

Covid Vaccines

Lines to take

Latest Deployment

- Wales began vaccinating in 7 different Health Boards from 8 December, in line with the other UK nations and JCVI advice.
- We have moved swiftly into the mobilisation phase of the programme and vaccinated over 6,000 the first week. In Wales initial deployment has been instructed for care home staff, over 80s and frontline health and social care workers at highest risk.
- As has been well-documented, the Pfizer vaccine has ultra-low temperature cold storage and transportation constraints, which has made it difficult to deploy safely and effectively to care homes in this first phase.
- We have been working hard to resolve this issue and I announced on Monday (14 December) a pilot to administer the vaccine in care homes settings in three health board areas.
- This will focus on repackaging the vaccine into smaller quantities suitable for use in care homes, under strict conditions set by the regulator, and continuous QA temperature monitoring. If successful, care home vaccination will be rolled out across Wales in the coming weeks.

Cluster of Staff Covid!9 cases Cardiff Vaccination Centre

- The Covid vaccination centre in Cardiff was closed on 15 December, due to a staff cluster of confirmed Covid-19 cases amongst NHS staff working at the site.
- Rapid testing is being undertaken across all staff at the centre and regular testing of staff in all centres is occurring in line with asymptomatic staff screening programme for testing.
- There is no risk to the public. Contingency arrangements are being planned and patients due to be vaccinated have been rebooked for next week.

Vaccine Minister Tweet

- It is important that there is agreement across all four nations about when, how and what Covid vaccination data is released.
- I hope that there will be no repeat of the release of Wales' vaccine deployment figures at a national level without our expressed agreement and consent. Public Health Wales will be reporting weekly Wales' national figures from Friday this week (18 December).

Future roll-out

- We need to balance immediate delivery and subsequent weeks' activity.
- We have been alerted to the risk of a possible disruption in the supply of the Pfizer vaccine in January 2021. Whilst only a risk at this stage, I'm sure all Ministers will be keen for assurances that steps are being taken to avoid this eventuality, and the damaging impact that a break in continuity in the supply chain will have on the deployment programme.

Background

Cardiff Vaccination Centre staff cluster

- There have been a cluster of cases of confirmed COVID-19 amongst staff working at the Cardiff and Vale UHB vaccination site in Cardiff and this centre has been temporarily closed as a result, with rapid testing taking place.
- This will affect figures for Cardiff and Vale this week in terms of number of doses administered. As all staff were compliant in PPE requirements, advice has been taken which states there is no risk to patients who attended. Any further updates will be communicated to you.

Tweet by the Vaccines Minister

- On 16 December the UK Minister for Vaccine Deployment, Nadim Zahawi, tweeted vaccine figures as follows:

A really good start to the vaccination program. It's been 7 days and we have done: England: 108,000 Wales: 7,897 Northern Ireland: 4,000. Scotland: 18,000 U.K Total 137,897. That number will increase as we have operationalised hundreds of PCN (primary care networks)

- It is understood he learnt about the figures at a confidential conversation that the SRO of the English programme was having with a different person, and that this should not have tweeted. The tweet was not authorised by DHSC or BEIS Comms. The Secretary of State has been informed and will contact Health Ministers in the DAs to apologise. His tweet has caused embarrassment for the UK Government, as it had not yet been agreed between the 4 nations what data would be shared and when. The Office for Statistics Regulation is expected to take a dim view of this.

- He subsequently tweeted:

Transparency is vital as we deliver vaccines across the UK. For now, these figures are provisional. From next week, we will begin to publish weekly figures on the number of vaccines administered.

- On a daily basis, the 4 UK Vaccine SROs share data verbally in confidence, on areas such as numbers of adverse reactions per immunised population.

The 4 CMOs share informally for clinical reasons also such as population rate of reactions per 1000 immunised, clinical risk groups etc.

- There has been no official release of Wales' statistics. A public facing release is planned for Friday 18 December on a Public Health Wales tableau, with plans to update on a weekly basis. Public statements in the future will then only refer to the published data.

Future roll-out

- Whilst the initial data published on the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine (19/11) is encouraging (particularly for over 65 age group) and the relative ease at which this vaccine can be rolled out, there is still uncertainty about its availability, which could be some weeks off. The UKG has confirmed that the latest data package was expected to go to the MHRA by 21/12, so that earliest approval would not come until after 28/12.
- On Friday 4 December officials at BEIS notified officials of the potential for disruption to the ongoing supply of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in January 2021. At this stage this was noted as a risk but not a certainty and officials have been revising plans as a contingency measure accordingly. You will recall Pfizer representatives were asked specifically about continuity of supply in January at a meeting on Monday 7 December. Pfizer's UK General Manager gave assurances regarding the overall levels of supply and Pfizer's commitment to the UK.