

COVID-19 UPDATE

Written responses to questions asked at JHOSC on 29 January 2021

Vaccine hesitancy in the care system

The take up of the vaccine has varied across health and care staff, but we believe we have provided a first dose to more than 65% of care workers. We continue to work closely with local authority colleagues to further drive uptake, including promoting the message that eligible social care workers can now self-refer and book a vaccination through the National Booking Service.

How the NHS was using volunteering networks to support the vaccination programme

We are working closely with both NHS Volunteer responders and [local voluntary organisations](#) to recruit and deploy volunteers to support the NCL Covid-19 vaccination roll out in several ways: volunteer marshals to help manage patient flow, ensuring social distancing and the wearing of masks at vaccination centres, administration and supporting patients who are leaving hospital or vulnerable local residents. This includes providing transport to vaccination centres for elderly residents, helping residents with shopping or collecting medication.

Additional information on the vaccine rollout for the housebound and carers

NCL Primary Care Networks and Community Providers have been working together to deliver vaccines to housebound residents to meet the national ambition of reaching all over 80s residents by mid-February and to complete all housebound residents by the end of February. Where practicable and where vaccine supply has been available, providers would also have vaccinated family members and carers.

The differences between lateral flow and PCR testing

It had been explained at the JHOSC meeting that lateral flow and PCR testing were different but that test results could vary based on when a person was tested after contracting Covid-19. It had been explained that it was sometimes important for particular people to have a particular test and that the Committee could be provided with a written report to explain the different types of testing. PCR tests are used across NCL to test people experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Lateral flow tests are used to test asymptomatic residents and also staff within Trusts. A positive result on a lateral flow test would be confirmed by a PCR test. More information on the different types of tests can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/types-and-uses-of-coronavirus-covid-19-tests/types-and-uses-of-coronavirus-covid-19-tests>

Engagement with communities on testing and vaccination

At the JHOSC meeting, it was enquired how communities with higher levels of testing and vaccine hesitancy were being contacted and whether local community volunteers were being used. It had been explained that there was a substantial programme of community engagement on testing and vaccinations which included working with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), faith groups, and other groups. The JHOSC had noted that local councillors could provide a link with local communities. It was agreed that information

would be provided to members about local engagements to the Committee and encouraged councillors to provide any relevant information and feedback.

A summary of the community engagement work being carried out includes:

- A range of online seminars are being produced by local authorities to promote vaccine take up with communities in their boroughs. These include question and answer sessions with panels of experts to address concerns and improve uptake. Many of these are targeted at communities disproportionately affected by Covid and where early data is showing uptake is lower.
- Videos are being produced featuring trusted voices from communities to encourage people to take the vaccine. Some of these are being produced in different languages and feature faith leaders, council leaders, celebrities and sports stars respected by communities
- A lot of work is going on with faith leaders of all religions to encourage their communities to have the vaccine.
- Engagement is being done at grass root level, working with VCS organisations to better understand the barriers to vaccination and to improve access where it is needed. Feedback is informing the operational delivery, for example, providing pop up clinics in faith settings
- Community radio and television is used to reach communities. Somali TV and radio programmes were accessed by over 100,000 people. Feedback has shown this has made previously hesitant people change their minds and have their vaccine.
- Daily online seminars with clinical leaders have been run for staff, including social care staff, to improve take up in settings such as care homes. There has been a daily webinar programme with GPs and opportunities for staff to have 1-2-1s to get their concerns answered. A care home workforce toolkit was also developed
- A series of visits to vaccination centres have been arranged for MPs and councillors and they have been supporting getting messages out to their constituents
- A lot of media and social media coverage has been generated to share key messages again working with leaders from different communities
- We are commissioning work with local representative community organisations to gain insight into barriers and how we can address them to improve uptake
 - We are developing local, culturally and spiritually appropriate materials
 - We are working with operational colleagues on engaging appropriately with other specific vulnerable groups, such as the homeless, migrants and refugees, asylum seekers, carers, and people with learning disabilities and other physical disabilities.

In terms of the support councillors can provide, making sure messages are shared with the communities they serve, promoting vaccination within those communities, working with council colleagues on videos and events and feeding back any intelligence they pick up through their work on issues that need to be resolved, concerns raised or any themes as to why people are not getting their vaccination.

Queuing arrangements for the Covid-19 vaccine, particularly for older people

Each site does everything possible to ensure that residents are vaccinated quickly. We understand that, on occasion, unexpected delivery delays have resulted in longer than planned waiting times. All residents invited to come for a vaccine are asked not to come

more than 5 minutes before their appointment to allow for appropriate social distancing and a safe experience for all.

The online booking system for vaccinations

It had been noted at the JHOSC meeting that some people booking vaccinations online had been offered an appointment in Birmingham. Vaccination sites release new appointments on the National Booking Service at different intervals depending on vaccine supply. If someone is offered an appointment at a centre too far from their home, they are advised to amend their search or try again later to see if there have been any cancellations or new appointments released closer to home.