

## Public questions and answers: Integrated Care Board meeting, 28 January 2026

### Questions received from the public with responses from the ICB

<p><b>Question 1</b></p>	<p>The restriction of the Covid vaccine this autumn to those over 75 has significantly raised the health risks for older people of illness and infection due to the virus. As such the UK is an outlier as most countries give the vaccine to their older citizens over 60 and last year it was 65. Southwark Pensioners Action Group raised this issue with our MPs at the Pensioners Parliament last summer and it arose again at the Ageing Well Conference in the Town Hall in October, when a number of pensioners present were refused the vaccine on the grounds of age by the health ambassadors. As I said publicly at that meeting, surely this conflicts with the Council's stated aim of improving public health? Along with the flu this has also led to the hugely increased pressure on the NHS and local hospitals and is not a cost effective health measure. Will the Council and local stakeholders in health raise this issue with the government and with the JCVI. Southwark Pensioners are extremely concerned about this and want a change in policy relating to this important public health issue.</p>
<p><b>Response to Q1</b></p>	<p>The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) consider the latest epidemiology and safety data each year to provide NHS England with advice on the appropriate cohorts to be given COVID 19 vaccine. The advice given in July 2025 was for the following groups to be offered the vaccine in autumn 2025 and spring 2026</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adults aged 75 years and over</li> <li>• residents in a care home for older adults</li> <li>• individuals aged 6 months and over who have a weakened immune system because of a health condition or treatment</li> </ul> <p>As the vaccination policies, including eligible groups, are set nationally by NHS England, the ICB and healthcare providers are legally bound to deliver the programme in line with the recommendations.</p> <p>We can confirm that rates of Covid 19 infection have remained relatively low over the last few months, and the virus does not seem to be impacting on hospital pressures at the moment. Where there is evidence of a change in the epidemiology of the disease, the JCVI may consider a different approach.</p>

	I can confirm that Southwark Council through its public health department will raise this issue through the UK Health Security Agency.
<b>Question 2</b>	In theory I understand that all GP practices should have patient participation groups but I am not aware if there is any coordination between them, so those less effective can learn from others. The PPG I am a member of is struggling to work effectively with the practice yet there seems little easily obtainable advice out there. Would it be practicable/possible for your organisation to see if you could help spread practice and enable local practices to have effective patient participation?
<b>Response to Q2</b>	<p>GP practices are required as part of the national contract to have a PPG in place. The ICB also regards it as good practice and benefits practices to engage with their patients. We share a number of nationally and locally developed resources with GP practices, including the below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Patient's Association <a href="#">toolkit</a> and links to further resources for <a href="#">developing and supporting PPGs</a></li> <li>• The National Association of Patient Participation <a href="#">guide for PPGs</a> and <a href="#">resources for patients</a> as well as resources aimed at health professionals.</li> <li>• Links to a national Future NHS workspace for people working in primary care to engage with people and communities. This workspace contains useful resource, case studies and a discussion forum.</li> <li>• Links to South East London <a href="#">ICS engagement toolkit</a></li> </ul>