

Delivering the NHS Covid-19 vaccination

Summary

As you may be aware, the Government has asked the NHS to be ready to deliver a vaccination programme for England from December, so that those who need it most will be able to access vaccinations as soon as they are available.

Detailed planning has been underway, building on the expertise and strong track record the NHS already has in delivering immunisations like the annual flu vaccination programme and routine immunisations for children and pregnant women. These plans are primarily led by local GPs and community pharmacies, however for the Covid-19 vaccine we will also work with local councils and social care providers to expand on this, as well as set up roving vaccine delivery services in people's homes or care homes.

When eligibility is extended to wider groups, given the current requirements for social distancing and the number of people covered, this will be supplemented by specific 'mass' Covid-19 vaccination sites, which could be within existing NHS estates or at temporary standalone venues.

What vaccine will be available?

While there are a number of different candidate vaccines being developed, we don't yet know which will be approved for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), or when this might happen for each.

As clinical trials progress and we understand more about the requirements of different vaccines – such as storage, transportation and how it is administered – we will continue to refine our plans to ensure we have the right resources in place, including skilled staff, to deliver the vaccine.

Who will get the vaccine?

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have recently published [updated advice](#) on the priority groups to receive Covid-19 vaccine, advising that vaccines should first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people aged over 80 and health and social workers, before being rolled out to the rest of the population in order of age and risk.

The JCVI will continue to update this advice as more information becomes available on vaccine effectiveness, safety and clinical characteristics. This will in turn be reflected in our plans.



How will vaccine services be staffed?

Vaccinating hundreds of thousands of people as quickly as possible across Herefordshire and Worcestershire will require lots of staff so we will be in touch to ask for your support. We are already working with local and national partners on a campaign to initially recruit as many trained and experienced vaccinators as possible. Experienced vaccinators working for our local trusts and other employers will also be among the first asked to help deliver the vaccine.

More vaccinators will be needed in the longer term which is why the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) recently consulted on temporary changes to legislation allowing a wider group of clinical staff, including physiotherapists and paramedics, to become vaccinators. Public Health England (PHE) and Health Education England will be developing training courses, including supervision from experienced staff, in order to upskill those groups.

We are also looking at recruiting from the pool of former staff who signed up to help the NHS during the first wave, bank staff and third sector partners, led by St John Ambulance, who will also help recruit the important non-clinical support roles we will need to ensure clinics run safely and smoothly.

When will the vaccine be available?

We do not have any confirmation about the timelines of the vaccination at this stage, but as you would expect we are working with partners across Herefordshire and Worcestershire to ensure that once a vaccine is ready, we can get it to those most vulnerable as quickly and safely as possible.

Whilst the news of vaccine progress is great, it is important to remember that a vaccine is not an overnight fix and we could still be several months away from any large-scale vaccination numbers and reduction in community transmissions. We know that an infection in the community today could lead to a hospital admission in two weeks' time and that every bed taken to care for someone with Covid-19 means one less bed to care for and treat other people who may be in need.

So as infection rates in our area continue to be very high, we will continue to work with Public Health colleagues and local partners who are doing everything they can to prevent outbreaks and stop the virus from spreading.

For now, the most important thing we can all do to impact on this virus and its devastating effect on people and communities, is to follow the current advice.

In the meantime please contact hw.engage@nhs.net if you have any questions.

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