

HUW MERRIMAN MP
(BEXHILL & BATTLE)



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Local vaccination programme - update from Huw Merriman MP 8 January 2021

I understand the urgency and frustration at which local residents are wanting to receive one of the two Covid19 vaccines now available and it is incredibly frustrating when information is not coming through. Everyone is doing their absolute best as we try to deliver the vaccine at the same time as putting the infrastructure in place.

I have been working closely with my neighbour, Sally-Ann Hart, MP for Hastings and Rye on this issue. Over the past three weeks, we have had several conversations with Adam Doyle, the Chief Executive of the Surrey and Sussex Clinical Commissioning Groups and the CEO of Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust (who are leading the roll-out of the vaccination programme in East Sussex). We have also been in discussions with the Vaccines Minister about the central roll-out. However, I will keep this local.

At present vaccinations are taking place in hospital hubs; GP led vaccination services; roving services to care homes and the housebound; and planning is going into mass vaccination sites across the county.

Hospital hub vaccination services in Sussex were launched at the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton on 8th December 2020. Teams at the hospital have been vaccinating those over the age of 80 who were attending the hospital and health and care staff.

More local to us, the Conquest Hospital in Hastings went live as a hospital hub last week, and Eastbourne DG Hospital went live this week.

GP-led vaccination services are where the majority of the current population are being offered their vaccinations. In total in Sussex there are 15 sites which have gone live to date. In the majority, each service is supported by a number of GP practices (within their Primary Care Network footprint) working together to vaccinate their collective population. Currently in East Sussex, six GP-led vaccination services have gone live and have all started to vaccinate patients over the age of 80.

The nearest site for Bexhill residents is at Sidley Medical Practice in Bexhill with other sites in Eastbourne, Lewes and Uckfield vaccinating local residents. During this week, a GP-led vaccination service went live at The Hastings Centre, Kings Church, located on The Ridge in Hastings.

I am afraid that the weak spots in the chain have been Rural Rother and Heathfield. Outside the constituency, Hailsham is also lacking in provision. I've been working with Adam and his team to provide a solution for Rural Rother and for Heathfield.

For numerous reasons, we have not had a working Primary Care Network solution in these parts hence we have had an issue. I raised the lack of a solution for Rural Rother with the Prime Minister in the chamber yesterday (as you will see): <https://www.huwmerriman.org.uk/news/watch-vaccination-roll-out> . I have learnt this week that rural Rother GP practices will be served by a vaccination hub at Etchingham village hall which is expected to go live next week. I will get more details when I hold my weekly meeting with Adam and his team on Monday. I will also raise Heathfield again (as I have today). Patient lists from Heathfield are being handled by the Meads Medical Centre in Uckfield. This is an interim solution but I do not feel this is adequate for a parish of 12,000 residents and a cohort prioritised by age and vulnerability.

The CCG is working to vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible but deploying a vaccine at this scale is unprecedented. Timing will be dependent to a large extent on manufacturing timescales and supply.

We have to be realistic that this enormous logistical task is going to take some time to get completely up and running, but good progress is already being made. The Government has set a target of vaccinating the four top priority groups (over 13 million people) by the middle of February, and I will continue to do all I can as the local MP to support the efforts of the CCG in ensuring we meet this target.

The Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunity advises that the first priorities for the COVID-19 vaccination programme should be the prevention of mortality and the maintenance of the health and social care systems. As the risk of mortality from COVID-19 increases with age, prioritisation is primarily based on age. The order of priority groups for vaccination are as follows:

1. residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
2. all those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
3. all those 75 years of age and over
4. all those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
5. all those 65 years of age and over
6. all individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
7. all those 60 years of age and over
8. all those 55 years of age and over
9. all those 50 years of age and over

It is estimated that taken together, these groups represent around 99% of preventable mortality from COVID-19. The statistics on the number of people that have been vaccinated will be released daily online and I will be monitoring this data, and the progress being made, closely.

I know that work is continuing to set out future priorities and I will be studying this carefully. The committee is currently of the view that the key focus for the second phase of vaccination could be on further preventing hospitalisation. Vaccination of those at increased risk of exposure to SARS-CoV-2 due to their occupation could also be a priority in the next phase. This could include first responders, the military, those involved in the justice system, teachers, transport workers, and public servants essential to the pandemic response.

Further information on the roll-out of the local Covid-19 vaccination programme can be found at this link to the Sussex Health and Care Partnership

<https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/>

With my other colleagues in East Sussex, I will have weekly calls with the Vaccines Minister and with our local CCG team. I am also holding weekly or regular calls with other stakeholders (such as the County and District Councils, Hospital Trust, Sussex Police and Ministers and their officials). I will update my website so do please keep a look out. I am so sorry that there is much concern and uncertainty. The vaccine programme is vital to deliver a solution. I will do everything I can to get this delivered across the 200 square miles of the constituency.

Huw Merriman MP
Member of Parliament for Bexhill and Battle