**Vaccination**

The COVID-19 vaccine has now been offered to most people in the over-50 age groups, as well as care home residents, health and care staff, and the clinically vulnerable. It is now being extended by age group to people under 50.

Even if you and the people you work with have been vaccinated, you should continue to follow your school’s safety measures. The vaccine provides increased protection, but these measures are still necessary.

If your employer is asking you to reduce safety measures after being vaccinated, you should [contact your UNISON branch](https://branches.unison.org.uk/) for advice.

**Can I get paid time off to go for my vaccination?**

If you are unable to book a vaccination appointment outside of working hours, your employer does not legally have to give you paid time off to attend. However, employers are advised to support staff as much as possible to get vaccinated. For example, the latest advice from the NJC says:

*“The NJC urges all employees who are called forward to be inoculated to ensure that they take up the opportunity as soon as possible. Employers are asked to ensure that every possible effort is made in providing employees with reasonable time off in order for them to receive their jab. This guidance applies equally to when subsequent doses of vaccination will need to be administered.”*

UNISON believes that employers should offer staff paid time off as part of the national effort to offer all adults the vaccine as widely and quickly as possible.

**If I have to take time off because of a reaction to the vaccine can my employer class it as sick leave?**

Employers can categorise time off due to an adverse reaction to the vaccine as normal sickness absence.

Current NJC guidance on this issue states that the usual sickness policy should apply:

*“An employee who self-certifies, or produces a sick note, for any COVID related sickness absence (including an adverse reaction to a vaccination) should receive pay and leave in accordance with their length of service so that the usual provisions of the sickness scheme apply.”*

However, Acas guidance on the vaccine recommends paying full pay if staff are off sick with vaccine side effects and this type of absence should not count in sickness records or towards any trigger system in their absence management policy.

UNISON supports this recommendation, so that staff are not deterred from getting vaccinated to avoid disciplinary action or having to work while feeling unwell. In the interests of encouraging staff to get the vaccine, any vaccine-related absence should be treated sympathetically. If you are concerned about a potential reaction to the vaccine and how this may affect your sickness absence please [contact your branch](https://branches.unison.org.uk/) for advice.