

A Letter From the CEO

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The first Covid vaccinations started today in some of our local hospitals. This will be followed by general practice next week. Approximately 20 Wave 1 local practices in Wessex will be receiving a box of 975 Pfizer BioNTech vaccines next Monday or Tuesday. Nationally there will be 280 Practices in Wave 1. This will be closely followed by Wave 2 and 3 before Christmas.

These practices will get a further delivery on the 4th January to give the second vaccination. It is not expected at this stage that there will be additional deliveries between these dates for those practices but this may change depending on vaccine availability.

The recently published Covid Vaccine Programme (CVP) Enhanced Service has resulted 416 practices out of a total of 420 practices in Wessex signing up to deliver the Covid vaccine.

We recognise the considerable workload associated with the CVP and the additional pressure this has put practices under. There are a number of uncertainties and lack of details, but despite that many practices have indicated that they wanted to be part of the solution to ending the Covid pandemic.

The LMC will continue to work hard on your behalf and to try to find solutions to the unresolved issues and remove as many barriers as we can.

Stay well and stay safe.



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Covid-19 Vaccination



The Covid Vaccination Programme will start with the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine. This vaccine is composed of mRNA which is surrounded by 4 layers of lipid and is then frozen and stored at -70c to keep it stable. The vaccine will be delivered in a box (often referred to as a Pizza box) with 195 vials, each containing 5 doses - therefore you will have 975 doses.

Once defrosted the vaccine has a shelf life of 120 hours or 5 days. Once removed from the Ultra Low Freezer a label will be attached to the box of vaccines which will indicate when it was removed from the freezer and when it must be used by.

Before use the vaccine will need to be diluted with the provided normal saline - 1.8ml will be added to the vaccine vial. Then the vial needs to be gently inverted 10 times to mix the vaccine. If you shake it hard you will see the vial become 'frothy' and this is where lipid is damaged and in turn this will damage the mRNA which will render the vaccine ineffective.

When you receive your first order of this vaccine another 975 doses will be delivered 21 days later for you to administer the second dose. It has now been agreed that the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine should be administered with a gap of a minimum of 21 days between the first and second dose. The AstraZeneca vaccine will have a gap of a minimum of 28 days between the first and the second dose.

For those who are due to receive the vaccines next week it will mean the 2nd dose will arrive in early January. Currently it is not clear if you will receive any further vaccines before Christmas. It is possible depending on the availability of the various Covid vaccines and the licensing of the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine.

We will be informed if additional vaccine becomes available and the situation changes.

Prioritisation

If your site potentially has more than 975 patients over 80 years who may wish to be vaccinated, and you need to prioritise which patients should have access to the first supply of vaccine to your designated site, then you could consider the following:

- i. Age 80 or over;
- ii. Co-morbidities;
- iii. Ethnicity.

It is essential we vaccinate in line with [JCVI guidance](#) and ensure minimal wastage.

PCN Groupings designated sites should therefore ensure that after all efforts to facilitate patient attendance, any unfilled appointments or residual supply of vaccine are used to vaccinate Care Home and practice staff within the PCN grouping, who have been identified at highest risk of serious illness from COVID-19. Healthcare providers have been undertaking staff risk assessments throughout the pandemic to identify such individuals.

Because of the fragility of the Pfizer BioNTech Vaccine, this will **not be used** for Care Home residents or Housebound patients in the first instance. These patients remain a high priority - but we will need to wait for

confirmation that we are able to move the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine or the AstarZeneca Vaccine becomes available.

We have asked about people with **learning disabilities being identified as a high priority** as they have been shown to be an extremely vulnerable group, and this is under consideration.

Don't move out of the defined cohorts

The initial cohort is the over 80s, care home staff (who may also be invited to be vaccinated in the hospital vaccination hub) and health and social care staff. Because of the shortage of vaccine if you vaccinate your staff please ensure they are those at greatest risk but also ensure that you use all of the available vaccines and avoid wasting any.

Covid vaccination cautions / contraindications in adults

There actually aren't many cautions or contraindications to vaccination but cautions or contraindications include:

The usual contraindications to immunisation e.g. person being unwell, the other contraindications include:

- Previous anaphylaxis to Covid vaccine.
- Significant allergy to vaccine constituents.
- Pregnancy.
- Planning to become pregnant within 3 months of Covid vaccine.
- Breastfeeding.
- Received Covid vaccine less than 3 weeks earlier.
- Received any vaccine in the past 7 days- this is a relative contraindication.
- Additional information Covid vaccine is inactivated and no animal products are used in its manufacture.

The vial seal is synthetic rubber - bromobutyl not latex.

PGDs, PSDs and National Protocol

It is expected that the majority of vaccinations will be delivered by health care professionals under a Patient Group Direction (PGD) or lay vaccinators under the COVID-19 National Protocol.

Please note that it is anticipated that both the PGD and National Protocol for the COVID-19 vaccination will be available for use by the end of this week. When other healthcare professionals have the relevant skills and are working under a PGD, the presence of GPs is not an essential legal requirement. However, it is expected that a general practitioner will be involved in supervising make up and delivery of the vaccine at the launch of the programme and be on site to provide leadership, assist with the consent process or manage any difficulties.

Collaborative Agreement

A national template which has been provided for your benefit. It is essential that this is in place and agreed before you start vaccination. There are areas for you to complete or to add additional areas of clarification. I would particularly suggest that you make detailed agreements with regard to the financial section and also the indemnity.

Care Quality Commission

Practices working together whether that is in one of the practices or in a non-NHS site will have an impact on your CQC registration. There is no need to create a new registration but you do need to inform CQC - [click here for more CQC advice](#).

Clinical Waste

There will be more clinical waste created by the vaccination of patients with the Covid vaccine. You do not need to take any action as the national team have ensured that your additional clinical waste will be collected.

Security

There are concerns about the security of the vaccination sites, especially the non-NHS Sites. Once all sites are identified the Police will be notified and they may make some security checks for some sites especially for the non NHS sites.

In the unlikely event of a surgery being broken into, this should be reported to the Police and also your CCG.

Pinnacle (PharmOutcomes)

This is the IT system you will be required to use to start the vaccination programme. This is because currently EMIS and TPP are not configured to have the functionality required but it is expected that they will be able to be used in the near future. A smart card for Pinnacle is not required but if available will provide additional functionality, e.g. access to the summary care record.

This software is Web based and so you will require WiFi connection or a 4G connection. Sites will be provided with a number of hand held scanners to scan the bar code on the vaccine vials and also some laptops which will be 4G enabled. These will be useful for the use with the housebound and the Care Homes. The laptops will have restricted access to a number of websites including the BNF, NICE, GP Notebook, Pinnacle, NHS England Covid guidance.

Useful links for the Pinnacle software are below.

Patient Journey - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XT0icQ6m0y8&feature=youtu.be>

Training Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAD5BnKuE2U&feature=youtu.be>

More details will become available on Pinnacle and all staff working at the vaccination sites will require training on how to use Pinnacle.

Many practices are used to using **GP Connect** and this will be available for practices working collaboratively across a PCN Grouping to have an appointment booking service and access to clinical records.

Many practices have been asking about using AccuRx for the vaccination programme. The national team have reached an agreement to fund the booking system in AccuRx in addition to extra SMS text capacity. More details will be available shortly.

The national booking system will be available to practices but we are told that this may take some weeks before this can happen. Practices and PCN Groupings will therefore initially need to rely on their own systems.

Equipment

Each of the vaccine sites will have a delivery of equipment, this will depend on whether this is an NHS or non NHS site.

This will include a fridge for the storage of the vaccine and also a small freezer to store the ice packs to use in the cool bags (which will also come with the delivery) for use when you take the vaccine to the housebound or the Care Homes.

Included in the delivery of equipment will be a defibrillator, an anaphylaxis pack and oxygen masks but no oxygen cylinder.

You will also receive PPE, cotton wool balls, syringes, needles etc. In future you should receive a delivery of consumables 3 working days before you receive the vaccine delivery. You should also get notification prior to any delivery and be told whether this is an AM or PM delivery.

With the vaccine will come the required number of needles and syringes in addition to the Covid appointment cards which you can provide to the patients if you wish to do so.

NHS England are going to produce some template letters to invite patients to be vaccinated and these will be shared with practices to use if they wish.

Consent

Patients who are going to be vaccinated need to have informed consent - on the NHS England webinar they confirmed that written consent was not required.

When using the Pinnacle software it will ask you to confirm that the person has consented to the vaccine, and therefore this consent will be recorded.

The content of the newsletter is subject to change as the CVP develops and more information becomes available but is a reflection of the information that is currently available.

