



17/01/2022

Press release//

Black leaders take pledge in plea to community to get vaccinated.

A group of prominent health and community leaders from across England have made a joint pledge, in an effort to increase the take up vaccinations across their black communities.

In an open letter to the Black African and Black African Community, they pledge to be available for open and honest discussions about COVID-19 vaccination. This is to help the community that has been the target of disinformation about COVID-19 and vaccination. They also reassure that you will receive respect and compassion, whether you are asking for more information, having a much needed booster dose, or your very first COVID-19 vaccination.

Speaking about the pledge, Jennifer Pearson, Regional Midlands Lead CNO CMidO BME SAG, explained her motivations behind taking the pledge. "As a nurse, I have seen too many people in intensive care with COVID-19. And too many people from my own community, of all ages, some with long term health conditions and some who were previously very healthy. Everyone, who is unvaccinated is at risk of becoming seriously ill from COVID-19."

"We have had the vaccine for a year, and whilst we have a lot to be thankful for, unvaccinated people with COVID-19, including Black African and Black African Caribbean, our being admitted to intensive care units."

Whilst vaccination take-up is increasing in the black community, it is at a slower rate than for other populations. Leaving more of the Black community at risk of catching COVID and becoming seriously ill.

Dr Joseph Omofuma, is a pastor, GP and the clinical lead for mental health lead at the Caribbean and African Health Network. On taking the pledge he said:

"There is still a lot of disinformation being shared about the vaccine. I have taken this pledge as I want the community to know that it's ok to have questions, but to please use trusted sources for your information. Please don't turn down vaccination until you have spoken to a health professional, including myself.

"Unfortunately, COVID has resulted in a lot of deaths across all communities. I am sincerely sorry for everyone's losses. We have all lost family, friends and colleagues. I sadly lost one of the doctors who trained me. His death came before there was a vaccine available. Both as a doctor and a member of the community, I want to see

fewer hospitalisations and serious, long-term illness from COVID-19. Vaccination is our step towards that."

Community leaders have also taken the pledge. Reverend Charles Kwaku Odoi, is the Chief Officer of the Caribbean and African Health Network (CAHN). A non-profit organisation, of health, faith and community leaders; CAHN is working to eliminate health disparities, respond to diverse community needs, and improve the quality of life for the medically underserved and those experiencing barriers to care. Charles said:

"There is a real need to provide clear advice to the community about vaccination. From information about having the vaccination in pregnancy, to explaining the need to have the vaccine even when you have had COVID in the past. People have many questions, and that's ok, but please talk to us, so that we can have an honest conversation.

"COVID is still here and unfortunately many people are dying from COVID or being left with poor long-term health. I too have lost friends to COVID. Sadly, a few days before Christmas, I was at the hospital to say goodbye to a friend and fellow faith leader. This is why, we continue to ask you to talk to us about vaccination, and to ask our network to talk to their community about vaccination."

Throughout the pandemic, CAHN has been undertaking works and projects to promote health equity. Ensuring people have access to services, trusted COVID-19 and vaccination information and the opportunity to engage with health professionals. Helping people to make informed health choices. CAHN continues to offer a vaccination helpline, answering people's questions about vaccination to help them to feel more empowered and confident in their decision. On peak days, the helpline takes 18-22 calls per day.

You can contact the CAHN helpline on 0771 002 2382. The COVID-19 vaccine is available to everyone over the age of 12 living in the UK, free of charge and irrespective of a person's immigration status. Your NHS is here for you, and you can book your vaccination online at nhs.uk/COVIDvaccination or attend a walk-in centre.

Ends//

Notes to editor.

- CAHN is a non-profit organisation that provides a range of services to improve the health and wellbeing of the community. Including counselling, family advocacy, community leadership programmes, Black Community Anti-racist programme, and projects to improve health literacy, engagement and support. www.cahn.org.uk
- More than 114 million total COVID-19 vaccinations have been delivered in England, including more than 30 million booster or third doses. Data published 17 January: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/covid-19-vaccinations/>

- The new variant, Omicron has proven to be highly infectious and spreads rapidly. Having a COVID-19 booster vaccine as soon as possible, will help protect you and the people you love.
- A booster COVID-19 vaccine provides up to 88% protection against severe illness and hospitalisation from the Omicron variant.
- If you are over 18, please come forward and get your booster vaccination as soon as you can. You can book this two months after your last dose of the COVID-19 vaccine jab, to take place a further month later.
- Also, come and get a booster if you are aged 16 or over with a health condition that puts you at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19, if you are a frontline health or social care worker.
- The COVID-19 vaccinations do not contain any animal or harmful products, they do not alter your DNA or cause infertility.