

22 June 2022

s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)
Ref: H202206648

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) which was transferred to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 18 May 2022 for information relating to vaccine mandates.

You asked:

“Are we still bound by the mandates for re-employing much needed staff?”

If so,... when can we expect this to be reviewed considering our reduced levels of restrictions?”

Workers in the health and disability sector continue to be at a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19, and work with people who are more likely to experience serious illness if infected with COVID-19. Vaccination protects the workers themselves and helps protect those who are at greater risk of being hospitalised due to COVID-19. It also reduces the impacts on staffing within the health and disability sector during an outbreak.

It was on these grounds that Health and disability workers were included in the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 (the Order), requiring these workers to be up-to-date with COVID-19 vaccinations in order to work in health and disability settings.

The risk that COVID-19 poses in terms of serious health impacts, hospitalisations, deaths, and overall pressure on the health system, (including the impact on staff and service delivery) remains. With the Omicron variant still widespread in the community transmission will continue for some time to come. In a recent review it was found that there is still a high risk for workers who work directly with people who may have COVID-19 and for those who work directly in aged care or with vulnerable and/or disabled people.

As such, the mandates for healthcare professionals are still in place under the Order.

Here is a link with information on staying up-to-date with the vaccination requirements:
www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-mandatory-vaccinations.

I understand the significant impact on services from a reduced workforce. As the COVID-19 pandemic develops, the Order remains under regular review, including the scope of the settings that are in place. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing pressures on the New Zealand health and disability system. Therefore, the next formal review of these settings is likely to occur post-winter as this is when additional winter pressures on the health system may have reduced.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā



Caroline Flora
**Acting Deputy Director-General
System Strategy and Policy**