



30 April 2026

9(2)(a) privacy



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Official Information Request
Our Ref: OIA 2026-0058

I refer to your Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) request received on 17 March 2026 for:

"I refer to [the advice "COVID-19 Workforce Vaccinations Guidance" on your website dated 2 March 2021](#): It says :

" On 3 February 2021, Medsafe the medicines safety authority approved the first Covid-19 vaccine for use in New Zealand. It has been robustly assessed to ensure it meets international standards and local requirements for quality and safety."

1. *Please share the information on this medicine approval which the Public Service Commission received that said the medicine was approved.*
2. *Please share the assessment which the Public Service Commission relied on to say that the medicine was robustly assessed for quality and safety. The advice lauds vaccination and suggests making it a condition of employment agreements, for example:
 - a. *"Expect: set an expectation that all staff should be vaccinated"*
 - b. *Communicate an expectation that all staff who are able to be vaccinated will be vaccinated."*
 - c. *"For at-risk workforces, consider introducing a requirement for new employees to be vaccinated into employment agreements by agreement with any relevant unions."*
 - d. *"Vaccines should be administered in the workplace where possible"**
3. *Please share the analysis on the justified limitations on the NZ Bill of Rights 1990 which discusses the right to refuse medical treatment. I am requesting all the information (emails, correspondence, policy documents, meeting minutes etc) dated up to 2 March 2021 on the complete analysis of this demonstrably justified limitation on the Bill of Rights 1990."*

Information being released – Part one

Please find enclosed and listed in the table below, documents within scope of part one of your request:

Item	Date	Document Description	Decision
1	February 2021	EMAILS - <ul style="list-style-type: none">- sent from the Ministry of Health and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to the Public Service Commission (Commission)- sent within the Commission (ie between Commission staff)	Released in part
2	February 2021	COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>Frequent asked questions</i> document- <i>Latest COVID-19 Vaccine Key Messages</i>- <i>AOG Covid-19 message grid – 3 February 2021</i>	Released in part

I have decided to release the documents listed above, subject to information being withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the OIA to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people. In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the OIA.

In addition, some information has been redacted or deleted where it is not in scope of your request.

Information not held – Parts two and three

The Commission does not hold:

- *an assessment which the Public Service Commission relied on to say that the medicine was robustly assessed for quality and safety.*
- *analysis on the justified limitations on the NZ Bill of Rights 1990 which discusses the right to refuse medical treatment*

I am therefore refusing parts two and three of your request under section 18(e) of the OIA on the grounds the information does not exist.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Enquiries@publicservice.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that we intend to publish this response (with your personal details removed) on the Commission's website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicky Dirks', with a stylized, cursive script.

Nicky Dirks

Manager - Ministerial and Executive Services
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission

This means we can start the first phase of the vaccine programme in New Zealand, which is to vaccinate people who are most at risk of exposure to the virus. We expect the first Pfizer/BioNtech vaccines will arrive in New Zealand by the end of the first quarter and we are preparing for an earlier arrival.

Border and managed isolation and quarantine workers covered by the Required Testing Order (2020), and the people they live with, will be the first to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. This reflects the critical role they play, standing between the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and those who might unwittingly bring the virus into our communities, and the higher risk that represents.

We will continue to work with you to make sure we can roll out COVID-19 vaccines as soon as they are ready for use, and deliver them to border staff.

The Ministry is working with iwi, Pacific and ethnic communities and other key stakeholders across New Zealand to ensure an equitable delivery of the vaccines. A successful rollout includes protection for Māori, Pacific peoples, and our most at-risk population groups, such as older people, disabled people, health workers, essential workers and border staff.

We expect those vaccinations to be rolled out over three to four weeks, once the vaccine arrives in the country, and this should be by the end of March, depending on when the vaccine arrives. We are then aiming to make vaccines available for health workers after that, and we will confirm those dates with you shortly.

Vaccines are expected to be available for the wider community in the second half of the year.

Please find attached a factsheet and email below to share with your staff. This has information about the vaccine rollout, its safety and any other initial questions they might have. There is more information online here: [Unite Against Covid-19](#) and [Ministry of Health](#).

I am keen to provide you with any support you need and can be available to talk to your people if that would be of value.

Ngā mihi,

Ashley

Dr Ashley Bloomfield

Te Tumu Whakarae mō te Hauora

Director-General of Health

email: ashley.bloomfield@health.govt.nz

www.health.govt.nz

Email for border CEs to cascade to their staff

Kia ora koutou

As you are aware, the Government has secured supplies of COVID-19 vaccine for the entire country. Medsafe has granted provisional approval of a first vaccine against COVID-19, which means the we can start the first phase of the vaccine programme in New Zealand.

Provisional consent means the pharmaceutical company must meet certain conditions, including supplying more data from its clinical trials around the world. This will happen at the same time as the vaccine is rolled out.

Because of the critical role you play as border and MIQ workers in keeping COVID-19 out of Aotearoa New Zealand, you will be in the first group to get the vaccine. I appreciate that the nature of your work means you have a heightened interest in the vaccine and may have questions. We will continue to provide information as soon as it becomes available. The Ministry vaccine team is also available to support you and can be contacted at covid19vaccine@health.govt.nz for any questions you might have about the vaccine and roll out. We intend to offer vaccination to the people you live with and will contact you through your employers to arrange for vaccination.

The rollout of the vaccinations is likely to be over three to four weeks, once the vaccine arrives in the country. Please see attached a factsheet with information about the vaccine rollout and its safety.

Health workers will be vaccinated after that (unless they are working at the border), and the wider community will have access to the vaccine later in the year.

The COVID-19 vaccines will be free of charge. They will not be mandatory for the New Zealand

public. Medsafe has gone through a very robust process in assessing and approving the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to ensure it's safe and effective to use.

Information is also available on the Ministry of Health website.

Thank you for all your mahi keeping New Zealand communities free from COVID-19.

Ngā mihi

Dr Ashley Bloomfield

Te Tumu Whakarae mō te Hauora

Director-General of Health

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From: [Dale Farrar](#)
To: [Anna Cassie](#); [Sarah Borrell](#); [David Fowler](#); [Charlie Busby](#)
Cc: [Nicola Purvis](#); [Pete Fitzjohn](#)
Subject: FW: [UNCLASSIFIED] Covid-19 vaccine update for stakeholders and partners
Date: Thursday, 4 February 2021 10:49:56 am
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[Vaccine FAQs v1.pdf](#)
[3 February COVID-19 Vaccine Key Messages FINAL.pdf](#)
[Border+MIQ Workers guide 03Feb2021.pdf](#)
[AOG COVID-19 communications grid - 3 February 2021.docx](#)

Additional information form the COVID team.

From: Rebekah Cameron [DPMC]
Sent: Wednesday, 3 February 2021 4:11 PM
To: Out of scope

[Redacted]

Dale Farrar ; Out of scope

Subject: [UNCLASSIFIED] Covid-19 vaccine update for stakeholders and partners
[UNCLASSIFIED]

Kia ora Workstreams

2021 is the Year of the Vaccine. It's a full-year programme to ensure safe and timely access to vaccines for all New Zealanders.

Today MedSafe gave provisional consent to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in New Zealand. The Ministry of Health will now provide advice to Government setting out who are most suited to receive the vaccine, such as age ranges.

Provisional approval is not uncommon. It means the pharmaceutical company must meet certain conditions, including supplying more data from its clinical trials around the world. This will happen at the same time as the vaccine is rolled out. The annual influenza vaccine is given provisional approval for the same reason.

Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines will arrive in New Zealand by the end of March. We are making sure everything is in place in case of an earlier arrival. Our first focus will be to vaccinate our border and managed isolation and quarantine workers, which is about 12,000 people, plus the people they live with. Once vaccination of this group starts, we expect it to be completed within 2 to 3 weeks. **Border and MIQ Workers Guide on vaccine and immunisation rollout (attached)**, is a handy two page guide for frontline border staff.

Vaccines are expected to be available for the general public in the second half of the year.

The FAQ and Ministry of Health key messages (attached) can be used by your spokespeople and staff. The AOG Covid-19 Comms Grid (attached) provides useful context and wider messaging.

For more information visit the Unite Against COVID-19 website vaccine page:

www.covid19.govt.nz/vaccines

Those looking for an easy way to stay up to date with vaccine information should sign up to our vaccine email newsletter. This will provide regular updates on all key decisions and stages of the vaccination programme. Sign up here <https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/social-media-and-newsletters/>

Nga mihi

Beks

Rebekah Cameron

Special Advisor | DPMC COVID-19 Group

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E rebekah.cameron@dpmc.govt.nz



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This document answers frequently asked questions about the Pfizer and BioNTech Vaccine Decision Announcement on the 3 February 2021

This information applies from 3 February 2021

Information can be used for any government, agency, local government or relevant sector and business communications.

This is a living document that will be updated frequently over early January. Information that changes or is added between versions will be **highlighted**.

Please ensure you are using the most up to date version.

This version was current at **3.30pm, 3 February 2021**.

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Find out more at
Covid19.govt.nz

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When will the vaccines arrive in New Zealand?

We expect the first vaccines will arrive in New Zealand by the end of the first quarter of the year, but we are making sure everything is in place in case of an earlier arrival. We have broadly similar timing expectations as Australia. We acknowledge there is international pressures for Pfizer and BioNTech to prioritise countries that have serious community transmission of COVID-19.

As we have seen, timelines are changing frequently. Specifically, we are in discussions with Pfizer and BioNTech about the impact of the EU's restrictions on New Zealand's vaccine delivery timing.

When will the vaccination programme begin?

We do not have a confirmed date for our programme to begin but based on our current situation of no community transmission, our first focus will be vaccinating our border and managed isolation and quarantine workforce and their close contacts within the first quarter of this year. Once the vaccine arrives in New Zealand, we expect to be able to complete vaccinating this group within two to three weeks.

Our sequencing of who we vaccinate first only changes if our situation changes, such as if we have widespread community transmission. We expect to start vaccinating the general public in the second half of this year.

Who will be vaccinated first?

Our first focus will be vaccinating our border and managed isolation and quarantine workforce and the people they live with. These frontline workers have been protecting our country from this global pandemic during the past year and protecting them, and those who share their households, is a priority for us.

Once the vaccine arrives in New Zealand, we expect to be able to complete vaccinating this group within two to three weeks.

Those covered by the [COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Required Testing\) Order 2020](#) will be the first people to be offered vaccinations and within that group, we will first offer vaccinations to those who are tested most frequently – those tested weekly.

After workers covered by the testing order are offered vaccinations, we will offer vaccinations to the people they live with.

Why are you vaccinating border workers first?

We've always known that our greatest risk of COVID-19 entering New Zealand is at our border because the virus is rampant in many countries overseas, which is why we've put such tight measures in place at our border.

Protecting people working at the border and those at greatest risk of COVID-19 protects our entire population and adds another layer to our border defences.

Our sequencing of who we vaccinate first only changes if our situation changes, such as if we have widespread community transmission.

These frontline workers have been protecting our country from this global pandemic during the past year and protecting them and those who share their households is a priority for us.

When will you start vaccinating everyone?

The confirmed timing of the rollout will depend on when the suppliers can deliver it. Our first focus will be to vaccinate our border and managed isolation and quarantine workers, around 12,000 people, plus the people they live with.

We expect to make vaccines available for the general public in the second half of the year. However, if vaccines become available earlier, we would look to move as soon as possible to begin a wider roll out.

Where will the first vaccinations of the general public be done?

Initial delivery settings are likely to be workplace and some community locations. We are engaging with DHBs on their local plans for the initial scenarios, including the providers they are likely to engage. As more vaccines become available, we will add new settings as we scale up throughout the year.

What's the process for approving the vaccines?

Medicines regulator Medsafe sought advice and recommendations from the Medicines Assessment Advisory Committee (MAAC) about the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine.

The Ministerial expert advisory committee reviewed Medsafe's benefit-risk assessment of the pharmaceutical company's data, enabling Medsafe to grant provisional approval.

How was approval decided?

We have been working with Pfizer for a number of months now and started receiving clinical data from the company in November. We streamlined the assessment process so the company could submit rolling data to us as it came through — rather than sending us all the data at the very end. This is the same for all the COVID-19 vaccines.

Allowing rolling submissions means we can streamline our assessment process without compromising the rigour of the requirements and safety of the vaccine.

It's important people understand we haven't cut any corners in the assessment along the way while we worked to make a decision.

Medsafe considered its feedback and decided to grant provisional consent, which includes conditions that require the pharmaceutical company to provide data and information within an agreed timeframe. This includes additional clinical trial and manufacturing data as it becomes available. The company agreed to these required conditions and Medsafe formally gazetted the decision to approve the vaccine's provisional consent for use in New Zealand.

Who is on the Medicines Assessment Advisory Committee?

This committee is made up of people from around New Zealand with a broad range of skills, such as biostatistics, infectious diseases, geriatrics, paediatrics, consumer interests, pharmaceutical chemistry and manufacturing, clinical pharmacology, toxicology, clinical genetics, rheumatology and psychiatry. Their identities aren't public to protect them from external pressure in giving independent, free and frank advice about medicine approvals.

Has Medsafe shortened its evaluation process?

Medsafe has streamlined its approval processes for faster access, but it hasn't cut any corners along the way. This includes allowing pharmaceutical companies to submit rolling applications for approval for their vaccines, rather than submitting all their data at once.

We have prioritised the COVID-19 vaccines and allocated assessors for each vaccine. We have close communication with the pharmaceutical companies about the timelines for getting their data and we've been accepting rolling submissions of data.

We received the first set of data from Pfizer last November. Last week, we received a large amount of data from Pfizer. After assessing it, we've asked them some

questions, for which we've requested a response in a week. Normally we'd give companies four months to respond.

Are you concerned about the safety of the vaccine given its fast track development?

Medsafe has a robust assessment process to ensure this vaccine is safe and effective for use in New Zealand. The development of COVID-19 vaccines around the world has been fast because of enormous financial resourcing, clinical expertise and modern technology has enabled unprecedented swift progress.

Are all the logistics in place to store and despatch the vaccine?

As the largest vaccination campaign in New Zealand's history, it comes with significant challenges.

We've purchased nine large -80°C freezers that can store more than 1.5 million doses of vaccine. These will become our central storage facility for vaccine that requires ultra-low temperatures, which is the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine.

The nine freezers are in New Zealand and currently undergoing validation. It is expected this process, which includes commissioning, temperature mapping, failure mode challenges and temperature alarm tests, will take up to four weeks before the freezers are approved.

Do you have enough vaccinators trained for the rollout?

We're planning for an extra 2,000-3,000 full time (or equivalent) vaccinators throughout New Zealand who will be trained and available when needed.

An initial call for expressions of interest has gone out via the COVID-19 surge workforce webpage, and we are working with partners across the health and disability system (including regulatory authorities for the relevant healthcare professions and occupational health providers) to engage additional vaccinator capacity across New Zealand.

So far more than 1,100 people have registered their interest in being involved. In addition, more than 2,000 people have been trained as provisional vaccinators, ready to complete the COVID-19 vaccine training once available.

The Ministry of Health has contracted the Immunisation Advisory Centre to provide training on COVID-19 vaccines. This training is expected to begin in February — initially for those vaccinators who will deliver the Pfizer vaccine and then for nurses, doctors and pharmacists. This training will be available online and face to face across the country.

How will we safeguard Māori?

Under the no/low transmission scenario, the best protection for everyone in New Zealand is to protect those who are most at risk of infection and their household contacts.

We are also reviewing the evidence for additional risk faced by Māori and Pacific peoples in relation to infection and transmission, more serious illness and death, and cultural, social and economic impacts.

We will engage with key stakeholders and consider this alongside implementation options to determine the best approach.

What are the side effects of this vaccine?

Clinical data from the Pfizer and BioNTech trials shows some minor side effects include a painful arm and headaches. Data we have received at this stage doesn't suggest anything out of the ordinary. This conclusion comes from data provided by Pfizer and information supplied by international regulators we work with like the United States' FDA, the European Medicines Agency, and Australia's regulator the TGA.

There have been reports in other countries of other side effects. We are constantly receiving information from other regulators. We encourage people to report any side effects so Medsafe can determine if they are related to the vaccine or are coincidental.

There have been some reports about allergic reactions in other countries. This has helped Medsafe put conditions on the roll-out such as including a wait time after receiving the vaccine and using trained professionals to administer it. As we learn more, we will continually update our advice on who should receive the vaccine. If you have allergies, please check the list of ingredients on the Medsafe website.

How effective is this vaccine?

Clinical trial data from Pfizer indicates the COVID-19 vaccine has been 95 percent effective when administered to trial participants. The company reports efficacy is consistent across age, gender, race and ethnicity demographics.

What happens if someone has an adverse reaction?

As with all vaccines and medicines, any adverse reactions will be reported to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM). The pharmaceutical company must provide information on adverse reactions globally. Medsafe and their international counterparts share information on any adverse reactions experienced in their countries.

What level of adverse reaction is deemed acceptable?

Medsafe reviews all reports of adverse reactions and uses this information to inform what actions, if any, are required to be made to the COVID-19 immunisation programme.

What is New Zealand's view of the European Union's introduction of new export restrictions for COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in the EU?

New Zealand is very concerned by the European Union's introduction of a new export restrictions for COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in the EU. We have raised this through our channels in Brussels and are seeking further information.

The Ministry of Health is checking whether there are any implications for New Zealand's Advance Purchase Agreement vaccine orders.

New Zealand's advance purchase agreements for COVID-19 vaccines include timing for delivery of vaccines and we expect those agreements to be met. It is up to the pharmaceutical companies to meet the agreed timing schedule for delivery.

Vaccine manufacturing relies on global supply chains and it is in all countries' interests to ensure the smooth functioning of these supply chains, and actively facilitate the flow of COVID-19 vaccines and vaccine-related goods.

Where can I get more information?

The Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) provides independent, factual information based on international and New Zealand scientific research about vaccine-preventable diseases the benefits and risks of immunisation. <https://www.immune.org.nz/>

On the Medsafe website: <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/covid-landing.asp> and the Ministry of Health website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine>

Unite Against Covid 19

Website <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/>
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/UniteAgainstCOVID19/>

Find out more at
Covid19.govt.nz

Frequently Asked Questions

v1

LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/uniteagainstcovid19/>
Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/uniteagainstcovid19/>
Twitter <https://twitter.com/covid19nz>
Newsletter <https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/social-media-and-newsletters/#newsletters>

Find out more at
Covid19.govt.nz

New Zealand Government

Latest COVID-19 Vaccine Key Messages

Approved messages for use in your communications

Consistent messaging helps us to coordinate our efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document provides approved key messages from the Ministry. You may share this messaging with your internal and external audiences.

3 February 2021, FINAL

Medsafe provisional consent to use Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine

- On 3 February 2021, Medsafe formally gazetted its decision to grant provisional consent to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in New Zealand.
- Provisional consent means the pharmaceutical company must meet certain conditions, including supplying more data from its clinical trials around the world. This will happen at the same time as the vaccine is rolled out.
- Following advice from Ministry of Health officials, the Government will make a decision about using the vaccine this week.

COVID-19 vaccines

- The Government has four Advance Purchase Agreements for COVID-19 vaccines. All agreements are subject to the vaccines successfully completing clinical trials and being approved by Medsafe.
- Medsafe evaluates applications for all new medicines, including vaccines, which must comply with international standards and local requirements for quality, safety and efficacy before they can be approved and used in New Zealand.
- Medsafe is streamlining its assessment processes and prioritising the evaluation of COVID-19 vaccines over other medicines so that we can get a vaccine more quickly. They'll still have the same rigorous level of scrutiny that all medicines undergo.
- Three of vaccines are two-dose:
 - Pfizer and BioNTech – 1.5 million doses of vaccine (enough for 750,000 people).
 - Oxford and AstraZeneca – 7.6 million doses of vaccine (enough for 3.8 million people).
 - Novavax – 10.72 million doses of vaccine (enough for 5.36 million people).
- One vaccine is single dose:
 - Janssen Pharmaceutica – up to 5 million COVID-19 vaccines.
- Medsafe has given provisional consent to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and is currently reviewing one other vaccine.
- The COVID-19 Immunisation Programme is continuing to work at pace to be ready to roll out the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is approved by Medsafe and ready for use.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will be free of charge.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandatory for the New Zealand public.

COVID-19 vaccine rollout

- The confirmed timing of the rollout will depend on Medsafe approval of the vaccine and when the suppliers can deliver it.
- A sequenced framework (the order of rollout) will be used to guide the rollout of the vaccines as they become available.
- As things currently stand, border and MIQ workers, covered by the Required Testing Order (2020), will be the first group to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. This reflects the critical role they play, standing between the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and those who might unwittingly bring the virus into our communities, and the higher risk that represents.
- The Ministry of Health has been working towards a second quarter rollout for this (potentially during March); however, if the vaccine becomes available earlier, we would look to move as soon as possible.
- We expect to then make vaccines available for the general public in the second half of the year, subject to supply.
- The Ministry of Health also plans to offer vaccination to those MIQ and border workers' household contacts at the same time to ensure they receive the same level of protection. Although we know the vaccine will protect individuals from the effects of the virus, it is too early for researchers to confirm whether a vaccinated person could still be a carrier and transmit COVID-19 to someone else.
- Given it is too early to confirm whether a vaccinated person could still transmit COVID-19, mandatory testing of our border and MIQ workforce will continue.
- The Ministry of Health is preparing for a range of vaccine scenarios should the COVID-19 situation in New Zealand change.
- Ensuring equity of outcomes is a key measure of success, including protection for Māori, Pacific peoples and our most vulnerable population groups, such as older people, disabled people, health workers, essential workers and border staff.

Workforce – vaccinators

- The Ministry of Health is planning for an extra 2,000 to 3,000 full-time (or equivalent) vaccinators to be trained and available when needed throughout New Zealand. This number will continue to grow during 2021, in line with vaccine delivery schedules.
- The Immunisation Advisory Centre will provide training on the COVID-19 vaccines. The training is expected to start in February 2021 and will be available online as well as face-to-face, across the country.
- The Ministry of Health is currently seeking additional vaccinators to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Retired health professionals or others not currently in the health workforce who may want to volunteer as a vaccinator, can register their interest via the **COVID-19 Surge Workforce database**, which can be found on the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Planning webpage, or email **covid-19vaccine@health.govt.nz**. Please note that this database is only for people not currently in the health workforce willing to be involved in the roll out.
- The Ministry of Health is working closely with DHBs on vaccine rollout.

Impact of the vaccine on our borders

- At this stage, we can't advise how the availability of vaccines in New Zealand and internationally will influence any changes to our border controls.
- Although the data confirms the vaccines protect individuals from the effects of the virus, it is too early for researchers to confirm whether a vaccinated person could still be a carrier and transmit COVID-19 to someone else. Until that information is certain we need to maintain our current border settings.

EU export controls

The European Union has introduced a new export control measure for COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in the EU.

The Ministry of Health is working to urgently clarify whether there are implications for New Zealand's Advance Purchase Agreement vaccine orders.

Our advance purchase agreements for COVID-19 vaccines include timing for delivery of vaccines and it is up to the pharmaceutical companies to meet the agreed timing schedule for delivery.

We have joined the global COVAX Facility, a global mechanism to invest in scale-up of manufacturing capacity and ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, including to our Pacific neighbours. COVAX Facility orders are not subject to these export controls.

Further information

- The Ministry of Health has published the latest vaccine information, including the details of the COVID-19 vaccine planning and delivery groups, on its website under COVID-19 Response planning – Vaccine planning: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-vaccine-planning>
- Medsafe has a section on its website explaining our processes around assessing the quality, efficacy and safety of vaccines and treatments for COVID-19. This can be found here: <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/covid-landing.asp>

Vaccine strategy – background

On 12 October, the Government announced it has signed an agreement to purchase enough COVID-19 vaccine for 750,000 people from Pfizer and BioNTech, subject to the vaccine successfully completing all clinical trials and passing regulatory approval in New Zealand.

It also announced funding for medical supplies and infrastructure to ensure New Zealand was ready to launch a COVID-19 Immunisation Programme as soon as we have a safe and effective vaccine. The Government announced in May 2020 initial investment to enable the COVID-19 vaccine strategy.

On 27 August, the Government **announced additional funding** to help secure access to promising vaccine candidates through participating in global initiatives such as the COVAX Facility, and investing early in the vaccine development process, using tools like advance purchasing arrangements.

On 21 September, the Government **confirmed its commitment to the COVAX Facility** and announced initial investment to support its COVID-19 vaccine development and manufacture. More **information on New Zealand's COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy is available online.**

Guide to the COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunisation rollout:

Border and MIQ workers

You will have heard that Aotearoa New Zealand is securing enough vaccines to protect our entire population from the COVID-19 virus and that the first vaccine has been given provisional consent from Medsafe.

Provisional consent means the pharmaceutical company must meet certain conditions, including supplying more data from its clinical trials around the world. This will happen at the same time as the vaccine is rolled out.

The confirmed timing of the rollout will depend on when the suppliers can deliver the vaccine.

Because of your role at the frontline, working to keep the country safe, it is highly likely you will be one of the first people vaccinated. More details about what this means and answers to some of the key initial questions you might have are below.

Rollout

- Border and MIQ workers, covered by the Required Testing Order (2020), will be the first group to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
- This reflects the critical role you play, standing between the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and those who might unwittingly bring the virus into our communities, and the higher risk that represents.
- We have been working towards a first quarter rollout for this; however, if the vaccine becomes available earlier, we would look to move as soon as possible. We will keep you and your employers updated on timeframes.
- We also plan to offer vaccination to the people you live with at the same time to ensure they receive the same level of protection. Although we know the vaccine will protect individuals from the effects of the virus, it is too early for researchers to confirm whether a vaccinated person could still be a carrier and transmit COVID-19 to someone else. Until we know otherwise we need to assume that could be the case and keep our current precautions – such as PPE and regular testing – in place.
- We will contact you, either directly or through your employer, for your help in identifying your household contacts and any specific situations that need to be considered.

Is the vaccine safe?

- The vaccines that Medsafe approves are robustly assessed and must meet international standards and local requirements for quality and safety.
- As with any medicine, Medsafe will closely monitor the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, including analysing any reports of side effects.

Are vaccines mandatory?

- COVID-19 vaccinations will not be compulsory in New Zealand and anyone is free to choose whether to get vaccinated.
- COVID-19 vaccinations are being made available to you as a means of added protection against the risk you encounter as part of your workplace duties and we strongly encourage vaccination to protect yourself and the people you live with.

What happens if I don't want to be vaccinated?

- If you work in a high-risk MIQ/border setting and do not wish to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, this may create a health and safety issue for both yourself and your employer. These situations and the available options are currently being explored and will need to be discussed with your employer.

Do I still need to be tested?

- The vaccines will protect individuals from the effects of the virus; however, it is too early yet for researchers to determine whether a vaccinated person could still transmit the virus to someone else. While this remains unclear we have to assume there is still a risk of transmission.
- This means that the mandatory testing of our border and MIQ workforce still needs to continue. It is also an important reminder that the vaccines are not a substitute for good hygiene practices of wearing PPE, washing hands, coughing and sneezing into your elbow, wearing masks or face coverings and other precautions.

Will I have a choice of which vaccine I receive?

- All the vaccines have gone through a robust process to ensure they are safe and effective. The vaccine you are likely to get will be based on when it's available in New Zealand. The first vaccine that has been approved is the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.
- We are working to make vaccines available to the border and MIQ workforce as a priority. The four vaccines New Zealand has secured are going through the approval process at different times.

Next steps

- We know you will have lots of questions – please share these with your employer so they can pass them back to us.
- You can also find more information on the Unite against COVID-19 website – [Covid19.govt.nz/vaccines](https://www.unite.co.nz/covid-19/vaccines)

AOG COVID-19 message grid – 3 February 2021

Topic	Key message	Supporting messages	Notes
First COVID-19 vaccine approved	New Zealand's first COVID-19 vaccine has been approved by Medsafe as safe to use.	<p>Medsafe is independent of the Government and approves all medicines and vaccines available in New Zealand.</p> <p>Medsafe's approval is the culmination of a rigorous assessment over many months to ensure the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is safe and effective to use here.</p> <p>Medsafe has been in regular contact with medicines regulators around the world where the vaccine is already being rolled out. Allowing some time to study the roll-out overseas has given us extra assurance before starting our vaccination programme here.</p> <p>We are confident that this decision has been informed by the most up-to-date medical and scientific data.</p> <p>The Government will be encouraging all New Zealanders to get vaccinated.</p>	PM PR 3 Feb
NZ COVID-19 vaccine programme	The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine approval gives the green light for the first phase of New Zealand's vaccination programme.	<p>The Government plans to make a decision about using the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine this week.</p> <p>2021 is the Year of the Vaccine. It's a full-year programme to ensure safe and timely access to vaccines for all New Zealanders.</p> <p>We expect the first Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines will arrive in New Zealand by the end of the first quarter and we are making sure everything is in place in case they arrive earlier.</p> <p>New Zealand is in a fortunate position with no current community outbreaks or transmission of COVID-19.</p>	PM PR 3 Feb

		<p>A phased approach will see those most at risk getting the vaccine first, and the broader community accessing the vaccine in the second half of the year.</p> <p>Our first focus will be to vaccinate our border and managed isolation and quarantine workers - including cleaners, nurses who undertake health checks in MIQ, security staff, customs and border officials, airline staff and hotel workers, which is about 12,000 people - plus the people they live with.</p> <p>Once vaccination of this group starts, we expect it to be completed within two to three weeks.</p> <p>Vaccinating our frontline staff will provide a critical additional line of defence to keep them well and help prevent COVID-19 entering the community. It's an extra layer to help protect New Zealanders and our economy against future outbreaks.</p> <p>We have come far in the fight against COVID-19 - getting vaccinated is key to locking in the gains we have made and protecting our hard-won freedoms.</p>	
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Out of scope

