

Coronavirus – Mass vaccination centres getting ready for Monday

The mass vaccination centre now set up at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) will open its doors on Monday.

There is capacity at the EICC to vaccinate over 21,000 people each week. It has 45 stations.

Marshall Dallas, EICC Chief Executive, said: “The EICC is proud to be supporting the NHS, working closely alongside NHS Lothian to put a multitude of measures in place in readiness for the opening of the vaccination centre. We now look forward to facilitating the NHS team in their work to eradicate COVID-19 and the havoc it has caused across our society.”

After the EICC the next mass vaccination centres in Lothian will be set up in the Members’ Hall at Royal Highland Showground with nine stations, at the former RBS building in Edinburgh Park with 32 stations and then another site at the Royal Highland show ground with 50 stations which will open in March.

Elsewhere NHS Lothian is responsible for Strathbrock Partnership Centre in Broxburn which has six stations and has capacity to vaccinate 2,352 people each week. On 15 February the mass vaccination centre will move to Pyramids Business Park where it has capacity for 14,280 vaccinations each week at 34 stations.

A team of 350 volunteer vaccinators – people with varying experience in a number of clinical roles – has been created to work at the mass vaccination sites. They will be supported by a team of 100 support staff.

David Small, Director of Primary Care Transformation and executive lead for the vaccination programme, NHS Lothian, said: “This is a really exciting and significant moment for all of the teams involved.

“We have been planning, checking and cross-checking to make sure everything will be as safe and as smooth an experience as possible for people on Monday as we embark on the largest vaccination project of its kind.

“It has taken a lot of work, in such a short time to get us to the point where we can begin delivering the lifesaving vaccine to thousands of people across Lothian. I’m really proud of all of the work and effort from all of our teams.

“We have already vaccinated the vast majority of the first groups to be prioritised, including frontline health and social care staff; care home staff and residents and people over the age of 80.

“Nearly 83,000 people have already had their first dose of the vaccine and we are on track to complete that first wave by February 5th.

“It is really straightforward – 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.

“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 to provide protection to as many people as possible.”

Those between 75 and 79 and the most clinically vulnerable

will be given vaccination appointments by their GP, and those between 70-74 and 65 to 69 will be invited to mass vaccination sites and smaller community venues.

Julie-Ann Beveridge, Lead Vaccinator, said: “It’s brilliant to be able to work with such a great team of vaccinators, some of whom are returning doctors and nurses, who have all come together to support the mass vaccination programme.

“The best way out of Coronavirus is through vaccination and we want to help those who are most vulnerable feel like they can start to breathe again. There is a real feeling of camaraderie.”

Sarah MacLeod, Community Vaccination Team Nurse, said: “As a member of the community vaccination team, I normally work with schools but I’m now helping out at the vaccination centres. I’m very proud to be here and to be part of this great programme.”

NHS Lothian has worked with councils and health and social care partnerships and others to ensure sites are ready.

East Lothian

In East Lothian there will be a drive-through vaccination centre at Queen Margaret University with 16 stations and capacity for vaccinating 8,000 people a week.

There will also be a community hub at East Lothian Community Hospital.

Midlothian

There will be community hubs in Midlothian Community Hospital and at health and partnership centres in Sighthill, Pennywell, Craigmillar, Leith and Gracemount, Strathbrock and Howden.

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 their appointment.

Mr Small added: "A vaccination appointment, like any other medical appointment, is considered essential during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

"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.

"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."

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

NHS Lothian says that it is on track to complete wave one of the vaccination programme by Feb 5 and that the latest data shows that NHS Lothian is not lagging behind other Boards.

Nearly 83,000 people have been vaccinated as part of wave

one.

That includes 59,560 frontline health and social care staff, care home staff and residents and hospital inpatients over the age of 80. The care home programme will be complete by January 31, meaning that all residents in care homes will have been vaccinated. A further 23,057 people over the age of 80 have also been vaccinated by their GP.