

NHSEI Counter Fraud Alert 25th January 2021

The private purchase of COVID-19 vaccines

The NHSEI Counter Fraud team have received intelligence via the NHS Counter Fraud Authority (NHSCFA) with regards to a private company approaching GP practices offering to give a donation to charity or offering individual staff members a cash amount for unused COVID-19 vaccinations.

The approach was by email to the practice inbox and required a reply to advise of the availability and take up of the offer. We understand that no practice took up the offer and that the approach was reported through the appropriate channels.

Government guidelines clearly state that vaccinations are available from the NHS and cannot be sold privately in the UK.

The NHSCFA is clear that any attempt to privately purchase NHS supply, or offer private access to the vaccine is of concern for the following reasons:

- It risks establishing a black market where Government-purchased property intended for eligible groups through the NHS is sold at a profit for the benefit of criminals.
- Any unauthorized sale of COVID-19 NHS vaccines to a private company or individual would be an offence and is likely to attract a range of sanctions for those involved.
- It risks undermining the public message that the vaccines are free and confuses the process, allowing fraudsters to take advantage of the vulnerable by offering “vaccinations” and requiring payment.

Prevention Advice / Action to take

To protect against this type of fraud please consider the following:

- NHS organisations and providers of NHS services should alert their staff that any approach by individuals or companies attempting to privately purchase COVID-19 vaccinations should be refused and immediately reported in accordance with the procedures outlined below.
- As the vaccine provision is extended out to other providers of NHS services and an expanded workforce is used to administer these vaccines, they should also be made aware of this information.
- NHS organisations and providers of NHS services may wish to raise awareness to the public that COVID-19 vaccinations are only available through the NHS, are not privately available and that there should be no charge for vaccinations.
- Any approach by companies or individuals to privately purchase vaccines must be immediately brought to the attention of your Local Counter Fraud Specialist (LCFS) or reported to the NHS Fraud and Corruption Reporting Line (powered by Crimestoppers) on 0800 028 40 60 or online at <https://cfa.nhs.uk/reportfraud>