

First Minister visits vaccination centre at Western General

The Scottish Government says that healthcare workers are ready to begin vaccinating priority groups in Scotland against Covid-19.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon today met staff co-ordinating the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh.

The hospital is one of 23 centres where priority groups will be vaccinated against coronavirus.

The First Minister had a tour of the facility and learned about the detailed preparation which has gone into organising the delivery of the vaccine. Those giving the vaccination to others will receive the injection first.

The programme will then follow the independent advice received from the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\)](#), which recommends prioritising those with the greatest clinical need – including those aged over 80, and health and social care workers.

The First Minister said: “I’m grateful to everyone involved in giving this vaccine to those who need it most.

“By vaccinating the priority groups they will be covering those associated with 99 per cent of preventable Covid-19 deaths. That is a very compelling reason to put these groups

first in the queue for this vaccine.

“Finally there is light at the end of the tunnel. But I ask everyone to be patient as we work our way through this vaccination programme, and continue to follow FACTS to keep us all safe.”

Calum Campbell, Chief Executive of NHS Lothian said: “As we prepare to launch our staff vaccination clinics, we reach a crucial milestone in the fight against Covid-19. Across NHS Lothian, a huge amount of planning has and will continue to take place to ensure that we can deliver the vaccine quickly, efficiently and effectively.

“I am delighted that the first Covid vaccinations in NHS Lothian will be given tomorrow and would like to thank all our staff for their dedication in making this happen.

“The vaccine, which must be stored at well below freezing, has been transported to 23 locations around Scotland in temperature controlled lorries. People will be required to have two doses, at least 21 days apart. Scotland has an initial delivery of more than 65,500 doses, with more to follow. Storage requirements mean logistics have had to be worked out carefully, planning is underway for the vaccine to be taken to care home residents from December 14.”

According to the Green Book which is the government guide on vaccines and vaccination procedure: “The Pfizer BioNTech vaccine should be stored in a freezer at -80°C to -60°C (-90°C to -60°C in the thermal container). Shelf life is 6 months at -80°C to -60°C . Frozen vials should be transferred to 2°C to 8°C to thaw; a 195 vial pack may take 3 hours to thaw. Alternatively, frozen vials may also be thawed for 30 minutes at temperatures up to 25°C for immediate use.

“After thawing, stability data have demonstrated that undiluted vaccine can be stored for up to 5 days at 2°C to 8°C , or up to 2 hours at temperatures up to 25°C , prior to

use. Once thawed, the vaccine cannot be re-frozen.”