



Media release
15 January 2020

COVID-19 vaccinations – your new options explained

Since mid-December, the local NHS in west Essex and Hertfordshire has been contacting people aged 80 and over to offer them a COVID-19 vaccination. This extensive programme includes GP-led vaccinations in community settings, hospital-based vaccinations, and vaccinations in residential care homes.

This week, the range of local options has increased, with the welcome addition of a large-scale site in Stevenage (at Robertson House). Nationally-distributed letters have started to land on doormats across the local area, inviting those aged 80 and over to book their first COVID-19 vaccination.

The letter gives a website and phone number for the national booking system, through which the only local option is currently Robertson House. More options will become available through this site from next week as the phased vaccination programme continues to roll out.

Health bosses in Hertfordshire and west Essex are advising people of their options. Dr Jane Halpin, the Chief Executive of our area's three Clinical Commissioning Groups said:

“It's great news to have a large vaccination centre up and running as it means even more people are being vaccinated quickly, including those front-line social care and health staff who are supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities every day.

“However, for many people, particularly those aged 80 and over who have been prioritised for vaccinations, their GP-run service is likely to be the most local and convenient. By the end of this week, patients from every GP practice across Hertfordshire and west Essex will be covered by a vaccination roll-out plan, served by 28 community-based sites across our area. If you haven't yet been vaccinated and want to be seen at a community-based site, you don't need to use the national booking system, your GP will contact you.

“Residents and staff in residential homes are being vaccinated, and plans are also being made to take the vaccination to older people who are housebound and their carers as soon as possible.

“Delivering a vaccination programme on this scale is a huge challenge and the roll-out of the vaccine is being phased across our area. If you are aged 80 or over and are still waiting to hear about your first appointment, please be assured that you will be contacted by your GP practice and offered an appointment very soon. You may also receive a national letter offering the option to book at a large vaccination centre, giving you a choice. In the



meantime, please don't contact your GP practice about booking a local vaccination. We are very confident that everyone will be contacted, but staff are extremely busy giving vaccinations as well as continuing to offer their usual services. They will contact you. We appreciate your patience."

Please arrive at the time specified for your vaccination appointment – there is no need to arrive early. It's advisable to wrap up warm and bring something to read to pass the time in case you need to be monitored after your vaccination.

Like everyone else, people who have received their first or second vaccination must continue to observe government guidance to slow the spread of the virus by:

- adhering to the national lockdown rules
- hand-washing thoroughly and regularly
- wearing a face covering in line with guidance, unless you are exempt
- maintaining social distancing
- observing the 'Stay at Home' guidance.

You can find out more about the COVID-19 vaccination programme, including why some people are being asked to wait, [here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination/what-to-expect-after-your-covid-19-vaccination](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccination-what-to-expect-after-vaccination/what-to-expect-after-your-covid-19-vaccination)

Notes to editors

1. People need two doses of the vaccine for it to be fully effective. Most patients are being given a second appointment (around 12 weeks later and for the same location) when they get their first dose.

2. Most patients will have some level of protection against serious COVID illness from around two weeks after their first dose, but it takes a few weeks after getting the second dose of the vaccination for the person's antibodies to reach their optimum level. Even after a second dose of the vaccination, in order to protect yourself, your family, friends and colleagues, you must continue to follow national guidance to slow the spread of the virus, and observe the national lockdown.

3. You can find out more about the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination centre in Hertfordshire and west Essex [here: https://www.healthierfuture.org.uk/covid](https://www.healthierfuture.org.uk/covid). Community pharmacies are now also starting to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination. As pharmacies in our area begin to distribute the vaccine, details will be added to this website.