

Coronavirus CTE and belief leaders joint statement

As churches and communities of belief we hold a wide variety of faith convictions and don't always agree about everything. However, we are united in believing that it is essential that as many people as possible are vaccinated against Covid-19.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating to our communities, has led to significant loss of life, and has caused vast disruption to everyone's daily lives. It has impacted communal worship, prayers, weddings and other rites of passage, sometimes meaning that people have had to put their whole life plans on hold. The toll all this disruption has had on people's mental health represents a growing crisis, as does the number of people falling into poverty.

The vaccines authorised by the MHRA are the most significant way in which we can control the pandemic, accompanied by widespread testing and isolation regimes. The vaccines may have been developed and approved for use at unprecedented speeds, and with unprecedented investments and collaboration, but they have nonetheless been through the same rigorous approval processes that would be demanded of any medicine before it is authorised for general use. This includes double-blind randomised controlled trials and peer review. The evidence from those trials suggests that the vaccines are effective and that the risks from contracting Covid-19 far outweigh any risks associated with the some of the vaccines. That this is the case represents a towering scientific achievement.

Estimates vary as to how many people would need to be vaccinated before coronavirus restrictions can be lifted entirely. But with new strains of the virus seemingly spreading more easily, it is clear that a large majority of adults will need to be vaccinated. This includes those who are personally at low risk –as this contributes to the reduction in transmission of the virus, and reduces the risk of further mutation of the strains of Covid-19 in the community.

As a result, we are supportive of policies that encourage everyone who is medically able to be vaccinated against Covid-19, and to take up the offer of an injection when the NHS reaches out. The NHS [has advice](#) on when it expects to be able to offer the jab to different sections of the population, and legitimate medical exemptions from being vaccinated.

The end of this phase of the pandemic might be in sight – the Government hopes to be able to offer all adults an appropriate vaccine by September 2021. But we can only get there, and resume our daily lives as they were, if we all take up this call. Here is an opportunity to make our contribution to the common good, and a practical way to 'love our neighbour as ourselves.'

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