision makers so that they can use people's opinions to plan, shape and improve local health and care services. More about our work can be found at www.healthwatchcwac.org.uk and www.healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk.

Healthwatch Cheshire's Citizens Focus Panel enables us to get feedback on topical issues from a set group of Cheshire residents on a regular basis. Our panel is made up of a wide range of people from all across Cheshire and continues to grow, we're always looking for new volunteers to join us. More information on how to join our panel is at the end of this report.

The vaccination programme against Coronavirus (COVID-19) began in late December and early January, with many people across the country now having received their vaccine or know someone who has. There is still a large number of people that need to receive their first or second dose of the vaccine, and so the experiences of people so far can be used to help ensure that the vaccine is rolled out smoothly as the programme goes on. Therefore, this month our survey focused on people's experiences of, and views about, COVID-19 vaccinations. The survey was shared with all 95 of our members during February, and this report provides a snapshot of the key findings from the 72 responses that we received.

To form discussions and influence decision making, this report will be shared with Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils, NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Local NHS Foundation Trusts, voluntary and community organisations, the Care Quality Commission, and our colleagues at Healthwatch England.

Have you, or any of your close family or friends, received a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination?



Out of the 72 people responses we received, 50 people had received a Coronavirus vaccination or knew a close friend or relative who had received theirs.

Coronavirus vaccination experiences

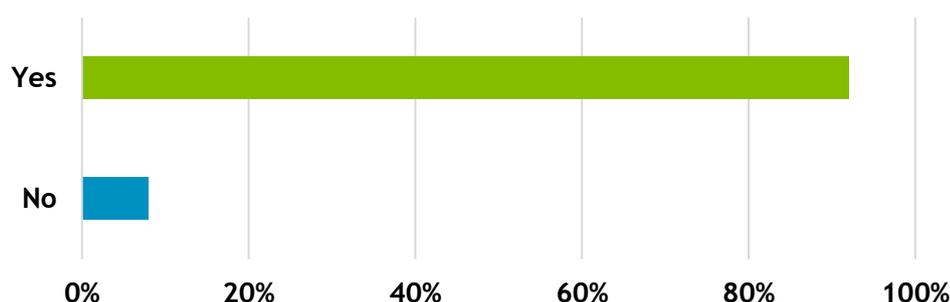
50 people told us about their experience (or that of a close friend or relative) of receiving a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination. Below is a snapshot of what they told us:



- *“My husband who is a GP received his vaccine (Pfizer/BioNtech) on the 6th January. There were no issues other than slight discomfort on the arm. Paracetamol was adequate for pain relief.”*
- *“Received the NHS letter. Offered the vaccine. selected a venue from a long list. Booked online. The centre was about 15 miles from home. The centre was a group of marquees in a supermarket. It was quite cold as we had to queue to get in to the marquee, which was heated by a portable unit. Once in the marquee, personal details were taken/confirmed. Given about 5 mins to read the advice. Some questions about general health, then taken to the vaccination area, vaccine administered quickly. Offered the opportunity to fix a date and time for the second dose, which I did.”*
- *“I had my vaccination at a site in Middlewich, I waited 5 mins to receive the jab. The whole process was very well organised.”*
- *“I received my vaccination at home. The Surgery Community Nurse called me up and arranged a time to come over and administer the jab.”*
- *“My Coronavirus jab was at Leighton Hospital. I was very impressed with the organisation and coordination of the vaccination service.”*
- *“I had my COVID-19 jab in mid-January at Poynton Civic Hall. It was all extremely well organised and showed the NHS at its best.”*

- *“My vaccine was given at Winsford Morrison’s, in a marquee in the car park. The process was well run and organised. Social distancing was good and there was no waiting.”*
- *“I received my COVID-19 jab at St Columba’s Church, Chester. It was a very smooth, organised experience, including; arrival, reception, vaccination observation room and exit.”*
- *“My mother in Congleton. She was ill for 4 days after and also had very swollen arm.”*
- *“The experience was all around positive and efficient. It took an hour in total from arriving there, queueing and getting the vaccine to a 15-minute wait before leaving.”*
- *“At my GP Practice. I received a phone call 2 days before giving me the appointment. I walked to save congestion in car park. My appointment was for 9am. I was out by 9.20. All very efficient but very quiet. My husband went 5 days earlier - the first day for vaccine locally. He waited 15 mins but mostly under cover. Again, very efficient. We were both thrilled to receive it.”*
- *“I haven’t [had my vaccination] as I’m only 68. [I know people who have had theirs at] various places in Macclesfield and Poynton. They were all impressed by the way it was organised when they went for the jabs. Some surgeries seem slower than others in calling people in for the vaccine and there seems no methodology in some cases as to who is called first. Many 73-year-olds were called before a 78-year-old. My practice, the Middlewood practice, has been very good.”*
- *“Took place at the Countess of Chester. Very well organised - took place in the Education and Training Building - free parking - orderly progression through system of booking in, having the jab and on to recovery for 15 mins. No standing in the cold and second Pfizer vaccination booked for early January. This was cancelled due to Government decision about extending the 3-week gap to 12.”*
- *“Leighton Hospital Nursing School. The process took about 45 minutes, there were separate rooms to maintain social distancing whilst waiting, receiving a vaccination and in observation. The vaccine was relatively painless and the staff and volunteers were very pleasant.”*

If you are yet to receive your vaccination, do you intend on getting one?

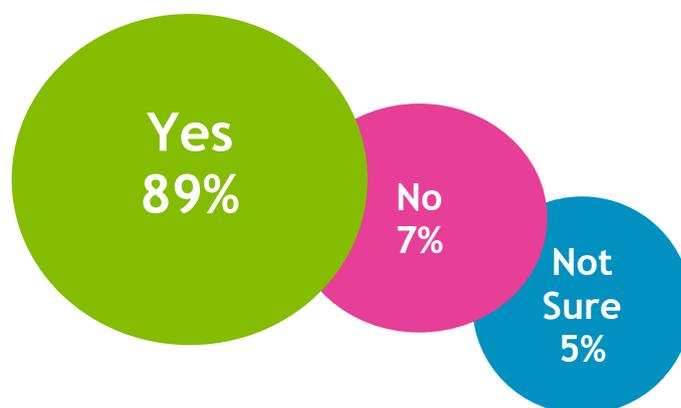


92%
intend to be vaccinated against Coronavirus

Out of 37 respondents yet to receive a vaccination personally, 34 told us that they intend on receiving one, when they become eligible. A number of people shared their views on receiving a vaccination:

- *“It’s important that we all get vaccinated to protect ourselves and each other, it’s the only way out of the current situation.”*
- *“I’ve had serious adverse reactions to jabs in the past. I also have misgivings about the vaccines safety and efficacy.”*
- *“Receiving the vaccination is 100% the right thing to do!”*
- *“I want to ensure protection for myself and my family.”*
- *“I want the vaccine because I’m over 70 and I need the help to protect my immune system against Covid.”*
- *“Taking the vaccination is an important part of our duty as a citizen and community member to reduce the burden of the pandemic on humanity.”*
- *“I will be taking it as I am aware of the benefits of doing so, however, I don’t agree with the 12-week delay between first and second jab for the Pfizer vaccine as this protocol is not consistent with the study protocol.”*
- *“Because I want to protect myself, my family and friends and other people and a vaccination goes a long way to help with this.”*
- *“Taking the vaccine will bring us closer to ending COVID.”*
- *“Because it may stop me dying.”*
- *“At present, undecided due to testing don’t want to be one of the first with my long-term condition to get it.”*
- *“Why would you not have it? Absolutely no evidence to say there are any problems with it.”*

Do you feel you have received enough information to make an informed decision about getting vaccinated?



Out of 72 respondents, 62 felt that they had received enough information to make an informed decision about receiving a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination. A further 4 people felt that they had not and 4 people were undecided at this time.



Below is what some people told us about how they came to their decision:

- *“I’ve been following the media coverage; and there’s lots of information and blogs on my GP’s website.”*
- *“I’m not sure. I’ve only been told things by people on the news, who only try to scaremonger.”*
- *“My husband had access to scientific information through his line of work as a GP. He couldn’t wait to get the vaccine.”*
- *“Vaccinations are fairly common - and this is backed by all key medical bodies in the UK.”*
- *“My Doctor called on the phone and explained why it was important for my wife to receive her vaccine to prevent escalation of her poor health. The process of the on-call doctor making a home visit to give my wife her vaccination was explained as well.”*
- *“I had kept myself well informed, the press covered the science very well and there was plenty of information available from all sorts of sources. The decision turned not on the efficacy of the vaccine but more that it was government policy that mass vaccination was the strategy for getting the virus under control. There was no plan B.”*
- *“Info about the vaccine was given after the injection - many people asked me later what they had had.”*
- *“I have read information and have friends who are Covid-19 vaccinators so have done all the necessary training and got all the information I need.”*
- *“Both current vaccines seem safe and the vaccination programme is being supported by all political sides and church leaders.”*
- *“I’m receiving loads of information, both online and via the TV.”*
- *“When I went to the hospital to receive my vaccination, I was given a leaflet explaining the process, safety and possible risks and complications. It was also a very reassuring read.”*
- *“I just haven’t received any proper information; I’ve been told nothing.”*
- *“It didn’t take much thought. We keep up to date with news and don’t believe rumours.”*
- *“I received none at the time but had kept myself informed prior to the vaccination.”*
- *“For me the test base of patients was not big enough and as an older person with a long-term condition, I or people like me would not have been asked to take part in any trial which means I am the trial. The flu jab can cause me issues so I am worried about it.”*

What information, if any, would you like to see from local healthcare services that would make the process of receiving a vaccination more convenient?



“Better choice on times and venues.”

“Support for people with visual impairment who may not have somebody who can take them, how they can access the vaccination.”



“Improved directions to vaccination sites, more signage and people on hand for those who need more support - I got lost at the hospital.”

“More information on when each group will receive their vaccine. Improved transparency on government health decisions.”



“Improved transport options, especially for older/disabled people in more rural areas and those who may struggle to access a vaccination appointment due to work and financial restrictions.”

Other responses included:

- *“Posters about the benefits of vaccination. reiterating the fact that every vaccine has similar benefits as I have heard a lot of people say that they don't want a particular brand of vaccine or so on.”*
- *“More information about how the vaccine was made and tested, in simple language. And the safety of the vaccine.”*
- *“Relative time periods to vaccination for each member of household. I have been vaccinated, my partner has heard nothing.”*
- *“It is not information that makes getting a jab more convenient. It is things like the hours of operation, the location of the vaccination venue, the absence of queues.”*
- *“I would have liked to have been put in touch with free transport list of some kind.”*
- *“Process seemed convenient enough but patients not clear about process when they arrived or who would be doing the vaccination.”*
- *“More information on the scientific data which underpins the government's COVID-19 vaccination protocol.”*
- *“From what I gather from everyone I know who has received their vaccination the process is excellent, very well organised, information is readily available, staff are*

friendly, helpful and professional so I'm not worried that it will be any different when it's my turn."

- *"Living between two care communities, receiving, consistency in giving out information would be good."*
- *"3 days after having a letter and making an appointment at Leighton, I received a phone call from my GP Practice requesting me to make an appointment. Also, at Leighton I was asked if I had brought the barcode, this was not requested at initial telephone call."*
- *"There could be more information about what happens on the day as its quite a nerve-wracking experience and you feel like cattle moving through a production line."*
- *"A way of checking that all who are eligible are on the list, and in particular the extremely clinically vulnerable. At present you're not supposed to ring surgeries so you have no way of knowing you're on any list."*
- *"It couldn't have been improved from our point of view. It would help others if they knew where the roll out was up to. People understand about the different priorities and don't mind waiting. They worry in case they have missed a phone call or lost their place. A roll out programme for the different areas would remove that concern."*
- *"It's not really about convenience it's about trust. Lots of people don't trust the government, news, scientists etc. It's the uptake among people who are reluctant that you need to work on. Honesty (in government and public services) would be a good place to start. Showing people that you've got their back would really help. Health literacy would help so that people learn to understand information being provided. No more leaflets or translation services PLEASE! Listen to the people, don't try to educate them - as though their fears are dumb-witted. Most people have a valid reason if they don't trust. Hear them and respond respectfully."*
- *"More indication as to when you are likely to receive the vaccination - as someone of high risk still no contact as to when I am likely to be called in for vaccination."*
- *"Nothing. I think locally they are doing an amazing job the clinics are well-manned and the volunteers great (from social media feeds), so doing a great job."*
- *"It's needs to be at my GP or local pharmacy. We had to drive 30 miles for my husband's vaccination, through flooded roads. We were reluctant to postpone because of the urgency we feel is necessary for everybody in the country and the rest of the world to receive this vaccine."*
- *"Clear instructions: where, when, etc. And for my husband who carries an Epi-pen (for anaphylactic) knowledge of and acknowledgement of this and that appropriate arrangements made."*
- *"Details of where we are with getting it and what process they have put in place. It would be fantastic to get some information from our surgery but alas there has been nothing which is not unexpected as channels of communication are rarely used."*

What would you say to a family member, friend or neighbour about getting the vaccine?

There was a majority sentiment of people encouraging others to get their vaccination. 32 respondents said that they would tell somebody to “get it”, “do it”, “have it”, or “go for it”. Others talked about the importance of protecting your self and others, the vaccine as a way to be able to return to a more ‘normal’ life and see family and friends. It was also mentioned how easy and painless the vaccination process is. Comments included:

“Get vaccinated as soon as you can!”

“Protect yourself, your family and the NHS.”

“The vaccine is essential to keep everyone safe.”

- *“That they are doing a great job taking the vaccine. And that they should inform the NHS if they have any side effects or signs of COVID immediately. I would answer any doubts regarding the efficacy of vaccinations or signpost them to people or resources who can.”*
- *“Get the vaccine, we will soon be able to see our family again and we can stop worrying about the effects of Covid on our health.”*
- *“This is essential to stop the spread of the virus.”*
- *“The security and feeling of being safe outweighs any qualms.”*
- *“Important to get one.”*
- *“Better to have hope than fear.”*
- *“Weigh the pros and cons.”*
- *“Ignore fake news and reports on problems and side effects.”*
- *“You must get vaccinated, it’s easy and vital for everyone’s safety.”*
- *“Have the vaccine but be wary of the side effects that aren’t mentioned in the media.”*
- *“It’s safe - it’s sensible.”*
- *“As a black person, I am aware that some black people I have spoken to are reluctant to have the vaccine for various reasons, primarily safety fears. My husband and I have so far managed to reassure some family and friends, especially when they have found out that my husband got his first job and has been fine. As a healthcare scientist by training, my advice to anyone is for them to get the right information, to consider the benefits, to assess the risks, then make an informed decision.”*

- *“Get it as soon as it is offered.”*
- *“I would encourage them to take the opportunity as soon as they were invited.”*
- *“Very simple and easy with nothing to worry about.”*
- *“Read the information from trusted sources, speak to your GP surgery if you have any concerns. You can’t make people have the vaccine but I would encourage as much as I can.”*
- *“Not to worry about it. You don’t get that much info during the actual process but there are people there if you need help.”*
- *“Do not hesitate get it done.”*
- *“I think provide some scientific information particularly to those who are sceptical. Specifically, about side effects, the risk of death and how the vaccine was tested.”*
- *“You need to get vaccinated.”*
- *“Recommend that they have it.”*
- *“Go for it, was quick and easier a positive step forward.”*
- *“Don’t think about it, go for it.”*
- *“Do it otherwise we and the rest of the world will never return to normal.”*
- *“It doesn’t hurt and after effects are minimal - similar to the normal flu jab.”*
- *“It depends on the person but I’d stress it’s not only for ourselves but for everyone including people who are unable to take it and people who are really vulnerable.”*
- *“It is essential to protect us all.”*
- *“Go for it as soon as you are invited.”*
- *“It’s quick and well organised and essential to help beat the coronavirus.”*
- *“Get the vaccination as soon as you can.”*
- *“You should have it to keep you and your family safe.”*
- *“As with my mother-in-law, get it. My only reservation is its impact on my long-term condition.”*
- *“Please have it as soon as possible.”*
- *“Have it and be thankful.”*
- *“I would encourage them to have the vaccination.”*
- *“It is the best way to avoid catching the virus.”*
- *“Get vaccinated to protect yourself and family and to protect the NHS.”*
- *“You must get it as soon as you are offered one.”*
- *“We need to get the county up and running again on a more normal footing.”*

- *“It is important to have the vaccination to protect them and other people. The process was simple and efficient. Minimal after effects.”*
 - *“Not just for you but for everyone.”*
 - *“Please have the vaccination. It will help to keep us all safe.”*
 - *“Get vaccinated, this is the best hope to end the Coronavirus pandemic and see your loved ones again.”*
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Do you have any other concerns regarding health and care at this time?

- *“I feel that the government needs to do more in the area of raising awareness of the benefits of COVID-19 vaccination among the BAME community, listening to people's fears and concerns and allaying those concerns.”*
- *“Dental care is much reduced which could lead to long waiting lists in future.”*
- *“My real concern is the impact on waiting lists for treatment or for surgery. The consequential knock-on effects.”*
- *“The situation in Mental Health. Lockdowns are causing increased loneliness and isolation.”*
- *“People should have been reminded to continue to take all precautions until clearly told otherwise.”*
- *“Difficulty in contacting GP surgery by phone.”*
- *“More information on how you'll be contacted [to receive a Covid vaccination], it would be a great help and hopefully stop people getting scammed.”*
- *“We need stricter adherence to social distancing rules, publicised and enforced”.*
- *“I'm concerned about a lot of services being put onto the 'backburner' this may cause some people issues down the line.”*
- *“I think there is an increased burden on health care professionals. There is also a risk of certain vulnerable groups of communities not getting proper or continued help due to former issue. There is also a huge wave of misinformation about the vaccine.”*
- *“The history of the Government's management of the pandemic is littered with false starts, mistakes. ridiculous promises and U-turns. The thing that has been going amazingly well has been the roll out of the vaccines. So far it has been a stunning success. My real concern is the impact on waiting lists for treatment or for surgery. The consequential knock-on effects will leave many people in unnecessary pain and a shortened lifespan.”*
- *“I am receiving excellent healthcare at this time.”*

- *"I had a slight reaction to the injection in that I have bright red patch on my arm that lasted 72hrs."*
- *"I'm concerned about some people not believing the vaccine is safe, where is their sense of community?"*
- *"I wish my surgery would use the communication systems available to keep me informed of what's happening and progress in dealing with the backlog of issues as well as Covid progress."*
- *"I have received timely and appropriate service from my GP practice since the start of the pandemic as have members of my family."*
- *"Just around consistency of information. GP Practice have been asking people to ring the booking line for appointments but this was taking up to 45mins, when you get through booking is for a different age range to what the GP Practice are saying."*
- *"Doctors and pharmacies don't care about anything that isn't a major ailment."*
- *"Too many people seem to be catching the virus in hospital and yet it's essential that those who need hospital treatment receive it as soon as possible."*
- *"The NHS is understandably overwhelmed at present and doing the best they can but increasing waiting times should have been sorted out long ago to prevent an even longer waiting time for consultations, treatment, operations."*
- *"Wondering when NHS dentists will resume routine check-ups. Private dentists seem to be doing them."*
- *"Delays in routine dental check-ups for my children. They don't pay for dentistry and have not been given a check-up for well over a year."*
- *"Dental care is much reduced which could lead to long waiting lists in future."*
- *"I have had to use some services and have been surprised by how well most of it has worked."*
- *"Long term impacts of lack of human interaction for children and teenagers."*
- *"Anxiety and fear among people who have fallen victim to conspiracy theories and the loss of friendships and support because of it."*
- *"Need for human connection among people who live alone."*
- *"I think the health professionals are doing their best under the circumstances."*
- *"Only to say had a recent GP appointment, this was a phone call which was really good, much better than having to get there and park and all that, it was really easy and didn't impact on my working day, so great."*

Summary

A large number of panel members had either received a Coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination or knew a close friend or family member who had. All respondents who had received a vaccine commented on how well organised and efficient the process was, especially in relation to the helpful and considerate nature of staff at a number of vaccination sites. Some people felt a slight pain or discomfort in their arm post-vaccine, but all told us this feeling receded in a short amount of time with rest or mild off-the-shelf pain relief. The vast majority of respondents who had not received a vaccine told us they intended to get theirs as soon as it became available. A few members said they were vaccine-hesitant, mostly citing concerns around how the vaccine will affect long term conditions. Most told us they felt they had received enough information to make an informed decision about receiving a vaccine. We were told that communication could be improved, particularly with regard to the logistical arrangements and what to expect when receiving a vaccine.

In most cases, respondents felt prepared to receive the vaccine, with the right information to hand, or would recommend the vaccine to family and friends.

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Citizens Focus Panel?**

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