

COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

Care homes briefing: 7 January 2021

Roll out of the care home COVID-19 vaccination programme across Sussex

Dear care home manager

As we roll out the COVID-19 vaccine across Sussex, we are committed to making sure you are kept up to date. We will be sharing with you weekly updates on the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination, our Coronavirus (COVID-19) system response, and more.

You will be aware older people in care homes have been identified as the top priority group for the vaccine by the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisations due to their high risk from COVID-19. Care staff are also in the top priority.

However, due to the well-publicised logistical challenges associated with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, the NHS was initially unable to transport the vaccine to care homes and instead began inviting care staff to receive the vaccination at hospital hubs and then at other local vaccination services.

Delivery of the vaccine to care homes in Sussex

As regulators approved a way for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to be transported in smaller batches, we began the process of delivering it in care homes for older people, with the first homes vaccinated in the week of 29 December 2020. The vaccine cannot be split into batches of less than 75, and cannot be transported between homes, so delivery began at larger care homes.

The recent approval of the Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccine, which is much easier to transport, means that we will now also be able to vaccinate in many more care homes, much more quickly, safely and effectively. However it has only been available to the NHS since Monday 4 January and initially was at just one location in Sussex, to ensure a safe roll out.

Care staff vaccinations across Sussex

Vaccinations are now also being given to care staff via all our Sussex hospital hubs including Brighton, Chichester, Eastbourne, Hastings, Haywards Heath, and Worthing. Staff must book an appointment directly with the hub *before* attending. Hospital hubs cannot accommodate 'walk ins' and will have to turn away anyone that does not have an appointment and does not have identification to confirm that they are a health or care worker in Sussex.

Care homes will receive an invitation from their local hub for staff to book in, with staff working in care for older adults, and frontline health and social care workers, being scheduled first, in line with the [national priority list](#). Please wait for your invite before trying to book appointments.

Next steps

While we are making great progress, we need to be realistic that it will take time. We are working to vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible, but deploying a vaccine at this scale is unprecedented. Timing will be dependent to a large extent on manufacturing timescales and supply.

National guidance for roll out of the vaccine is being followed, with priority for vaccinating residents and staff of care homes with greater than 50 residents initially. This is for a number of both clinical, workforce capacity, and logistical reasons including the need to minimise the number of unnecessary visits to care homes to mitigate potential risk.

Vaccines are being delivered through a GP-led vaccination service, managed by the local Primary Care Networks which we expect to cover the majority of the care homes in Sussex. The remainder will be served by Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust vaccination teams. The Oxford/Astra Zeneca vaccine will be made available to Primary Care Networks over the next three weeks, allowing the NHS in Sussex to increase the number of care home residents and staff vaccinated each day. Delivery of vaccinations by the GP-led service is also dependant on the readiness and approval of the local vaccination service, in line with planned go live dates, which will be expedited throughout January.

We will be working in partnership with care homes to organise and schedule the vaccinations. This will be aligned with availability of the vaccine in local areas to work towards the goal of getting all national priority group care homes scheduled for vaccinations by the end of January.

A detailed plan for each local area is currently being worked up which will confirm the timelines, requirements and Standard Operating Procedures for care homes and scope any support likely to be required based on learning from the pilot sites already vaccinated. The NHS will be in touch with care homes directly to arrange and support the process of vaccinations and the appropriate information sharing and consents needed, including any additional considerations such as mental capacity and safeguarding.

Availability of the vaccine and sites able to vaccinate people are increasing week by week, but again, we need to be realistic that it will take time. All residents will receive the vaccination in their care home.

We will shortly be writing out to you with more detail about the schedule of vaccinations in case homes and thank you for your patience at this challenging time.

Thank you again for your continuing dedication and support for our population, each other, and the Sussex system. We have so much to be proud of in the way we all, as a health and care system, have responded to the pandemic throughout 2020. We are confident that we will continue to make positive progress this year too.