

Covid Certification medical exemptions application – Guidance for clinicians reviewing applications

Background

COVID-19 certificates can be used to demonstrate an individual's vaccine status and may be required as a condition of entry to specified venues. While the majority of individuals are able to safely receive COVID-19 vaccination, there are a very small number of individuals who have conditions which mean that vaccination may not be possible or in their best interests. These individuals, who are medically exempt from vaccination, need an alternative method of gaining COVID-19 certification so that they are not unfairly penalised by the COVID-19 certification process. It is expected that the number of individuals who are genuinely medically exempt from COVID-19 vaccination will be very low.

In Northern Ireland, individuals who have been advised that they should not have the COVID-19 vaccine or who believe they are exempt due to a specific health condition, will be able to apply for recognition of medical exemption via the existing Covid Certification Service (CCS). Applicants will answer a series of questions to determine possible eligibility for medical exemption. Only applicants indicating that they meet the criteria for medical exemption will proceed to the next stage of the process.

Applicants who meet the initial eligibility criteria will send an application form. Applicants will be asked to indicate the name and hospital/GP practice of the clinician who advised them that they should not have the COVID-19 vaccine, or who manages their 'exemption condition'. This application form then needs to be reviewed by the indicated clinician who should confirm or refute that there is evidence that the person should be exempt from COVID-19 vaccination. A list of conditions which may afford exemption is given below, however it should be noted that this is not exhaustive and clinical judgement is key.

Medical exemption eligibility

The criteria for medical exemption in Northern Ireland, as in other parts of the UK, are informed by guidance in the Green Book, as well as expert opinion shared by NHSE and others. It is recognised that for some of these conditions vaccination will still be both possible and desirable. However there may be individual circumstances, as detailed below, where vaccination is not possible in context. Therefore clinical judgement is key. Possible medical exemptions include¹:

¹ The Green Book. [Chapter 14a COVID-19 – SARS-CoV-2](#). November 2021.

- Complex allergy including allergic reaction to the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine – **only where exemption has been advised by a specialist**
- Other adverse reactions associated with first dose, e.g. myocarditis or Thrombosis and Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS) – **only where exemption has been advised by a specialist**
- Temporary/time-limited exemptions – the Green Book cites that if a patient is seriously debilitated, still under active investigation or has evidence of recent deterioration, vaccination can be delayed
- End-of-life care where vaccination is not in the best interests of the person
- Learning disabilities and neurodevelopmental conditions where vaccination cannot be carried out with reasonable adjustments

Pregnancy

Pregnancy alone is not sufficient justification for medical exemption, including on a temporary basis. This reflects the evidence that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective in pregnancy and the harms associated with COVID-19 in unvaccinated pregnant women².

Information for all clinicians reviewing medical exemption applications

Clinicians will be given access to the Covid Certification Service online portal to upload received application forms and to indicate whether there is sufficient evidence for medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination. Clinicians will be asked to confirm that the patient details (name/DOB/HCN and address) on the electronic record match those supplied by the patient on their application.

Further detail on the portal is given below. It is expected that the clinician will also record the decision in the medical record.

Submitting application review via Covid Certification Service portal

- Complete 'clinician decision' section on exemption application form with reference to the medical exemptions listed above
- Scan completed form
- Log into CCS web portal using the details supplied to your trust/practice
- Upload complete application form
- Complete the relevant information requested

If a patient wishes to be considered for medical exemption, please direct them to the CCS helpline to apply. Please do not issue patients with letters of medical exemption as this information will not be accessible to the CCS, and therefore cannot be used to obtain a

² UKHSA. [The safety of COVID-19 vaccines when given in pregnancy](#). April 2021.

domestic use Covid Certificate, and could be used inappropriately or vulnerable to manipulation.

Information for GPs

It is expected that the role of GPs in reviewing medical exemption applications will be limited to patients who are receiving End-of-life-care and who are not under the care of an additional specialist palliative care team.

If a patient presents a medical exemption application letter to their GP for a reason other than end-of-life care, it is expected that the GP will direct the patient to the specialist who (i) advised them that they should not get the COVID-19 vaccine or (ii) who usually manages the condition which may afford exemption from COVID-19 vaccination.

Patients who do not meet the eligibility criteria for medical exemption should be offered the opportunity to discuss safe vaccination against COVID-19 either within the practice or at their local pharmacy provider.

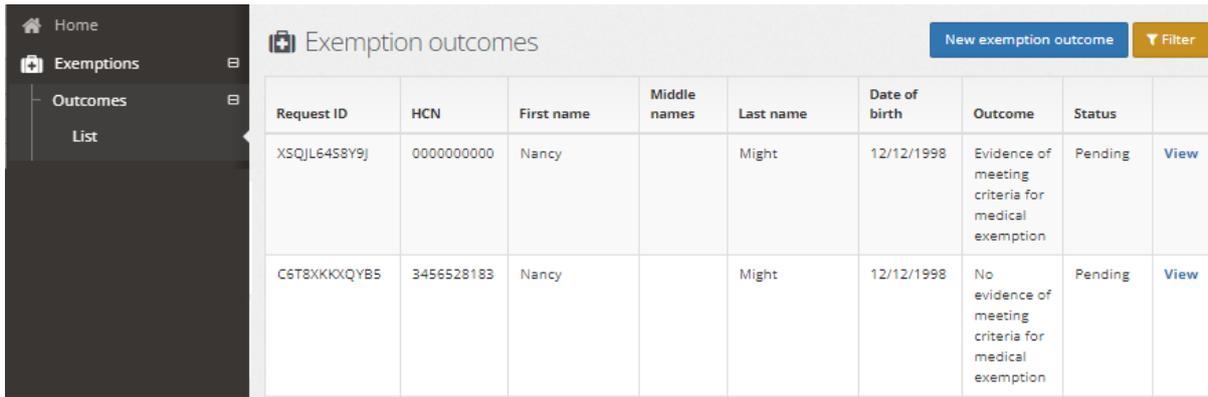
Using the Covid Certification Service Portal

Clinicians and other CCS portal users will be able to use the CCS portal to record the outcome of the medical exemption application. Users will be able to record and display whether an individual is exempt from COVID-19 vaccination.

Login details have been created for each GP practice and for the single point of contact (SPOC) in each trust. If additional access is required, e.g. for a trust clinician, please contact exemptioncertni@nidirect.gov.uk. Login details will then be received by email and can be used to access the CCS portal.

Recording a COVID-19 exemption application outcome

1. Log in into the CCS portal
2. Navigate to 'Exemptions – Outcomes'
3. Click on 'New Exemptions Outcome'
4. Complete the required data fields within the New Exemption Outcome form
5. If the address provided by the patient is different to the address on the patient clinical record this must be recorded on the outcome exemption form against the question "Is the address provided above verified against the patient record?"
6. Exemption questionnaires must be attached to the outcome under the "Upload exemption documentation"
7. Select 'Save' - a summary will be generated for review and submission.
8. All Exemption Outcomes submitted for a specified user will be viewable within the CCS portal.



Request ID	HCN	First name	Middle names	Last name	Date of birth	Outcome	Status	View
XSQJL6458Y9J	0000000000	Nancy		Might	12/12/1998	Evidence of meeting criteria for medical exemption	Pending	View
C6T8XXKXQYB5	3456528183	Nancy		Might	12/12/1998	No evidence of meeting criteria for medical exemption	Pending	View

Frequently asked questions

What if it is not possible to identify the applicant on trust/practice clinical record system?

As applicants are asked to provide their identifying details, including Health and Care Number, and to indicate their usual clinician, it is expected that the majority will be readily identifiable from electronic records. If there are occasions when it is not possible to identify the applicant, please notify the Covid Certification Service via email on exemptioncertni@nidirect.gov.uk. This will trigger a call to the applicant from the call agents to verify the details they provided and review the clinician details as required.

What if it is not possible to identify the nominated clinician within the trust/practice?

There may be situations where it is not possible to identify the nominated clinician, e.g. the clinician is no longer working in the trust. Where possible, efforts should be made to identify who is responsible for the ongoing care of the patient and, where appropriate, to ask this clinician to review the medical exemption application.

Where it is not possible to identify the nominated clinician, please notify the Covid Certification Service via email on exemptioncertni@nidirect.gov.uk. This will trigger a call to the applicant from the call agents to review the clinician details provided in the original call.

What if I do not feel I have sufficient clinical information in the medical record to advise on eligibility for medical exemption?

You may wish to contact the patient directly to discuss the reason they have applied for medical exemption.

If there is insufficient evidence of meeting the criteria for medical exemption based on your knowledge of the patient and the information in the clinical record, including discussion with the patient where appropriate, indicate 'No evidence of meeting criteria for medical exemption' on the application form.

How will the patient be notified of the outcome of their application?

The patient will receive a letter from the Covid Certification Service notifying them of the outcome of their applications.

Individuals for whom the application has been accepted will be given information on how to access a Domestic use COVID-19 Certificate.

Individuals for whom the application has been unsuccessful will be advised that they can seek a review of their application. This is not designed to challenge clinical judgement but to ensure that the application has been processed correctly at each stage of the application.

My patient meets the criteria for temporary/time-limited exemption. How will this be captured in the application process?

If a patient meets criteria for a time-limited exemption, as outlined above, you can indicate an appropriate end-date for the current medical exemption, for example to account for likely timescale of planned investigations, e.g. in 3 months, 6 months.

If the patient is still eligible for a medical exemption after the end-date, a further application for medical exemption would be required.

What if a patient presents with a condition other than those outlined above, who I believe cannot be vaccinated with reasonable adjustment?

The list of exemption conditions including within this document is not exhaustive and clinical judgement is critical. If in your clinical opinion, vaccination against COVID-19 cannot be safely carried out with reasonable adjustment, this can be recorded on the application review as 'evidence of meeting the criteria for medical exemption'.

I believe my patient meets the criteria for medical exemption. Can I issue them with a supporting letter to this effect?

As above, if a patient wishes to be considered for medical exemption, please direct them to the CCS helpline to apply. Please do not issue patients with letters of medical exemption as this information will not be accessible to the CCS, and therefore cannot be used to obtain a domestic use Covid Certificate, and could be used inappropriately or vulnerable to manipulation.

Single point of contacts for Health and Social Care Trusts

Hospitals	Trust	Address for Medical Exemption Applications
Royal Victoria Hospital; Belfast City Hospital; Mater Hospital; Musgrave Park Hospital; Children's Hospital; Royal Maternity; Forster Green Hospital; Knockbracken	Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	COVID-19 vaccination medical exemption application c/o Chief Executives Office Non Clinical Support Building RVH Grosvenor Road Belfast BT12 6BA Email – Mary McLaughlin - Mary.McLaughlin@belfasttrust.hscni.net
Antrim Area Hospital; Braid Valley Hospital; Causeway Hospital; Dalriada Hospital; Holywell Hospital; Mid-Ulster Hospital; Moyle Hospital; Robinson Hospital; Whiteabbey Hospital	Northern Health and Social Care Trust	COVID-19 vaccination medical exemption application Bush House 23 Bush Road Antrim BT41 2QB Email – Lynn Craig - Lynn.Craig@northerntrust.hscni.net
Ards Community Hospital; Bangor Community Hospital; Downe Hospital; Lagan Valley Hospital; Ulster Hospital	South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	COVID-19 vaccination medical exemption application 2nd Floor Home 3 Ulster Hospital Upper Newtownards Road Belfast BT16 1RH Email - Robert McCormac - Robert.McCormac@setrust.hscni.net
Armagh Community Hospital, Craigavon Area Hospital, Daisy Hill Hospital, Lurgan Hospital, South Tyrone Hospital, St Luke's Hospital	Southern Health and Social Care Trust	COVID-19 vaccination medical exemption application C/O Chief Executive Office Trust HQ Craigavon Hospital 68 Lurgan Road Craigavon BT63 5QQ Email: Rose McCullagh - Rose.McCullagh@southerntrust.hscni.net / Mary Donnelly - Mary.Donnelly@southerntrust.hscni.net
Altnagelvin Area Hospital; Grangewood Hospital; Lakeview Hospital; South West Acute (Enniskillen); Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex; Waterside Hospital (Gransha)	Western Health and Social Care Trust	COVID-19 vaccination medical exemption application Renal Unit Altnagelvin Hospital Glenshane Road BT47 6SB Email – Girish Shivashankar - Girish.Shivashankar@westerntrust.hscni.net

Covid Certification – Medical Exemptions Pathway

