

Coronavirus – first mass vaccination centres to begin operating next week

The first mass Covid-19 vaccination centres are preparing to go live in Lothian, beginning from next week.

Centres in Edinburgh and West Lothian will begin vaccinating patients on Monday 1 February 2021 as part of Wave Two of the national vaccination programme.

The Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) will host a centre capable of vaccinating more than 21,000 people a week through 45 stations.

Strathbrock Partnership Centre in Broxburn, West Lothian, will also open for vaccinations on Monday with six stations, capable of vaccinating 2352 people every week, before the centre moves to Pyramids Business Park on February 15, which will provide 14,280 vaccinations every week at 34 stations.

A drive-through vaccination centre will follow when it is launched on 10 February 2021 at Queen Margaret University in East Lothian. It will have 16 stations and be capable of vaccinating 8,000 people a week.

David Small, Director of Primary Care Transformation and executive lead for the vaccination programme, NHS Lothian, said: “NHS Lothian has already vaccinated the vast majority of the first cohort to be prioritised.

“NHS Lothian is right on track with Phase One of the vaccination programme. During that first phase, a total of

3564 residents in care homes across Lothian have been given the vaccine. A further 47,742 health and social care workers and care home staff have also been vaccinated, as well as over 800 hospital inpatients over the age of 80.

“GP practices continue to deliver the injections as fast as their vaccine supplies allow. Thousands of doses of the vaccine have been distributed directly to GP practices across all four regions and they are on track to ensure that over 80% of people over the age of 80 are vaccinated as a priority by 31st January with the rest of this age group completed by 5th February.

“Our teams have done a fantastic job to bring us to this point and I’m really proud of the hard work and effort that has been achieved.

“This is a significant moment as we embark on Wave Two of the largest vaccination programme that has ever been undertaken.

“We need to vaccinate as many people as we possibly can to help save lives and provide protection to help communities get back to normal. We therefore urge people to attend their appointment once they are notified of the details.

“The vaccination programme is one of three critical ways we are all working together to beat this virus, along with the testing programme which helps prevent its spread and the rules in place that we all know to follow. These three planks form our route out of this pandemic.”

NHS Lothian has been working with councils, health and social care partnerships and other partners in recent weeks to ensure the sites are ready.

A team of around 350 volunteer vaccinators, with a vast array of experience from a huge number of clinical roles in Lothian, has also been created to work in the mass vaccination sites.

They will be supported by around 100 administrative staff.

The centres are the first of a total of 15 to be rolled out across Lothian.

On February 15, a vaccination centre with 32 stations will be created at Edinburgh Park in the former Royal Bank of Scotland building, as well as another venue at the Royal Highland Showground, near Edinburgh Airport in March.

Centres will be run on smaller scale in more community hubs in Midlothian Community Hospital and East Lothian Community Hospital as well as health and partnership centres in Sighthill, Pennywell Craigmillar, Leith and Gracemount, Edinburgh, Strathbrock and Howden in West Lothian.

People aged between 75-79 and those most clinically vulnerable will be given appointments to be vaccinated by their GP, while those aged between 70-74 and 65 to 69 will be invited into mass vaccination sites and smaller community venues for their injections.

Patients are being urged to keep their first appointment in order to provide protection to as many people, as quickly as possible even if their appointment venue may not be the one that is closest to where they live

Smaller community clinics will deliver vaccinations in the local area for people with complex needs or who, for other reasons, absolutely cannot and would not be expected to travel to a mass centre.

If patients absolutely cannot keep the appointment they have been given, they are being asked to call the COVID-19 Vaccination Helpline on 0800 030 8013 to rearrange their appointment. If they are aged 75 and over, they should phone their GP practice to rearrange your appointment.

Mr Small added: "A vaccination appointment, like any other

medical appointment, is considered essential during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

“When patients receive an appointment, we really would urge them to keep it, even if it is at a centre which is not closest to their home. We need to move fast.

“I would also ask patients to stay safe by following the Scottish Government guidance currently in place, by wearing a mask and maintaining physical distancing as they travel to and from vaccination centres across Lothian.

“Parking will be available around some venues and public transport operators are all following Scottish Government transport guidance for safe travel.

“When you arrive at your appointment, make sure to wear a mask and bring your appointment letter with you to avoid any unnecessary delays.”

More details and information about the venues can be found on NHS Lothian's website <https://www.nhslothian.scot/Coronavirus/Vaccine/Pages/default.aspx>

Or for more information about the vaccine and appointments on NHS Inform.scot.