

HAWKES BAY MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS SOCIETY

Covid-19 Vaccination Policy

DATE: December 2021

POLICY NUMBER:

REVIEWED: ongoing

AUTHORISED BY: _____
President, HBMS

Purpose:

Hawke's Bay Multiple Sclerosis Society (HBMS) has an obligation to protect staff, volunteers (including Board Members) and members in a pandemic as part of the requirements for health and safety in the workplace, and in provision of services in the health and disability sector during a pandemic.

All interactions between staff and members, and all other interactions which are based on the representation of HBMS must comply with any Ministry of Health requirements and all will be required to meet the requirements of the prevailing Covid-19 Protection Framework and any Orders.

All representatives of HBMS Society (including staff, volunteers, board members and contractors) are expected to have full vaccination against Covid-19 in order to protect themselves, and our members, health.

Vaccination and other mitigation strategies also protect the business continuity and viability of the organisation as well as enabling the organisation to continue to provide services to clients.

Employees involved:

Office Manager and MS Community Nurse.

Risk Assessment:

There are two at risk populations:

- Employees of the Society and those who represent the society in the course of their work may be more likely than the general public of being in contact with people who are not fully vaccinated.
- Members of the society who are immunocompromised or on medication or have conditions which put them at risk in being with people who are not fully vaccinated.

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) a risk assessment has been completed and has identified that the workplace is of moderate risk for the following reasons:

- Employees in the normal course of their work are in contact with people who may be immunocompromised, and/or not fully vaccinated for health reasons

- The transmission of Covid-19 Delta variant is more prevalent in indoor settings, our MS Community Nurse work includes face to face home visits and small group settings indoors.
- Face to face groups may include members who may be at greater risk of infection.
- Employees engage regularly with office staff who are therefore placed at risk through close contact with potentially infected people.
- Employees and volunteers work with People with Multiple Sclerosis (PwMS) and engage in a broad range of community environments where transmission is possible but not more so than the general public in the same environment.

Principles:

This policy will be reviewed and amended, if necessary, when there is a change or any release of Orders or directives by the Ministry of Health.

This policy is to ensure the Society:

- Responds to the pandemic event effectively and safely.
- Minimises of the impacts of the pandemic on the health of individuals and the community through vaccination.
- Be guided by Ministry of Health guidelines for future protection including infection control and vaccination.
- Service delivery continues while being flexible and working within the Ministry of Health's Covid-19 Protection Framework or any other prevailing Orders.
- The use of vaccine passports will be encouraged and required to participate in some of the society's services.

Policy:

This organisation is committed to effectively meet the health needs of members, employees, visitors and the wider community during a health pandemic in an appropriate and sustainable manner.

1. Staff

HBMS Society requires all staff including administration roles to be fully vaccinated.

Proof of vaccination status is required and a copy is to be given to the Office Manager to be kept on the staff members file.

Any new staff will be required to be fully vaccinated and will need proof of vaccination prior to appointment.

2. Provision of service by MS Community Nurse:

Provision of service to individual members by MS Community Nurse is defined below and may change in response to any further government directives and Orders. The primary consideration is within the policy purpose, regarding ensuring our obligations to staff and members for their health and safety.

Home visits will not be provided for members while the Hawke's Bay region has been placed in the red zone of the Covid-19 Protection Framework due to the increased risk to our vulnerable communities. Home visits may resume when it is considered safe to do so and will be reviewed in response to Ministry of Health frameworks and guidelines.

Service protocols:

While in the red zone of the Covid-19 Protection Framework the MS Community Nurse will communicate and deliver services via phone/text/email/zoom to clients. Face to face services will only be delivered in extenuating situations and to be discussed with the President first.

Face to face contact with members will resume once a shift has occurred between levels. The MS Community Nurse will ensure all public health control measures are in place as per HBMS Society's Covid-19 Staff Procedure.

Clients who are not fully vaccinated will only be booked for a face to face consultation at the end of the MS Community Nurses working day.

All staff are required to closely self-monitor their own health and notify the President and/or Office Manager of any change of condition which may indicate Covid-19 symptoms. Staff are required to get tested and self-isolate if they have symptoms of Covid-19, until a negative test result is received.

If a positive test result is notified to any member of staff, the President will assess the situation with the staff member and ensure that all members and other staff who have been in contact with the staff member are notified.

A staff member who is tested positive will ensure that all requirements of Ministry of Health directives for people who are Covid-19 positive are followed. The staff member will not return to work until medical evidence supports their ability to return safely to their role. Some changes of work content or contact may be negotiated with the staff member to facilitate this.

3. Members and clients of HBMS Society

Vaccination status and unvaccinated members/clients of the Society

The society has an obligation to provide a service and protect all members and/or clients.

1. Members/clients may choose not to get fully vaccinated. Members do not have to disclose their vaccination status to HBMS Society unless they choose to.
2. A member/client will be requested to prove vaccination status through My Covid Record either with a printed or emailed or screenshot copy.
3. Proof of vaccination status will be kept in the individual's confidential file.
4. A member/client who declines to provide proof of vaccination status when asked by HBMS Society's staff will be regarded as not fully vaccinated.
5. Sharing vaccination status information of individuals without permission is a breach of privacy, and members/clients have the right to keep their vaccination status private.

6. If a staff member is concerned for their own welfare, and/or have no knowledge of the vaccination status of a member/client, the staff member may request the required protocols are implemented to protect their own safety.
7. A member/client who is not fully vaccinated may not attend face to face groups, seminars or HBMS Society events unless required protocols are in place. (See 9).
8. Staff will engage with a member who has medical exemption from vaccination in the same way as if they were not fully vaccinated.
9. Face to Face contact (support groups, seminars, events) where other members are present will require:
 - a. Masks must be worn
 - b. Outdoor meeting if possible
 - c. 2 metre physical distancing if indoor
 - d. No food or drink shared
 - e. No physical contact, including standard greetings such as handshakes
 - f. Hand sanitiser used at the beginning and end of the meeting
 - g. The member may wear PPE equipment if they choose to
 - h. If a member discloses that they are not fully vaccinated to the group of members they interact with, the group may agree further protocols to keep themselves safe. The staff member will inform the unvaccinated member of requirements from the group which have been decided and recorded in writing for the group members, to the President and the unvaccinated person
 - i. If a support group decision is that the group will not permit members who are not fully vaccinated to attend despite protocols, that decision is supported.

A member/client may also request or practice any interventions to protect themselves from transmission of Covid-19 for personal use.

A member/client has the right to decline services if their safety is a concern for them.

4. Support Groups

- Face to face Support Group meetings attendance will require members to have proof of vaccination.
- Support groups will only be organised and approved by HBMS Society at level 1 and 2 or equivalent, and when it is safe to do so according to Ministry of Health directive.
- Support group members need to agree on any protocols to remain safe.
- The support group convener is obliged to ensure that protocols are enforced.
- The support group convener has the right to refuse entry to individuals whose vaccination status is known as not fully vaccinated or is unknown.

5. Volunteers (including Board Members)

- A volunteer will be unable to attend in any HBMS Society support groups, events, AGM or Board meetings unless fully vaccinated for which proof will be required.

- If any volunteer chooses not to be fully vaccinated and discloses this to HBMS Society the first consideration will be to maintain the relationship with the person and provide ways for that person can be accommodated to continue their role. For example, a Board member may still provide input through non-contact meetings, where their vaccination status does not put them or anyone else at risk.
- If a volunteer who is not fully vaccinated is in a role or function that does not require any face to face contact with members, clients or staff in any circumstances (e.g. telemarketer, home-office support) the President will have final decision on whether the vaccination requirement can be waived for the role.
- Any new volunteers will be required to be fully vaccinated and will need to provide proof of vaccination prior to appointment.

6. Contractors

- Contractors may choose not to get fully vaccinated. Contractors whose contract means they must enter the HBMS Society office and/or have face to face contact with either HBMS Society members, clients or staff need to disclose their vaccination status with proof to the Office Manager or MS Community Nurse.
- Sharing vaccination status information of individuals without permission is a breach of privacy, only the Office Manager and MS Community Nurse will have access to this information on individuals.
- Vaccination status may affect contractors' ability to undertake their role with HBMS Society.
- A contractor has the right to choose not to provide in-person support to a person who is not fully vaccinated if required protocols are not able to be implemented.
- If a contractor who is engaged in face to face interaction with members, clients or staff is not fully vaccinated, the President and/or Office Manger may terminate the contract after consideration of other options, for example virtual or non-contact services, with the contractor to mitigate the frustration of the contract.
- All new contracts will require full vaccination with proof required before appointment.

Definitions:

'Fully vaccinated' means according to the requirements of Ministry of Health. Currently (Dec 21) this requires 2 doses with a booster shot 6 months post 2nd dose but may include further booster shots in the future.

'Proof of vaccination' can be provided through My Covid Record and printing or emailing that record, which is kept in a confidential file or a Vaccination Certificate.

Appendix:

Covid-19 Protection Framework
 HBMS Risk assessment
 Covid-19 Staff Procedure