

Roll out of the Covid-19 vaccine in Berkshire

I have received this update on the vaccine programme from the Berkshire West Integrated Partnership:

It's the biggest mass vaccination programme in the history of the NHS – and in Berkshire West the PPG groups have played a key role supporting the roll out of the Covid vaccine.

The PPGs' tireless work has meant this highly complex vaccination programme has been running smoothly since it started in December and that thousands of vulnerable people have received the ground breaking Pfizer vaccine.

The vaccine has undergone rigorous scientific assessments trials to guarantee it is safe, effective and of a high quality and clinical trials have also been carried out on up to 50,000 people across the world aged between 18 to 84.

At the time of going to press PCNs across Wokingham North and South, Tilehurst, University, West Reading Villages and Reading West have started delivering the vaccine. GPs have identified suitable sites within their PCNs to administer the vaccinations, initially to patients over 80 and frontline health and care workers. The programme will be rolled out to other groups* over the next few months.

People are asked not to contact their GP surgery so that their practice team can focus on arranging the vaccinations and continue providing day-to-day support for all of their registered patients. You will be contacted when it is your turn to receive the vaccine.

Dr James Kennedy, Joint Clinical Director of the Wokingham North PCN, and a GP at Wargrave surgery said: "This is the biggest vaccination programme in NHS history and, thanks to some truly outstanding work done by our clinicians, support staff, PPG members and community volunteers, the roll out in our area has been achieved in a smooth and timely way.

"Many of the first patients we vaccinated hadn't left their homes for months and had extremely limited contact with other people, so for them it was a huge achievement to attend for their appointment. Their spirit and determination to get to our site was really remarkable. And many of them were very grateful for the way all our teams – the clinicians, surgery staff and volunteers – had rallied round to deliver the vaccine," he said.

Tony Lloyd, Chair of the Wokingham Area PPG Forum and Wargrave Surgery PPG member said "our team was led by Judith Stephenson-Hodges who liaised with practice staff, organised volunteer rotas and attended on all three days for the delivery of the first dose of the vaccines. We managed to vaccinate people at a rate of about 60 an hour in a very organised and safe way. This

involved guiding them and their carers to be registered prior to assembling them in groups of five. From there a PPG member escorted them to the main surgery entrance for temperature checks prior to vaccination. Once they had received the vaccine, a volunteer and PPG member then escorted them to the observation lounge where they were asked to wait for 15 minutes before being discharged and escorted back to their cars.

“The system worked very well, thanks to the team work of everyone involved, and I think highlights the value PPGs bring to their surgeries,” he added.

One of the Wargrave patients said: “We were happy to come for this vaccination. We wanted to show to others that it’s safe and well run, so they will feel comfortable to come for the jab as well.”

Over in Swallowfield, PPG representatives were out in force, directing traffic, accompanying patients and helping to oversee the booking-in systems.

Speaking on the first day, Finchampstead Dr Jane Spurgeon: “I can honestly say this morning was one of the highlights of my career, such a lovely experience both team wise and patient wise. Thank you so much to everyone who played their part in delivering this. It was so exciting to think we’re all involved in a little bit of ‘making history’.

And volunteers were also out in force to guide and advise patients from Pangbourne’s Boathouse Surgery and Chapel Row Surgery as they attended for their appointments.

Dr Abid Irfan, Chair of Berkshire West CCG said: “Whilst the vaccine offers our best defence against the virus, it’s important to remember that it doesn’t mean we can start to relax our attention to the hands, face, space regulations. I’d urge everyone to continue doing everything they can to comply with the Government’s rules and play their part in helping to keep themselves and their families safe.”

*The full list of groups to be prioritised for the vaccination is:

- Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
- All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
- All those 75 years of age and over
- All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
- All those 65 years of age and over. All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
- All those 60 years of age and over
- All those 55 years of age and over
- All those 50 years of age and over

The vaccination is not recommended for some people:

- Anyone with a history of severe reactions or allergies
- Children (with some exceptions). The vaccine hasn’t been tested in

younger children yet

- Pregnant women. The vaccines have not yet been tested on pregnant women so this highly precautionary approach is being taken. Women should also not be vaccinated if they are planning a pregnancy within three months of the first dose. If a woman becomes pregnant between her first and second dose of the vaccination, then the second dose will be postponed until completion of the pregnancy.