

South Lincolnshire COVID-19 Vaccination programme – Press Release

Since the approval of the first vaccine was received practices across South Lincolnshire have been working closely together to prepare to roll it out to as many people as possible as quickly as possible, and we had hoped that this would allow us to begin vaccinations prior to Christmas. Unfortunately despite practices being ready this was not possible due to issues outside of our control at a national level.

Obviously rolling out a vaccine programme quickly on this scale across the country was always going to be difficult; however huge progress has been made. Like patients we have been frustrated that we have not been able to begin sooner, but we are delighted that we can begin this weekend.

Unlike a normal vaccine clinic that all practices are hugely experienced in running, because of the specific requirements of the first vaccine to become available (Pfizer/Biontech) it is simply not possible at present to deliver the vaccine to every GP surgery in the country and get this rolled out quickly, and as such we've been asked to work together and deliver from one local site initially, and to ensure this is as accessible as possible for as many people as possible, this site will be in Spalding.

The site will be staffed by teams from all our local practices, so you will hopefully see familiar faces! Practices will be contacting people eligible for the vaccine directly and will confirm the location, time and date, as well as everything you need to know in advance.

If you or a relative are offered an appointment, please arrive at your allotted time, and note we will not be able to offer a vaccine without an appointment so please do not come without one and wait until you are contacted by the NHS.

We'd ask for people to be accompanied within the site only if it is essential, to keep the number of people on site as small as possible and make social distancing as easy as possible as safety is our priority. We would recommend that you bring a list of current medication (or your yellow book if you have one!) with you as this will help during the process.

After you've been checked in, and had your vaccine you will be asked to wait for 15 minutes before you can leave and as such we hope that the whole process will take no longer than 30 minutes.

Whilst we appreciate that asking our patients to travel is not ideal and it is our hope that as the vaccine becomes more readily available, and following the introduction of the second vaccine (Oxford/Astrazenca) which can be transported more easily we will soon be able to offer more options, more times, and more importantly more people the vaccine, including from your local practice, but rest assured we are doing all we can to support our community to get access to the vaccine.

For the next couple of weeks though our priority is to reach the first two cohorts identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccines and Immunisations (JCVI). These are care home residents and staff (mainly using the Oxford/Astrazeneca vaccine) and the over 80's and Health and Social Care staff (mainly using the Pfizer vaccine), but we hope to quickly move on to more cohorts in line with the timelines the Government has laid out and supply of vaccine.

In developing our response and plans we always consider the best interests of our patients, and have continued to fight the case for our community to have fast, convenient and safe access to the vaccines. We hope we will be able to provide more regular and detailed updates on the programme in the future, something which has also been out of our control.

We are extremely proud of all the people around the world who have made this vaccine programme possible, and whilst we had hoped to be one of the first areas in the country to be delivering it, we feel a huge sense of relief and optimism that soon the vaccine will be here, as we feel this marks the beginning of the end. For now, we urge everyone to keep following the Government guidelines, and we will call you forward for your vaccination as soon as possible.