

Sent via email
To all GP Practices

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4th February 2021

Dear Colleagues

I wrote to you on 26th January about extending the GP cohorts for COVID-19 vaccination. Practices were asked to start actively calling and vaccinating patients in the 75-79 and 70-74 age groups and those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) as their vaccine supply allows. This is a further update to that letter.

The Department of Health has asked that, in line with the current policy, GPs priority order should be as follows:

1. Patients over 80 (DoB on or before 31 March 1941) AND practice staff
2. Patients over 70 (DoB 1 April 1941 to 31 March 1951) AND Patients who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable patients aged 16 & 17

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommends that Clinically Extremely Vulnerable patients aged 16 and over are offered vaccination. GPs are using AstraZeneca Vaccine which is only approved for people aged 18 and over.

When practices run their CEV searches, they should identify patients aged 16 & 17 but not call them for vaccination. The Department of health are considering how best to offer vaccination to this group of patients, and details will be shared once the process has been finalised.

Clinically Extremely Vulnerable patients aged 65-69

All patients, including those who are Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, in DoB range 1 April 1951 to 31 March 1956 can book to have their vaccination in regional centres. When practices run their CEV searches, they should identify patients aged 65-69. They should encourage them to book to have their vaccine at a regional centre. Those patients who cannot attend a regional centre can be vaccinated in practice. While having their Health and Care number is useful, it is not required and patients should not be asking their practices for this information.

Temporary residents

By definition temporary residents are registered with a GP in Northern Ireland and are expecting to be outside that practice area for a period of up to 3 months.

Practices are asked to offer vaccination to temporary residents within care homes as these are high risk settings. Other temporary residents should be encouraged to get their vaccination from their own GP. This will assist with planning for their 2nd dose as well as practice allocations.

People from within NI who have stayed or are planning to stay in the area for more than 3 months should register with a new practice.

People from outside NI are visitors and need to meet criteria for eligibility to HSC care.

Recent delivery

A delivery arrived on Tuesday, allowing an allocation to most practices. Please remember that it can take up to five working days for orders to be delivered to practices.

Some of this delivery of AstraZeneca has also been allocated for Trusts to allow them to vaccinate staff who had contra-indications to the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine

Check with patients if they have had a vaccination elsewhere

The COVID-19 vaccination programme is trying to ensure each priority group is directed to either their GP or the regional vaccination centres. Practice user testing of the link between the vaccine management system and GP clinical systems has started. This will then allow patients registered GP to be informed of vaccinations given in vaccination centres. There is currently a possibility that patients may have started their vaccination programme in the Trusts and then be called by their GP. GPs should therefore ask about COVID-19 vaccinations already given as part of their consent process. If a patient has had a first dose in a Trust, they will have an appointment for their 2nd dose in the same centre, using the same vaccine.

Yours sincerely



Dr Margaret O'Brien
Head of General Medical Services