

Council hears there are 40,000 not fully vaccinated in West Lothian

Almost 40,000 people in West Lothian have yet to receive their booster jab against Covid – including its latest variant omicron.

Councillor George Paul, a senior Labour member for Whitburn and Blackburn, questioned members of the Integrated Joint Board over latest figures released in an update to the board covering up to 2 January.

In her report Chief Officer Alison White said: “As of 31st December 92,922 people had received the booster (71%). Uptake of the third dose is likely to have been impacted by the high infection rate in West Lothian and there was a noticeable reduction in people attending appointments in the lead up to the Christmas and New Year breaks.”



Cllr George Paul

Councillor Paul said: "Only 92,000 had taken their jab up to December. Is there any way we have been trying to re-contact these people?"

"It's an awful number, a third of the number that need their jab, 38,000 who have yet to have their booster."

Mrs White said: "It's quite intensive to get in touch with each individual multiple times. It's difficult to know if people are just actively choosing not to have the booster or if they have missed an appointment."

She added: "We have done our best in arranging drop-ins to make it as easy as possible. We are likely to have seen an increase in that number since 31 December. The message is out there."

She said the numbers vaccinated had probably risen following the end of the festive holidays

"It is difficult to understand why everybody has not taken up the offer of a booster.

"Part of the challenge around Christmas is that you can't have the booster if you've recently experienced Covid and because of the high numbers of Covid around at the time some people were not able to partake of their jab at time."

Board chair Bill McQueen suggested that members get an update on the booster jabs at the end of January and also the end of February so as to be better informed for the next board meeting in early March. This was agreed.

The Health and Social Care partnership had to plan rapidly for the expansion of the Covid vaccination programme to meet the target of offering appointments to 80% of the adult population by 31 December 2021.

In addition to bookable appointments, drop in clinics operated at the Pyramids throughout the day and at Strathbock Partnership Centre in the evenings.

Based on the data available at 2 January, uptake is as follows: • Vaccine uptake (16+ years) – dose 1 – 85.3%, dose 2 – 79.1%

The unvaccinated WL population (16+ years) – 25,692 6.3 The total number of people due a Covid booster in West Lothian was 130,635. As of 31st December 92,922 people had received the booster (71%).

One board member suggested that the slowdown might have occurred because people found it difficult to obtain information about when they were due their booster and there was uncertainty about the amount of time you had to wait between vaccination and booster.

Board members learned that while the waiting time had originally been 26 weeks this has now reduced to 12 weeks.

Alan McCloskey, CEO of the Voluntary Sector Gateway said the organisation had been successful in recruiting volunteers to help with the initial vaccination programme and stood ready to help with the booster programme. He said he had already had preliminary discussion on ways of helping through the British Red Cross.

by Stuart Somerville Local Democracy Reporter

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