

A Vaccination Update From The Wokingham Town Centre General Practices

A fortnight is a long time in a vaccination campaign...

Wokingham Town Centre's Covid-19 vaccination programme is being delivered by the four practices that comprise East Wokingham Primary Care Network, namely: Woosehill Medical Centre, New Wokingham Road Surgery, Burma Hills Surgery and Wokingham Medical Centre. The doctors and staff of these practices have vaccinated around 2600 patients at the Bradbury Centre, Wokingham during the course of the last fortnight. In addition, we've vaccinated virtually all residents and staff in our local older adult care homes, meaning that a total of nearly 3000 vaccinations have been performed in the opening two weeks of our vaccination programme. Furthermore, we expect to vaccinate another 2000 residents over the next few days as we receive more vaccine supply.

The importance of these numbers cannot be overstated as they represent almost all of the over 80-year olds and almost all of the older adult care home residents in East Wokingham Primary Care Network. NHS England has rightly prioritised this group of citizens as they have substantially higher complication and death rates from Covid-19 and it has been a real pleasure to catch up with 'old friends' on vaccination days.

From a practical and logistical perspective, we are particularly pleased that the vaccination effort has been achieved without any queues at the Bradbury Centre and while maintaining strict social distancing and infection control measures. We have been ably assisted by the Wokingham Volunteer Centre and the Wokingham Lions who have provided a seemingly limitless supply of volunteers who have braved the cold and rain in order to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are vaccinated safely and efficiently.

We've been made aware of various misunderstandings that are being perpetuated on local social media and it may help residents' anxieties if some of these are clarified:

1. Some Primary Care Networks – and therefore some practices – started vaccinated before others. The order in which practices started vaccinating was not down to the practices themselves but largely as a result of guidance from NHS England. It's hopefully fairly obvious that vaccinating everyone nationally – simultaneously – might have problematic consequences were there to be widespread side effects.

2. The pace of vaccinating is dictated by vaccine supply and is not in the gift of practices. The vaccine supply is currently a little erratic and – we understand – is being actively managed by NHS England to ensure all regions have consistent supply. Please be assured that we are vaccinating as fast as we are receiving vaccine deliveries. If we only receive 400 doses, we can

only vaccinate 400 people.

3. Practices are delivering vaccines in age cohorts that are determined by NHS England. These cohorts reflect the need to vaccinate the most at-risk citizens first. The practices will contact everyone in cohort order, so please, please, please do not petition your practice to state that you have a special case – all you do is prevent our staff from doing their jobs.

4. Your practice is delivering the vaccination programme while simultaneously trying to maintain some degree of normal service – and often while having staff self-isolating. Vaccinating tens of thousands of our patients means that staff will be diverted from normal activities inevitably. Practices don't have access to a multitude of spare doctors and staff that can be parachuted in to assist at short notice – and therefore a reduction in non-clinical and clinical staff at your practice on vaccination days is inevitable. Despite our best efforts this may mean that it takes a little longer to answer the phone and it may mean that there is a delay in securing your desired appointment. So, please be patient with us as we try to deliver one of the most ambitious global vaccination programmes ever.

Finally, we have been humbled by the gratitude that many of you have shown. We have received countless messages of thanks and many of you have commented on how well-organised the Bradbury Centre operation has been. We are proud to be involved in the Covid-19 vaccination programme and the appreciation of our community means a great deal to us – thank you.

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