

# COVID-19 Response Stakeholder briefing

05 January 2021

## Response to COVID-19 – West Sussex

This briefing aims to update you on the response across our local NHS system in West Sussex to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, in particular the vaccination programme.

### Current cases

The number of new cases of COVID-19 in West Sussex has continued to rise. Across the county, the local rates are now above the national figures. The latest stats show a rate of 555 new cases per 100,000 population in West Sussex while the rate for England is 518.

### Managing demand on NHS services

The demand for all NHS and care services across Sussex has risen significantly due to the higher infection rates of COVID-19 in the community in recent weeks. In some places, we are now seeing triple the number of COVID-19 positive hospital inpatients compared with the first peak back in the spring, and numbers are still increasing.

Staff across the NHS and local authorities are working tirelessly to ensure they continue to provide safe consistent care; hospitals, community teams, mental health services, social care, GP practices and the NHS111 telephone service are incredibly busy, but remain open.

In terms of impact on services, the current position is:

**Discharge** - at times, to ensure we can treat patients who need urgent care quickly and to maintain the highest standards of safety for all our patients, this will mean some patients are discharged from hospitals into community settings which may not be their first choice. Our teams are working to have conversations with families and manage this with each individual in the best possible way;

**Planned operations** – at this time the system is continuing to provide cancer, urgent elective operations and diagnostics, but some routine, planned operations are being delayed in order to respond to the increase in demand. These decisions are never taken lightly and are temporary measures only.

**Maternity services** - due to the significant pressure on our ambulance service, immediate changes are being made to maternity services to ensure that all births can take place as safely as possible. Whilst the ambulance trust is prioritising urgent 999 calls, this means that support for all emergencies from the ambulance service will be stretched and response times may be delayed. This includes attending home addresses for complications that can arise during home births, and attending for complications that can arise at stand-alone midwife led units where women/people may need to be transferred to another maternity unit.

The safety of births is our priority, so across Sussex the decision has been made to suspend planned homebirths and births at the stand-alone midwife led unit in Eastbourne Hospital at this time. The midwife led units at Worthing Hospital and St Richard's Hospital in Chichester are both continuing as they are co-located with maternity units. Our teams are working to ensure that all of our maternity services are as accommodating as possible and the home birthing teams and midwife-led unit midwives will be available to continue to provide care if you were planning a home birth or a midwife-led unit birth.

The situation continues to be monitored regularly and there are system calls every day. We will continue to keep you updated.

## **COVID-19 Vaccination programme**

Work continues at pace to roll out the COVID-19 vaccination across West Sussex.

Vaccinations are taking place in

- Hospital hubs;
- GP led vaccination services;
- Roving service to care homes and housebound; and
- Planning for large vaccination services (formerly known as mass sites).

### **Hospital hubs**

Hospital hubs in Sussex were launched at the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton on 08 December 2020. Teams at the hospital have been vaccinating those over the age of 80 who were attending the hospital and health and care staff.

In West Sussex, Worthing Hospital went live as a hospital hub last week, Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath went live on Monday and St Richard's Hospital and East Surrey Hospital (for residents in the north of the county) go live this week.

Princess Royal Hospital is one of the first in the country to use the new AstraZeneca vaccine.

Other hospital hubs in Sussex include The Conquest Hospital in Hastings (went live last week) and Eastbourne Hospital (due to go live this week).

### **GP-led vaccination services**

GP-led vaccination services are where the majority of the current population are being offered their vaccinations. In total in Sussex there are 15 sites which have gone live to date.

In the majority, each service is supported by a number of GP practices (within their Primary Care Network footprint) working together to vaccinate their collective population.

To date there have been eight sites in West Sussex which have started vaccinating their patients who are over the age of 80:

- Angmering (Angmering Medical Centre, moving to Angmering Community Centre)
- Crawley – (Leacroft Surgery and Saxonbrook Medical Centre)
- Haywards Heath (Perrymount Road site)
- Horsham – (Park Surgery and Christ's Hospital Blue Coats)
- Pulborough (Pulborough Medical Group)

- Storrington (The Glebe)

Further sites in West Sussex are going live this week:

- Bognor Regis (Bognor Medical Centre)
- Worthing (Strand Medical Group and Durrington Health Centre)
- Shoreham by Sea (Northbourne Medical Centre)
- Crawley (Poundhill Medical Practice)

There are then further sites expected subject to final approvals, including in Worthing, Lancing, Chichester, East Grinstead, Littlehampton/Rustington and Midhurst.

In areas where GP practices have not signed up to the Enhanced Service to lead the vaccination programme, we are working the Primary Care Networks and Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust to provide a service to these patients instead. Final details are being confirmed in terms of arrangements for these patients and we will share this as soon as possible.

Each site that has gone live or is going live this week had an initial delivery of vaccine with 975 doses to provide the first vaccination to their patients. Some have ordered further supplies and have completed a second session of first doses to their patients. This will now be an ongoing process with the sites ordering vaccine and inviting in more of their over 80 registered population.

The Government guidance on the timing of the second dose has been updated and is now over a 12 week period. Our vaccination services will be working to adhere to the guidance and invite their patients back for their second dose in the 12 week period.

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.

### **Vaccinations in care homes**

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.

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

Now that regulators have approved a way for the Pfizer vaccine to be transported in smaller batches, we have begun the process of delivering it in care homes. The approval of the Oxford vaccine, which is much easier to transport, means that we will now be able to vaccinate in many more care homes much more quickly.

To date, the first eight homes were vaccinated at the end of December 2020.

We are working in partnership with care homes to organise and schedule the vaccinations. Vaccines are being delivered in the main through the GP-led vaccination service, managed by the local Primary Care Networks. We expect these to cover about 60 per cent of the care homes in Sussex, with the remainder being served by Sussex Community NHS Foundation

Trust vaccination teams. All residents will receive the vaccination in their care home. Staff will continue to also be able to access the vaccine from hospital hubs.

In the immediate term, our planning continues to be based on the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Because it cannot be split into batches of less than 75, and cannot be transported between homes, we will be starting with larger homes, and homes with more than 50 residents are being prioritised.

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.

The NHS, local authorities, acute hospitals, and community services have worked together to draw up a prioritisation schedule for the order in which Sussex care homes will receive the vaccine, and this will be aligned with availability of the vaccine in local areas to work towards the goal of getting all care homes vaccinated by the end of January. 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.

A detailed plan for each 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.

### **COVID-19 vaccination scam alert**

We are aware that some people are receiving fraudulent calls and text messages offering the COVID-19 vaccination. In some cases, people are asked to press a number on their keypad or to send a text message to confirm they wish to receive the vaccine. Doing so is likely to result in a charge being applied to their phone bill. In other cases, callers are offering the vaccine for a fee or asking for bank details.

People are warned to be alert to these scams. The vaccine is only available from the NHS and the NHS will contact you when it is your turn. At present, appointments are only being offered to members of the public over 80 years old.

The NHS will:

- NEVER ask you to press a button on your keypad or send a text asking you to confirm you want the vaccine.
- NEVER ask for payment for the vaccine or for your bank details.
- If you receive a call you believe to be fraudulent, hang up. If you believe you have been the victim of fraud or identity theft you should report this directly to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. Where the victim is vulnerable, report it to Sussex Police online or by calling 101.

### **More information**

We continue to publish all of the latest information on the vaccine of the [Sussex Health and Care Partnership website](#) including a public FAQ, which you may find useful. An FAQ with suggested replies to common enquiries is also attached to this briefing to help you with the questions you may be receiving.