

**Covid-19 Vaccinations - Survey Report.  
February-March 2021.**



## Summary:

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees opened a survey to local people gather their views regarding the Covid-19 vaccinations. To gain this information we conducted a Covid-19 vaccination survey on Survey Monkey. Engagement with Healthwatch Champions, the use of social media, telephone and email contact with support services in the local area enabled us to promote the survey. Seventy-two people completed the survey. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees will use the findings from the Covid-19 vaccination survey to inform future public engagement, work plans and to share information with the public and other services and organisations.

The overall findings of this engagement, based on what people have told us, show:

- That most people have very positive views of the Covid-19 vaccinations and vaccinations in general, and if they had not already received the Covid-19 vaccination then they would.
- Available appointment times and the distance and the location of the vaccine sites are factors that could possibly prevent vaccine uptake.
- Those who would refuse the vaccine told us that they would want to wait until others had it first or they believe that the vaccine isn't safe. Some people were unsure why they would not want it.
- The main reasons for having/wanting to receive the Covid-19 vaccine are to protect themselves and others, to help society get back to normal, and to help the economy.
- People have been able to access information about the Covid-19 vaccinations from a range of different sources.
- Information has been positive toward a Covid-19 vaccine.
- Information on the Covid-19 vaccine has been communicated clearly and effectively from the NHS/Government.

Further findings and additional information addresses:

- Confusion and concerns around vaccine dosing schedule.
- Vaccine priority for carers and other front-line health and social care workers.
- Concerns of misinformation surrounding impact of the Covid-19 vaccination on the fertility of young people.
- Disparities between the views of Covid-19 vaccinations of people from BAME communities and future engagement and work to address inequalities.

## Introduction

Local Healthwatch have been set up across England to create a strong, independent consumer champion with the aim to:

- Strengthen the collective voice of citizens and communities in influencing local health and social care services to better meet their needs.
- Support people to find the right health and social care services for them by providing appropriate information, advice and signposting.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees works with local people, patients, service users, carers, community groups, organisations, service providers and commissioners to get the best out of local health and social care services. This doesn't just mean improving services today but influencing and shaping services to meet the needs of the local communities tomorrow.

Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees is steered by a Board of volunteers, commissioned by the Local Authority and accountable to the public. Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees are the only non-statutory body whose sole purpose is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak-out on their behalf. The service is managed by Pioneering Care Partnership, a leading third-sector charitable organisation aiming to improve health, wellbeing and learning for all.

Healthwatch has:

The statutory right to be listened to;

- Providers and Commissioners must respond to Healthwatch within 20 days of submission of requests for information or reports.
- The statutory power to Enter & View publicly funded health and social care services.
- A statutory seat on the Health and Wellbeing Board.

## **Background:**

As a result of the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic, the UK has been under variable lockdown and social distancing measures since March 2020. These measures aim to monitor and control the spread of Coronavirus to help protect the NHS and save lives. Other measures have included test and tracing, self-isolation, shielding for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, wearing face coverings indoors in public places, handwashing, cleaning and ensuring ventilation of indoor spaces.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 the biggest vaccination programme in the UK's history began. The Department of Health and Social Care have stated that vaccinations are the foundations of our way out of the pandemic and the best way to protect people from Covid-19, potentially saving thousands of lives.

By the 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 three vaccinations had been 'approved' by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), after meeting the MHRA standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. The UK Government have 'authorised' Pfizer/BioNTech and the Oxford/Astra Zeneca Vaccine.

According to the Department of Health and Social Care, by the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021 the vaccination programme aims to have offered a first vaccine dose through the NHS to everyone in the top four priority groups as identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI); (See Appendix (1) for top four priority groups, and subsequent priority risk groups, and Appendix (2) for clinical conditions list).

The COVID-19 vaccination is administered as a 2-dose schedule given as an injection into the upper arm. The second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine may be given between 3 to 12 weeks following the first dose (JCVI,2020). The second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine may be given between 4 to 12 weeks following the first dose (JCVI,2020). The JCVI concluded that the first dose of either Pfizer/BioN or Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine provides substantial protection from severe Covid-19 disease within 2-3weeks of vaccination. The data indicates high efficacy from the first dose of both Pfizer-BioNTech and AstraZeneca vaccines (JCVI, 2020). To maximise the short-term impact of the programme, the JCVI advised initial priority of the delivery of the first dose to as many eligible individuals as possible over the delivery of a second vaccine dose.

In Stockton-on-Tees, the Covid-19 vaccine is being offered in some hospitals and local vaccination centres run by GPs. The NHS currently states that people will be informed when it is their turn to have the vaccine that people are not to contact the NHS before then. Since the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021 the vaccination programme has progressed. On the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021 22 million people had received the first dose and over a 1 million people had received the second dose.

In March 2021 the vaccination programme had progressed with vaccinations being offered to the following groups within the Stockton-on-Tees area:

- People aged 55 and over
- People at high risk from coronavirus (clinically extremely vulnerable)
- People who live or work in care homes
- Health and social care workers
- People with a condition that puts them at higher risk (clinically vulnerable)
- People with a learning disability
- People who are the main carer for someone at high risk from coronavirus.

### **Methodology:**

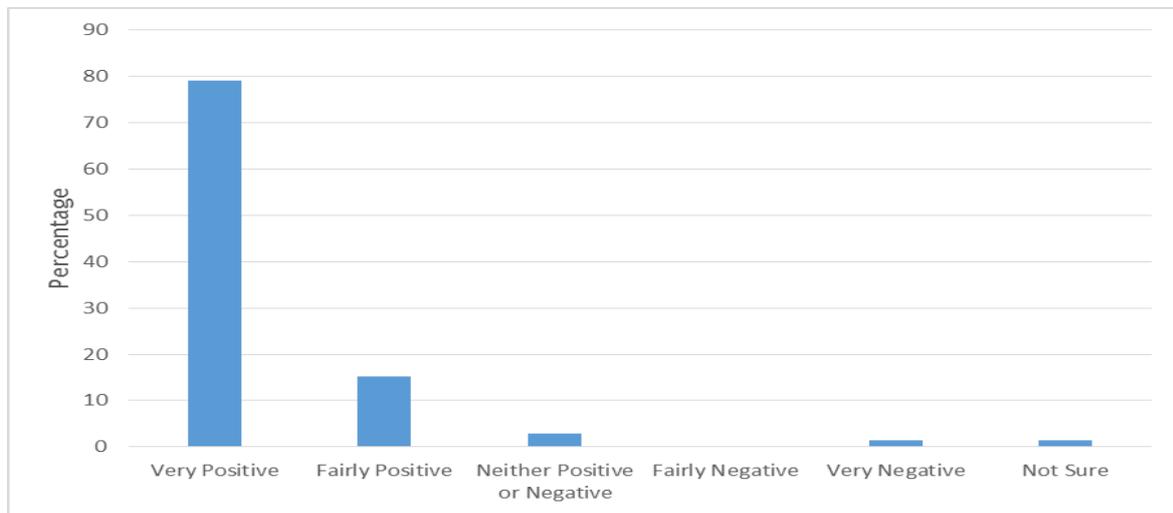
Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees opened a survey to the local people to find out about their views of the Covid-19 vaccinations. The aim of the survey is to:

- Find out why people have decided to get the vaccine,
- Find out, why those who have not already had the vaccine want, or do not want, to receive it.
- Discover the sources and the nature of the information relating to the vaccinations, and
- Obtain view of the communication of the vaccine roll out from NHS/Government.

The Coronavirus/Covid-19 vaccination survey was published on Survey Monkey and was open to the public between 5<sup>th</sup> February-8<sup>th</sup> March 2021, receiving 72 responses. The survey was made available via a link on the Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees website. It was also posted on Healthwatch social media platforms, and Healthwatch Champions were engaged to support and promote the survey to local people. We contacted a wide range of support services within the Stockton-on-Tees area via email or telephone, with an aim to create an awareness of the survey and to include harder to reach groups and individuals.

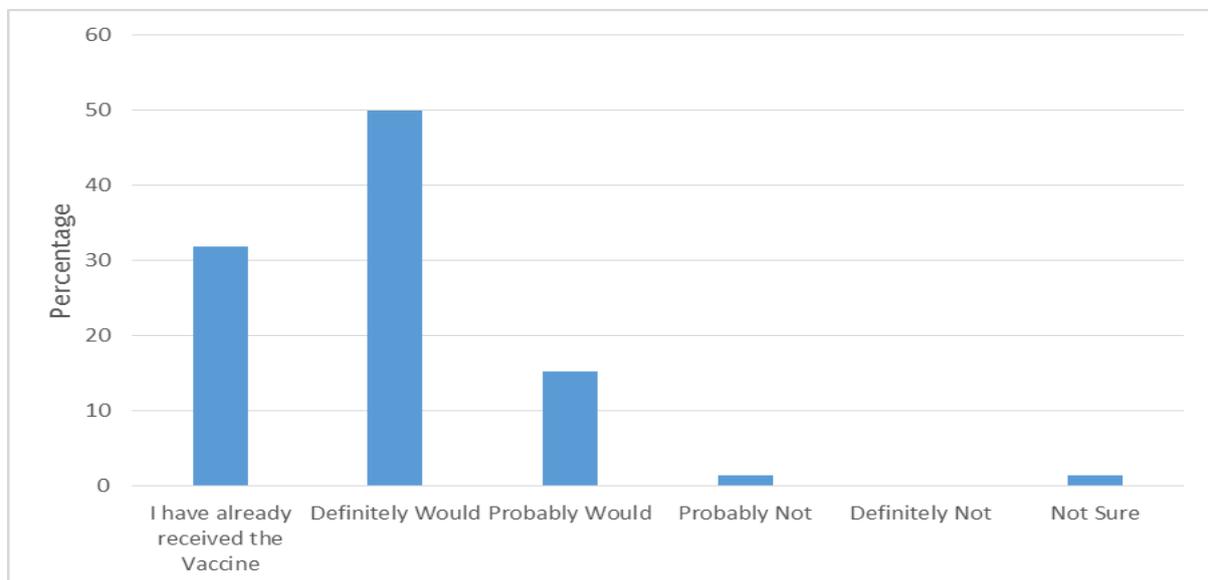
## Findings:

**Question 1. Thinking of vaccinations in general, such as those given for flu, polio or tetanus, is your view of vaccinations...**



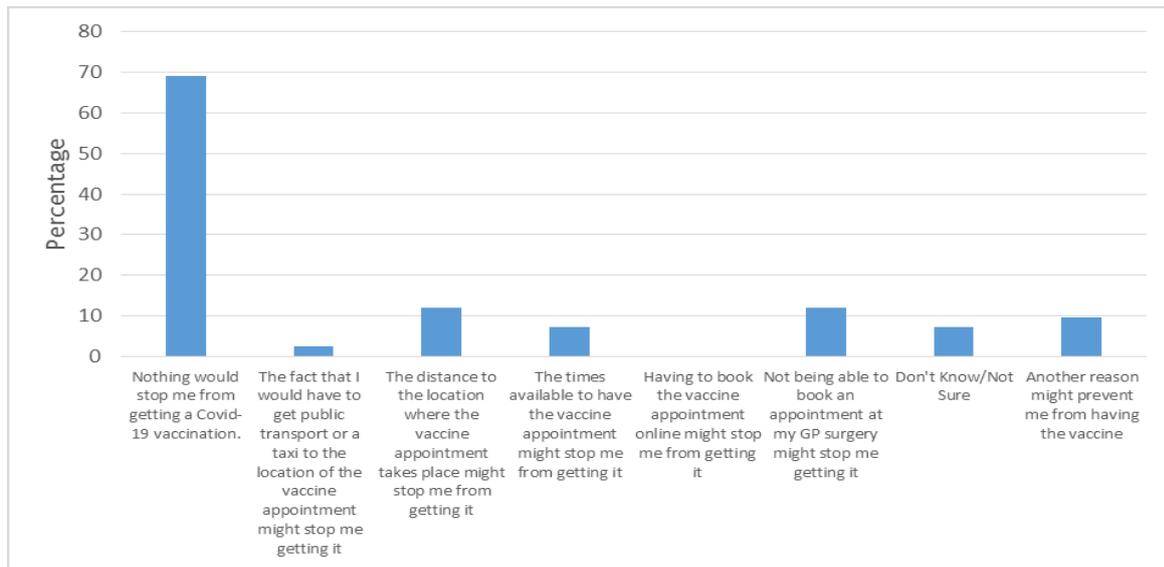
Nearly 80% of people told us that they have very positive views of vaccinations in general, followed by 15% of people having fairly positive views.

**Question 2. If you were offered a vaccine against Covid-19 (Coronavirus), and at no charge through the NHS, how likely would you be to get vaccinated?**



50% percent of people told us they would definitely get the vaccine against Covid-19 and over 15% probably would. Over 30% of people have already received the vaccine.

**Question 3. If you want to be vaccinated, is there anything that may stop you from receiving a vaccine when it is made available to you?**



Nearly 70% of people who had not already had the vaccination told us that nothing would stop them receiving it. However, distance/location of the vaccination site and not being able to book an appointment/availability for appointment times, were given as possible reasons for people not accepting it.

**Question 4. What are the main reasons you want the Covid-19 vaccine?**

People told us that the main reasons why they want the Covid-19 vaccine are to protect; family and friends (83%), themselves (69%), those in the vulnerable/high risk groups (64%) and the NHS (64%). People also told us that they would receive the vaccine to help society in general get back to normal (81%) and to help the economy get going again (62%). Sixty two percent of people also told us that they believe it is the responsible thing to do. Those who responded also told us that wanting to visit older family members at home/in a care home whilst keeping them safe (29%) is another reason for wanting the vaccine.

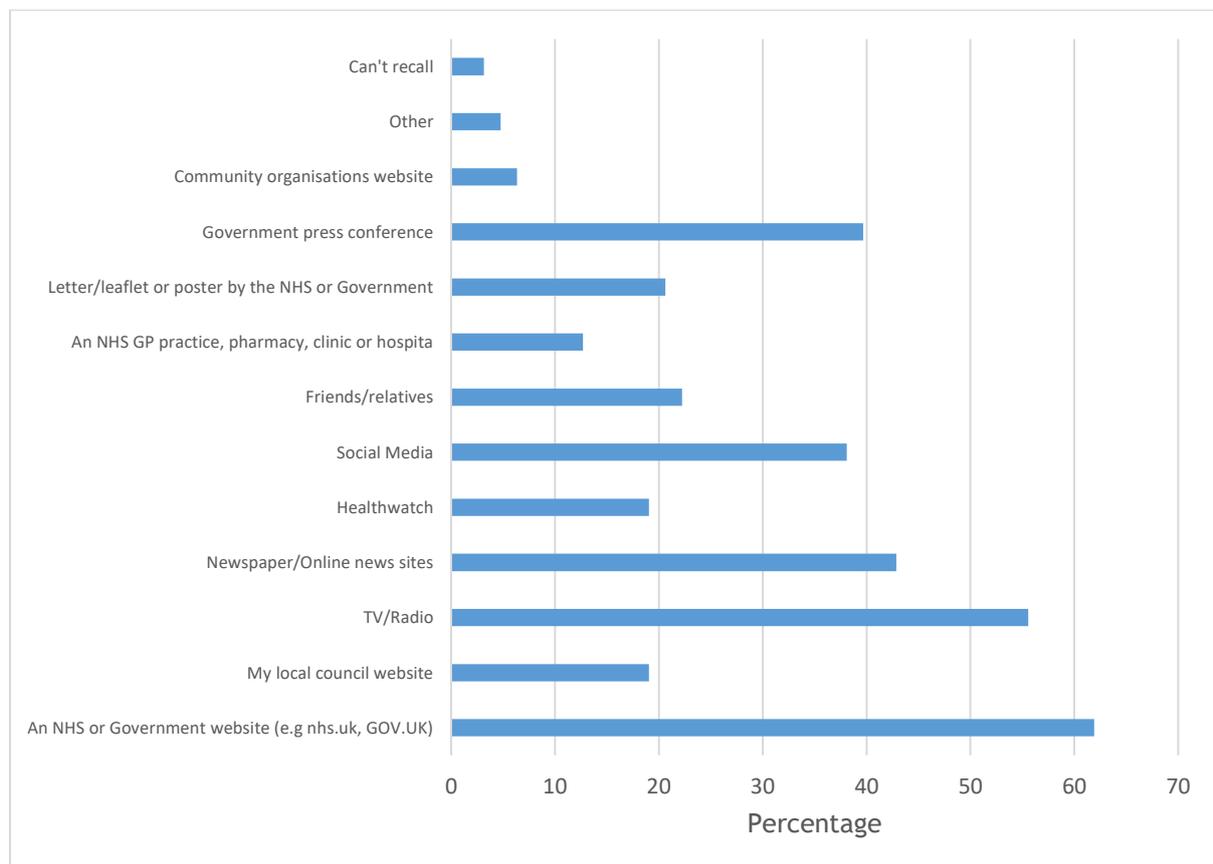
**Q5. If you would not want to be vaccinated, what would be your motivation for refusing the vaccine?**

Seven people told us that they don't know or are not sure why they would refuse the vaccine. Other reasons for refusing the vaccine include; wanting to wait until others had it first (5 people), believing that the vaccine is not safe (4 people), coronavirus doesn't pose enough personal risk (2 people), the ingredients used in the vaccine (1person), and health reasons (1person).

### Question 6. Which of the following are reasons why you decided to be vaccinated against Covid-19?

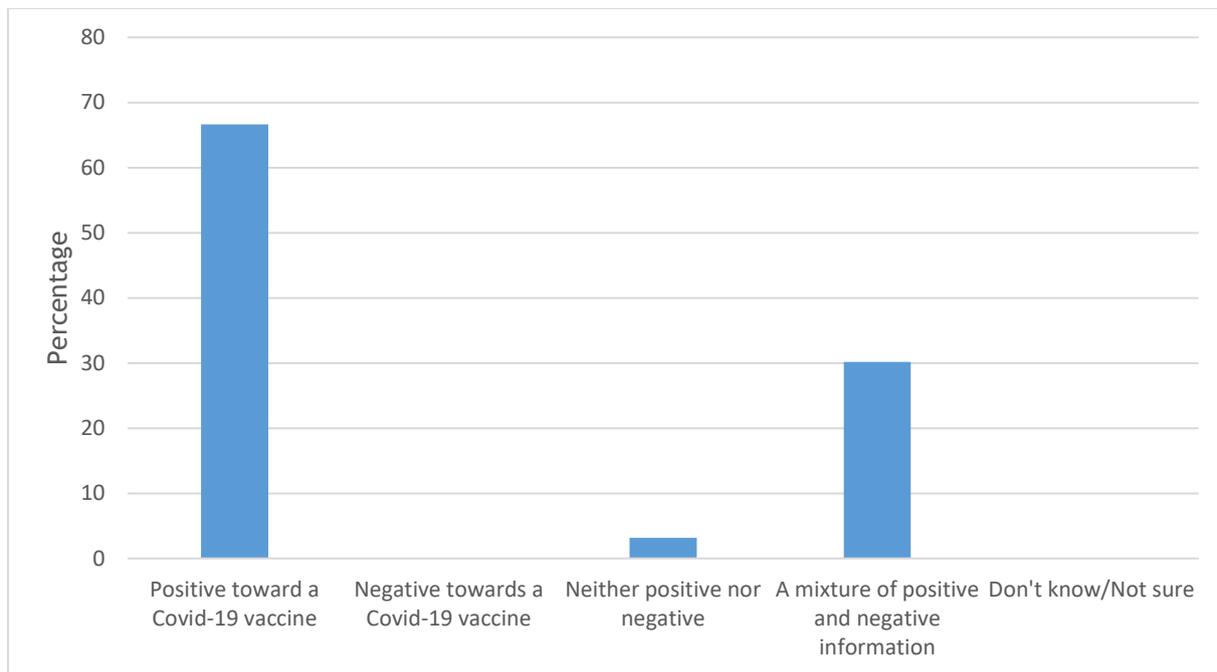
People told us that the main reasons for deciding to be vaccinated against Covid-19 were to protect; themselves (81%), family and friends (79%), those in the vulnerable/high risk groups (67%), and the NHS (54%). People also told us that they decided to be vaccinated to help society in general get back to normal (74%) and to help the economy get going again (58%). Fifty eight percent of people also told us that they believe it is the responsible thing to do. Other reasons that that people gave for being vaccinated include wanting to visit older family members at home/in a care home whilst keeping them safe (28%), understanding the seriousness of the virus due to having a family member/friend who has been ill or died from Covid-19(23%), and the recommendations from medical/healthcare professionals(21%).

### Q7. Where have you mainly seen or heard information about a Covid-19 vaccine recently?



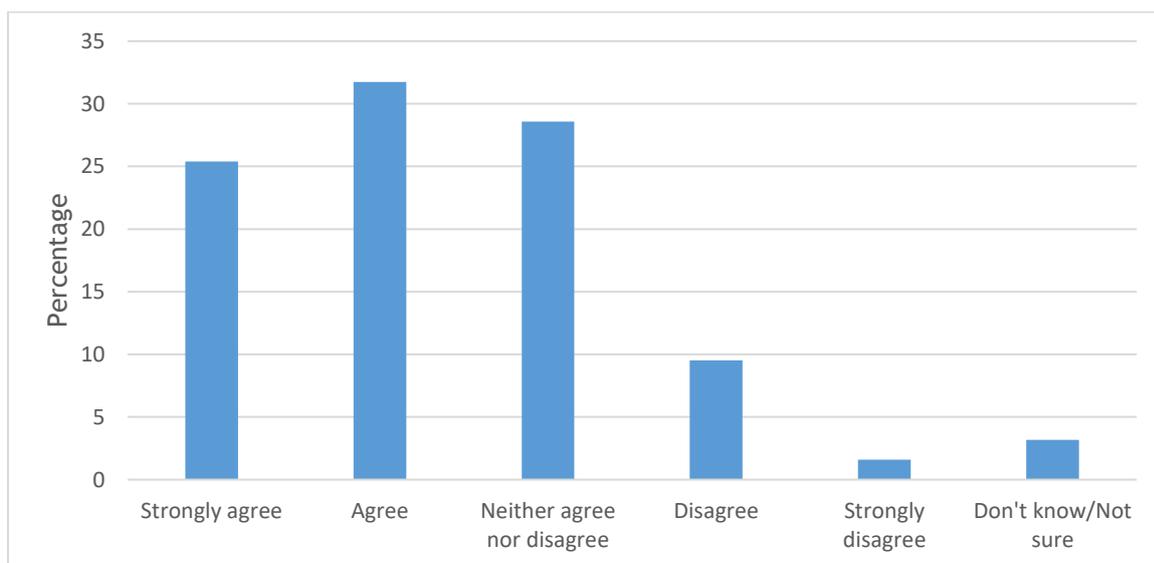
People have told us that they have seen and heard information about the Covid-19 vaccination from a range of different sources. The main sources of information have been the NHS/Government websites, TV/radio, newspaper/online news sites, Government press conference and Social Media.

**Question 8. Overall, was the information that you have seen or heard recently...**



The majority of people told us that the information that they had seen or heard recently was positive toward a Covid-19 vaccine (67%), while 30% felt there was a mixture of positive and negative information.

**Question 9. Do you agree that information from the NHS or the Government about the vaccine and its roll out has been communicated clearly and effectively?**



People told us that they agree (32%), strongly agrees (25%), neither agree nor disagree (29%) that the information from the NHS/Government about the vaccine

and its roll out has been communicated clearly and effectively. However over 10% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Question 10. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about Covid-19 vaccinations?**

People have reported that they've experienced confusion and concerns in relation to where and when they are to receive the first vaccine and the time scales between the first and second dose.

Informal carers and those who are self-employed providing community services have expressed disappointment in the lack of support and information in relation to them being able to receive the Covid-19 vaccine:

*'No information or vaccination support for self-employed whom work in the community visiting vulnerable people. All information relates to NHS or care homes/ care providers not individual self-employed.'*

*'I am extremely disappointed that informal carers haven't been given more priority regarding the vaccine rollout I have been my sons main carer for almost 30 years. He has been at home for almost a year, with no respite'.*

## **Summary of Findings:**

Overall people told us that they have very positive views of the Covid-19 vaccinations and vaccinations in general. People have reported that if they had not already received the Covid-19 vaccination then they would. Although the majority of people told us that nothing would stop them getting the vaccine, factors that would possibly prevent vaccine uptake were given as the appointment times available and the distance and location of the vaccine site. For those who responded that they would 'refuse' the vaccine if it was offered, a majority told us that they are not sure why they would, they would want to wait until others had it first, or due to belief that the vaccine isn't safe.

Reasons for having/wanting to receive the covid-19 vaccine are for the protection of themselves and others, to help society get back to normal, and to help the economy. Other reasons for having/wanting to receive the vaccine include; believing that it is the responsible thing to do, wanting to visit older family members at home/care home, having a family member/friend who has been ill or died from covid-19 and recommendations given by medical/health care professionals.

People have told us that they have seen and heard information about the Covid-19 vaccinations from a range of different sources. The majority of people told us that the information that they had seen or heard recently was positive toward a Covid-19 vaccine and that information from the NHS or the Government about the vaccine and its roll out has been communicated clearly and effectively.

## **Additional Findings and Further Information:**

People have shared their expression of confusion and concern in relation to where and when they are to receive the first vaccine and the time scales between the first and second dose. Although it wasn't elaborated within the survey responses, a possible factor contributing to the confusion and concern could be the changes to the dosing schedule. On the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 the UK Chief Medical Officers announced that the interval between the first and the second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech and the Oxford/AstraZeneca should be extended from 3-4 weeks up to 12 weeks. Given that the first dose of the vaccines provide substantial protection from severe Covid-19 disease (JVCI,2020), the JCVI advised the UK Government that initial priority of the delivery of the first dose over the delivery of a second dose to maximise the short term impact of the programme (JVCI, 2020).

Informal carers and those who are self-employed providing community services have also expressed disappointment in the lack of support and information in relation to them being able to receive the Covid-19 vaccinations. In Stockton-on-Tees, since March 2021, the vaccination has been offered to people who are the main carer for someone who is at high risk from Coronavirus. This includes carers who are in receipt of Carers Allowance or if it states that they are a carer within their GP record. The NHS have stated that carers can book appointments at larger

vaccination centres or pharmacies now, or wait to be invited to go to a local NHS service. On the 5<sup>th</sup> March the NHS stated that those who are social care workers providing face-to-face care or support to those at high risk from Coronavirus who have not already been vaccinated through their employer, can book appointments at larger vaccination centres or pharmacies. Online Covid-19 vaccination bookings can be accessed at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>

The Covid-19 vaccination survey received an almost equal response from each age group. The younger people who responded to the survey didn't express any concerns relating the vaccinations. However, Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees have been hearing about Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy among young women in the area. This has been in relation to the effect of the Covid-19 vaccines on fertility. These concerns have also been shared by younger care staff working in care homes.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, The Royal College of Midwives (RCM) and The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) have issued a joint statement about Covid-19 vaccinations, fertility and pregnancy. The RCOG and the RCM are aware that there has been some misinformation circulating about the impact of Covid-19 vaccines on fertility. Dr Edward Morris, President at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said: "We want to reassure women that there is no evidence to suggest that Covid-19 vaccines will affect fertility. Claims of any effect of Covid-19 vaccination on fertility are speculative and not supported by any data. Healthwatch Stockton-on-tees have shared this statement with the public through social media.

Ninety four percent of those who responded to the survey had told us that they are White British. Healthwatch England (HWE) carried out a poll in January 2021 with 2,500 people and have found disparities between certain communities. HWE have found that Black respondents were more likely to express mistrust about the intentions behind the vaccine programme (47% compared to 28%) and to say they wanted to wait until others had the vaccine before getting it themselves (55% compared to 32%). Respondents from Black communities were 50% more likely to see the location of vaccine centres as a barrier and closer to twice as likely to express a nervousness about using public transport.

HWE have shared these findings with the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and Public Health England to help them understand and address the barriers that could prevent some people from getting vaccinated. HWE are also carrying out further engagement to find out what differences exist in attitudes and barriers for different parts of the Black and Asian communities across the country. HWE will continue to provide assurance that the vaccine is safe and help address specific concerns.

Healthwatch England will also be calling on partners in Government and the NHS to do more to:

- Promote the different locations where vaccines are available

- Increase the number of vaccine outreach teams
- Ensure vaccination centres are set up in places that are well known and accessible by local communities
- Share honest communications about the effect of having the vaccine and what to expect

Within Stockton on Tees, the Covid-19 Community Champions Service work together with community residents to overcome barriers that might prevent people from following government guidance and lockdown restrictions. The Covid-19 Champions share key messages around Covid-19 vaccines, testing facilities, local infection rates and support services available to residents in the Borough. By understanding the reasons why residents are hesitant to take the vaccine, the Champions can tailor key messages and communications through social media, digital and telephone contact with Covid-19 Champions. The team have paid particular interest to concerns about Vaccines and Fertility and have been able to provide reassurance through Consultant advice from North Tees Hospital and statements from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

## Appendix 1

### Priority Risk group

1	Residents in a care home for older adults and staff working in care homes for older adults
2	All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
3	All those 75 years of age and over
4	All those 70 years of age and over and <u>clinically extremely vulnerable</u> individuals (not including pregnant women and those under 16 years of age)
5	All those 65 years of age and over
6	Adults aged 16 to 65 years in an at-risk group (see clinical conditions list)
7	All those 60 years of age and over
8	All those 55 years of age and over
9	All those 50 years of age and over
10	Rest of the population (to be determined)

(Department of Health and Social Care, 2021)

## Appendix 2

### Clinical conditions list:

- a blood cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- diabetes
- dementia
- a heart problem
- a chest complaint or breathing difficulties, including bronchitis, emphysema or severe asthma
- a kidney disease
- a liver disease
- lowered immunity due to disease or treatment (such as HIV infection, steroid medication, chemotherapy or radiotherapy)
- rheumatoid arthritis, lupus or psoriasis (who may require long term immunosuppressive treatments)

- have had an organ transplant
- had a stroke or a transient ischaemic attack (TIA)
- a neurological or muscle wasting condition

(Department of Health and Social Care, 2021)