

## **Aberdeenshire Covid-19 Vaccine Roll Out – frequently asked questions**

### **What is the difference between the National appointment system and the one we have been using?**

In Grampian we initially took the decision to issue appointments locally whilst we waited for the national booking system to come online. We used information provided by GP practices to allocate appointments. We also established a local call centre and had full control over the information that went into the appointment letters which allowed us to highlight local information on transport etc.

The national booking system is now live and able to schedule appointments at all of our clinics. We move to this new system from next week and people in the 70-74 cohort will receive their appointments through this system. The national system will also allow people to change details of their appointments, such as time, date and venue should they need to and there is capacity in the system to do so.

There is also a national phonenumber which people can use to make changes to appointments, you can find all information here: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine>

### **What has changed in vaccination programme?**

The Scottish Government is confident that we are now in a position to vaccinate at a much-accelerated pace and move through the cohorts quicker than initially anticipated. Initially the programme required us to have vaccinated all cohorts including cohort 5 (all those over 60) by the end of March with cohorts 6-9 being completed by early May. The accelerated programme will mean that we will need to complete vaccinations for all cohorts including cohort 6 (all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality) by the end of February. This represents a significant increase in the amount of vaccinations we need to be able to deliver over the next month.

### **Why are you closing the clinics?**

The acceleration in the vaccine roll-out is really great news but will mean that we have to concentrate on delivering vaccines from a smaller number of clinics. All of our Aberdeenshire Clinics will now need to run 8am-8pm seven days a week to ensure that we are able to vaccinate as many people as possible in as short a time frame as we can. The smaller the number of clinics we run the faster we will be able to go.

### **Why are we closing the Alford clinic?**

The clinics at Alford and Huntly were due to run on a rotation basis (one week Huntly the next Alford and so on) however with the changes to the Grampian wide vaccination programme, we need to increase the capacity of the Huntly clinic to run 7 days a week twelve hours a day. In a nutshell we can no longer run both clinics at the capacity required so we had to prioritise the one furthest from any other options.



### **Why are we closing the Ellon clinic?**

For the same reason. The original plan had a location in Ellon in it, but that clinic has had to close. The more resource we put to those mass vaccination clinics the longer it will take to actually vaccinate the community. Put simply we do not have the resource to run the number of vaccination centres that we had planned to. Staff who were meant to be at those facilities will move to the larger sites, enabling longer clinic sessions and the capacity to give more injections each day.

### **I am registered with an Aberdeen City GP, where will I get my vaccination?**

Appointments will now be allocated by postcode with people being sent an appointment at their nearest clinic, rather than by which GP they are registered with.

### **How did you select the venues for the mass vaccination centres?**

We selected large venues as the most efficient way to deliver mass vaccinations, both in terms of the size and scale of building (and associated facilities) and to ensure the maximum number of staff available to support this activity, including vaccinators and support staff.

Each venue must meet a number of criteria including location, size, availability of separate rest and changing space for staff, pre vaccination waiting area, post vaccination rest area, disabled access, suitable storage facilities, availability (we need to secure venues for at least 6 months) as well as separate entrance and exit.

We have tried wherever possible to ensure that each venue is within a 10-mile drive for most people. However, with the rurality of Aberdeenshire this is not always possible.

### **The centres aren't convenient for me – why can't I go to my GP?**

GPs have been heavily involved in the roll-out of the vaccine to the over 80s, housebound patients and care home residents and staff. We need to protect the primary care services that GPs offer across our whole region. To maximise the amount of people we can vaccinate at pace we need people to attend a mass vaccination centre. A few of our most remote communities will still have the vaccine administered by their GP. This covers Braemar, Ballater and Strathdon.

### **Why have you chosen to use sports facilities when it means we can't use them?**

The simple answer is that there are a very limited number of venues that meet the location, size and accessibility requirements for a mass vaccination centre. We have tried wherever possible to use venues that are not sports or leisure facilities however this has not always been possible. Colleagues at Live Life Aberdeenshire are also putting plans in place for the provision of sports and physical activities in

alternative venues in the communities affected, should they be allowed to resume before vaccination efforts are completed.

### **Why can't you put a clinic in every town?**

We have a limited and precious staffing resource, and we must use those staff to maximise the amount of people we can vaccinate as quickly as possible. The thinner we spread our staff the slower the roll-out of the vaccine.

### **Can we request a mobile vaccination clinic for our village?**

No. We do have a mobile clinic which we will deploy when required. To deploy the mobile unit, we would need to use staff from the main vaccination centre which would take capacity away from that clinic. Therefore any decision to deploy the mobile unit will be taken due to a defined clinical need.

### **Will I be able to change the venue I get my appointment at?**

As far as possible we would encourage everyone to take the appointment slot and venue they have been allocated. However, the Aberdeenshire Immunisation Contact Centre will be operating Mon-Fri 08.30-16.30 which will allow people to change the time or venue if needs be. Their number is 0330 128 9919. Please only contact them if you have received an appointment letter.

The first phase of appointments are being sent out locally, however, there will be a national system for sending out and allocating appointments which is due to come online from 8<sup>th</sup> Feb. This national system will allow people who have been allocated an appointment, to use an online portal/website to change that appointment should they need to.

### **If we are in lockdown can I travel to my appointment?**

Yes. Attending healthcare appointments is classed as essential travel.

### **How will I get to my appointment if I cannot drive?**

We are encouraging everyone to make every effort to arrange their own transport to clinics. Going to your appointment is classed as essential travel so you can car share with a friend or relative if required – remember to wash your hands before and after, keep your distance, wear a facemask and keep the car windows open. You can get guidance on car sharing [HERE](#)

If you want to find out about public transport go to the Traveline Scotland website on [www.travelinescotland.com](http://www.travelinescotland.com) or call them on 0871 200 2233. You can check the latest Stagecoach timetables at [www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/national/covid-temporary-timetables](http://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/national/covid-temporary-timetables). If you

are struggling to work out how to get to your appointment you can call THInC on 01467 536111 or email [travel@thinc-hub.org](mailto:travel@thinc-hub.org) for advice.

### **Can I volunteer to drive people to their appointments?**

You can register to volunteer through the Grampian Assistance Hub <https://www.gcah.org.uk/>

### **When will I get my vaccination?**

There is a national (Scotland) plan for rolling out the vaccine which you can read [HERE](#). That plan gives the following indicative timescales for the administration of the first dose of the vaccine for cohorts 1-5 and we are currently in line to meet those timelines.

### **What priority list are you using to allocate appointments?**

People aged 50 or over are most at risk, and the risk increases with age.

Older adults living in care homes are at greater risk because large groups of especially vulnerable people are living together, in surroundings where the virus can spread quickly.

Frontline healthcare and social care workers are also at risk as they may be exposed to infection.

JCVI advises the order of priority for the coronavirus vaccination is:

1. residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
2. all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
3. all those 75 years of age and over
4. all those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
5. all those 65 years of age and over
6. all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
7. all those 60 years of age and over
8. all those 55 years of age and over
9. all those 50 years of age and over

### **What counts as an 'underlying health condition'?**

There is good evidence that certain underlying health conditions increase the risk of morbidity and mortality from COVID-19. When compared to persons without underlying health conditions, the absolute increased risk in those with underlying health conditions is considered generally to be lower than the increased risk in persons over the age of 65 years (with the exception of the clinically extremely vulnerable – see above). The committee's advice is to offer vaccination to those aged 65 years and over followed by those in clinical risk groups aged 16 years and over. The main risk groups identified by the committee are set out below:

- chronic respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis and severe asthma
- chronic heart disease (and vascular disease)
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease
- chronic neurological disease including epilepsy
- Down's syndrome
- severe and profound learning disability
- diabetes
- solid organ, bone marrow and stem cell transplant recipients
- people with specific cancers
- immunosuppression due to disease or treatment
- asplenia and splenic dysfunction
- morbid obesity
- severe mental illness

Other groups at higher risk, including those who are in receipt of a carer's allowance, or those who are the main carer of an elderly or disabled person whose welfare may be at risk if the carer falls ill, should also be offered vaccination alongside these groups.

### **When will I get my second dose of the vaccine?**

You will be allocated an appointment for your second dose of the vaccine in the same appointment letter as your first.

### **How will Sheltered Housing residents get their vaccine?**

Sheltered Housing residents will be allocated appointments on the same basis as all residents of Aberdeenshire.

### **Can I accompany someone to assist them to get their vaccination?**

Yes, you can accompany someone to their appointment however, only the patient can be admitted to the vaccination centre.

Carers or helpers will hand over the patient to a member of staff who will give any assistance required and hand them back to the carer or helper after their appointment and recovery time at the door of the building

### **How can I volunteer to help?**

You can volunteer to help by registering on the Grampian Humanitarian Assistance Hub <https://www.gcah.org.uk/> Our team will then look at where volunteers might be required and for what tasks and will get back to you as soon as they can.

### **Do I still need to wear a mask and stick to restrictions after I have had my first dose of the vaccine?**

Yes. It is not yet known whether vaccinated people can or cannot pass on the infection to others. So, until this question has been reliably answered it has to be assumed that vaccinated people can acquire the infection and have little or no symptoms but can pass the infection to others. This means that once you have been vaccinated (and we strongly urge you to get it when offered) you must continue to do all the things that have to be done to reduce transmission – physical distancing, frequent hand-washing and wearing a face covering where appropriate. The time for ‘getting back to normal’ will come, but it has not arrived yet.

### **Why do I need to get the vaccine?**

The vaccine is the best way to protect yourself from COVID-19. With high rates of COVID-19 around, it’s more important than ever to stop the spread of COVID-19.

All households will have been sent in the post a set of information leaflets by the Scottish Government which contain lots of useful information.

### **I have more questions about the vaccine – who can I ask?**

If you have any questions about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit [www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine](http://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccine) or call 0800 030 8013 (available 8am–8pm, 7 days a week).

Note: It will not be possible to book or change your vaccination appointments via that helpline.

### **How does the vaccine work?**

The COVID-19 vaccine does not cause COVID-19. It helps to build up your immunity to the virus, so your body will fight it off more easily if it affects you. This can reduce your risk of developing COVID-19 or, if you do get COVID-19, it can make the symptoms milder.

### **Is the vaccine safe?**

NHS Scotland will only use a vaccine if it meets the required standards of safety and effectiveness. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved COVID-19 vaccines for use in the UK

### **Which vaccine am I getting?**

We do not know which vaccine will be in stock when you have your appointment. You cannot choose which vaccine you have.

### **I am housebound – how do I get to the vaccination centre?**

If a patient is on the caseload of the Community Nursing Team (the nurse comes to the house) then they may still be offered an appointment at a vaccination centre if they can get there. If they cannot attend a Vaccine Centre then the nurse will vaccinate them at home.

If they choose to attend a Vaccine Centre this will not in any way change or adversely impact on the care they receive from the Community Nursing Team.

### **Can I be vaccinated at the same time as my partner or friend?**

We will try to offer partners living at the same address, who are in the same age bracket, adjacent appointments wherever possible.

It is unlikely we will be able to offer friends who do not live together adjacent appointments.

### **I'm not sure if the medication I am taking means I shouldn't have the vaccine?**

If you are in any doubt you can discuss this with the nurse at the vaccination centre who can advise. Or, if you wish, you can ask your GP or consultant and call back for an appointment.

### **Public Information**

There is currently work being done to develop a national (Scotland) website which will have all available information about the vaccine, appointments and prioritisation. For now, information about the vaccine is hosted on NHS Inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/immunisation/vaccines/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine>

For general information about the coronavirus vaccine and its delivery you can phone **0800 030 8013** (available 8.00am to 8.00pm, 7 days a week) – you cannot book an appointment using this number.