

HUW MERRIMAN MP
(BEXHILL & BATTLE)



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Vaccination Update from Huw Merriman MP – 20 January 2021

Please find below information to help answer your questions on the local mass vaccination programme for Covid-19.

This update contains information on local vaccination centres, priority vaccination groups, vaccination types and logistics challenges and vaccination for care home staff and residents (including domiciliary and agency care staff)

Your local Vaccination Centres

At present vaccinations are taking place in hospital hubs; GP led vaccination services; roving services to care homes and the housebound; and in mass vaccination sites across the country.

Hospital hub vaccination services are up and running at the Conquest Hospital in Hastings and the Eastbourne DG Hospital.

Roving service – the vaccine is being taken into care homes and into people's own homes if they cannot attend a vaccination site. This is being stepped up over the coming weeks as more supplies of the vaccines become available.

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. Currently in East Sussex, six GP-led vaccination services have gone live and have all started to vaccinate patients over the age of 80.

The Prime Minister has pledged that residents should not need to travel more than 10 miles to receive a vaccine. There are sites in Eastbourne, Lewes, Bexhill and Uckfield vaccinating local East Sussex residents. During this week, a GP-led vaccination service went live at The Hastings Centre, Kings Church, located on The Ridge in Hastings.

I am afraid that the weak spots in the constituency have been Rural Rother (which includes Battle) and Heathfield (including its surrounds). One notable town also needing another solution, albeit just outside the constituency, is Hailsham. I've been working with the Sussex Community NHS Foundation to provide a solution for Rural Rother, for Heathfield and surrounding villages.

Bexhill and surrounds:

The nearest site for Bexhill residents, and those nearby, is at Sidley Medical Practice.

This site will be vaccinating patients registered with the following GP practices:

Collington Surgery, Little Common Surgery, Pebham Surgery and Sidley Medical Practice

Pevensey and surrounds:

Hampden Park Health Centre, for patients at:

Arlington Road Surgery, Grove Road Surgery, Park Practice, Seaside Medical Centre, and The Lighthouse Medical Practice

Princes Park Health Centre, for patients at:

Harbour Medical Practice, Sovereign Practice, Stone Cross Surgery in Pevensey, and Downlands Medical Centre and Manor Park Surgery, both in Polegate

With the Bexhill and Pevensey area having a vaccination centre nearby, I concentrate on the areas which do not.

Rural Rother (including Battle)

For numerous reasons, it has not been possible to achieve a Primary Care Network solution in these parts therefore work has been taking place with the Sussex Community NHS Foundation and the local GP surgeries to agree a system to vaccinate their patients. I raised the lack of a solution for Rural Rother with the Prime Minister in the House of Commons at the beginning of January.

As a solution, rural Rother GP practices will be served by a vaccination hub at Etchingham village hall which is will begin its first vaccinations on **20 January**.

The GP led vaccination service at Etchingham Village Hall is a partnership between Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust and the following GP practices:

Fairfield Surgery, Ferry Road Health Centre, Martins Oak Surgery, Northiam and Broad Oak Surgery, Oldwood Surgery, Rye Medical Centre, and Sedlescombe and Westfield Surgeries.

Patients from those GP practices who are over the age of 80 will be the first to receive the vaccination from this service over the course of this week.

I have had a number of constituents contact me from Rother Levels asking why they need to travel to Etchingham. The reason is that the Pfizer vaccine needs to be stored at very low temperatures, which is why large sites needed to be set up to deliver a

significant number of vaccines every day. This is also why people who are being vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine need to travel to the hub to get the vaccine.

Whilst it's great news that Etchingham will start vaccinating tomorrow, I am still pushing for a further solution in Battle and rural Rother. I am working closely with our local NHS on an almost daily basis about further locations in the area, and how the vaccination can be offered from GP practices to make it as easy as possible for people to receive this vaccination. However, for this to be viable we need greater supplies of the Astra Zeneca vaccine.

I've asked the Vaccines Minister and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to consider a more simplified contract for GPs which is less onerous on opening hours and would see the GPs in this area take Astra Zeneca only. The Pfizer vaccines which have more challenging storage and transportation should be focussed at the bigger venues.

This is a fast-moving programme and there may be the option to provide the vaccine from more sites across our communities confirmed this week.

Heathfield and its surrounds

This week COVID-19 vaccinations will start for patients over the age of 80 from Heathfield Surgery.

They will be taking place this week and at the weekend for patients at the GP-led vaccination centre at The Meads Surgery and at some of GP practice sites in the Greater Wealden Primary Care Network.

It is expected that all of Heathfield Surgery's patients aged over 80 will be vaccinated by the end of this week.

The vaccination team from the Meads have already covered care homes in the Heathfield area.

I have had a number of constituents contact me from Heathfield and its surrounding area asking why they need to travel to Uckfield. The reason is because the Primary Care Network covering this part of Wealden has identified Uckfield as the local centre to deliver the Pfizer vaccine. I am aware that Heathfield residents, and those from its surrounds, would like to be vaccinated nearer to home. I fully understand this sentiment and I share the aim for a further solution to be found as well. I hope to have further conversations with the NHS Foundation and the surgery to enable this to occur.

I'd like to thank everyone in the NHS for helping to find an interim solution. I'd also like to thank our Parish Council and residents for communicating and showing patience. I am sorry that residents have not received the vaccination as quickly as other parts of Sussex. I am assured that Sussex supplies will be aimed at finishing each priority cohort before moving to another so I fully expect our area to catch up.

If it is clear that Pfizer vaccines continue to be the chief supply, the Sussex Community NHS Foundation will need to assist in the opening of another centre within easier

reach. This will require local action as well. I have already put forward the view to the Foundation that Heathfield needs a local centre given its large population size.

Hailsham, Punnetts Town & Dallington

A number of my constituents are registered with GP surgeries which are part of the Hailsham and District Primary Care Network (PCN). The update for these patients is as follows:

Preparations to launch the COVID-19 vaccination programme for people aged over 80 in Hailsham and the surrounding area are further progressing this week with the aim to start vaccinating next week.

GPs from the town's three surgeries – Bridgeside Surgery, Hailsham Medical Group and The Quintins Medical Centre – are working in partnership with Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust to provide the vaccination to their patients, starting with those over the age of 80.

Vaccinations will be provided from surgery sites in Hailsham as soon as vaccine supplies are received. Preparations are progressing with the aim that the first vaccinations will begin next week subject to vaccine delivery.

Vaccination Types and Logistics Challenges

When the vaccine programme was developed, it was hoped that GP surgeries would inoculate their own patients. The Pfizer vaccine was the first vaccine to be approved. It has logistical challenges with its deployment and this has led to a number of GP surgeries, particularly in rural areas, being unable to participate. With the Astra Zeneca vaccine now approved, rural areas may now be better served as supplies arrive.

The following vaccines have now been approved for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency:

Pfizer Vaccine

This was the first vaccine to be approved for use but it has logistical challenges (including transportation type and storage conditions of minus 70C). As a result of the challenges, GP surgeries have formed Primary Care Networks in order to provide one centre to deliver the vaccine. East Sussex has two areas where no such network has been able to source a centre. These are Rural Rother (including Battle) and Hailsham. The Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust has worked in partnership with the local GPs to find premises (for Rural Rother; Etchingam Village Hall will open for vaccinations on Friday 15 January).

Astra-Zeneca Vaccine

This was signed off for use at the beginning of January. This vaccine can be stored at fridge-temperature levels and is therefore more effective for GP surgeries to use along the lines of the flu jab. It is hoped, as more supplies become available, that residents in Rural Rother (including Battle) and Heathfield, and its surrounds, will be able to receive it locally, via their GP surgery, and not be required to travel longer distances to receive a vaccine. Residential care settings are also better able to deliver this

vaccine. As care home residences are the highest priority for the vaccination, this may have an impact on supplies to surgeries.

Moderna

This has just been signed off as the latest vaccine. It requires storage of minus 20C (equivalent to a freezer). We await supplies in the UK and have an order in for 17 million.

Supplies and Logistical challenges

The UK has ordered 100 million doses of the Astra Zeneca (enough to inoculate 50 million people) and 40 million of the Pfizer vaccine. Combined, these will inoculate the entire population. There are other vaccine candidates which are being trialled and for which the UK has orders in.

Regardless of the orders, the vaccinations are in short supply and we need to be more upfront in saying this in national media. The Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust do not put supply orders in; they get what is made available and this could be either of the two vaccines. I have urgently lobbied the Vaccines Minister to ask for more Astra-Zeneca for the rural areas.

As of today, the Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust have been told how much of the vaccine, and what type, will be delivered for this week. They have been assured that there are sufficient numbers to vaccinate all of the first four priority groups by 15 February.

Nationally, we are aiming to vaccinate 15 million people (the first 4 of the 9 current priority groups) by 15 February. This is an ambitious target given the supply requirements so I wish to personally caveat the end date. I'm doing all I can to ensure constituents are in the earlier part of this dateline.

In Sussex, 70,000 vaccinations have been delivered. As a comparison, Surrey have delivered 38,000 and the combined counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckingham have delivered 68,000. We expect each of the prioritisation groups to be delivered across East Sussex before the next cohort is vaccinated (so those in areas of the county where it is slower to start will have to catch up).

Priority Vaccination Groups and numbers

The Sussex Community NHS Foundation is 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.

We have to be realistic that this enormous logistical task is going to take some time to get completely up and running, but good progress is already being made. The Government has set a target of vaccinating the four top priority groups (over 13 million people) by the middle of February, and I will continue to do all I can as the local MP to support the efforts of the CCG in ensuring we meet this target. This week the Prime Minister announced that 2.4 million people have been vaccinated. Across, Sussex, as of Saturday 9 January, 70,000 residents have been vaccinated. This compares to

38,000 in Surrey and 68,000 across the combined counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunity advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age. The order of priority groups for vaccination are as follows:

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

It is estimated that taken together, these groups represent around 99% of preventable mortality from COVID-19. The statistics on the number of people that have been vaccinated will be released daily online and I will be monitoring this data, and the progress being made, closely.

I know that work is continuing to set out future priorities and I will be studying this carefully. The committee is currently of the view that the key focus for the second phase of vaccination could be on further preventing hospitalisation. Vaccination of those at increased risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 due to their occupation could also be a priority in the next phase. This could include first responders, the military, those involved in the justice system, teachers, transport workers, and public servants essential to the pandemic response.

With parts of the constituency not moving as fast as the more urban parts of Sussex, I am reassured that the County will look to ensure that it delivers to the first four priority groups by 15 February before moving onto the next. This will be done by ensuring supply is aimed at the areas where the first four cohorts still need to be vaccinated.

I am keen that we receive more regular detail on numbers vaccinated in order to explain and keep the pressure up. This will be achieved via improved national and local data which is expected to be released this week and will allow for a county by county picture.

The Health Secretary has committed to ensure that everyone who needs it will be vaccinated by Autumn. This should give comfort to those who do not qualify within the 9 priority groups.

This is a mammoth task and I appreciate concern about the speed at which we are delivering. Please note that, whilst the UK delivers its 2.4 millionth vaccination, France had delivered under 50,000 vaccines to its citizens as of Friday 8 January. We had been in a position of delivering more of the vaccine than the EU nations put together. I'd rather be more ambitious and seek to catch up with Israel ([which has the best global record](#)).

Vaccination for Care Home staff and residents

More than 240 care settings in Sussex have now been vaccinated (as of 18 January 2021).

Many more homes across our patch will be vaccinated this week,

Subject to vaccine supply, all care homes with residents over the age of 65 years old, will receive vaccinations by the 25 January, and all care homes in Sussex by mid-February 2021. Details will be confirmed to each home individually. This will include the appropriate information sharing and consent forms required, including any additional considerations such as mental capacity and safeguarding.

Vaccines in care homes are being delivered through the Sussex GP-led vaccination service, managed by the local Primary Care Networks (PCN). We expect this to cover the majority of the care homes in Sussex, with the remainder being served by Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust (SCFT) vaccination teams.

Care Home staff are being vaccinated alongside residents are or via the hospital hubs. This will include agency, domiciliary and self-employed care and nursing staff. NHS staff were the first to receive vaccinations in the hospital hubs. There are 70,000 NHS and care worker staff who need to receive the vaccine in East Sussex.

Thank you to all of the NHS and Caring staff who are doing such an amazing job.

From 13 January care staff have been invited to book their appointments at hospital and further information can be found at this link <https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/workforcevax/>

Additional Information

Further information on the roll-out of the local Covid-19 vaccination programme can be found at this link to the Sussex Health and Care Partnership <https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/>

With my other colleagues in East Sussex, I will have weekly calls with the Vaccines Minister and with our local CCG team. I am also holding weekly or regular calls with other stakeholders (such as the County and District Councils, Hospital Trust, Sussex Police and Ministers and their officials). I will update my website so do please keep a look out. I am so sorry that there is much concern and uncertainty. The vaccine programme is vital to deliver a solution. I will do everything I can to get this delivered across the 200 square miles of the constituency.

Huw Merriman MP

Member of Parliament for Bexhill and Battle

For an over view of the local programme –

<https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/>

For information about local vaccination sites:

<https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/covid-19-vaccination-sites/>

Frequently Asked Questions (being constantly updated)

– <https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/faqs-about-the-covid-19-vaccine/>

The CCG have set up a dedicated inbox for enquiries about the vaccination programme. If you have any queries please email them at

sxccg.vaccineenquiries@nhs.net