

## Dear Colleagues

**COVID-19 vaccination has now reached a new milestone, with over 23,000 vaccinations delivered through our programme in the county.** This means that we have delivered over 8,000 vaccinations since last week's bulletin – by far our largest weekly total.



*The team in Builth Wells completed a mammoth day of vaccination on Friday*

I am particularly pleased that we reached this important milestone, as with snow forecast across the county we needed to take urgent steps to ensure that no vaccine was wasted.

It may be helpful to explain how our massive vaccination centres operate, in order to understand why adverse weather and travel disruption is such a threat.

- Our mass vaccination centres mainly use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. This vaccine needs to be stored at very cold temperatures, and once it is brought to a usable temperature it must be used within four days. But the vaccine is supplied to us in trays of around 1000 doses which must be used within four days of opening. This gives us a very small window to vaccinate a very large number of people.
- Using Pfizer/BioNTech in our mass vaccination centres also means that most of our supplies of AstraZeneca can be distributed to primary care, and used by

our outreach teams in care homes and people's own homes. This is because the AstraZeneca vaccine is much easier to transport and store than Pfizer/BioNTech, so can be used in a community setting. But, we do ensure some supplies of AstraZeneca are available in our mass vaccination centres for people for whom this vaccine is clinically advised.

- Based on current UK supplies of COVID-19 vaccine, we normally operate our mass vaccination centres from Wednesday to Saturday. But, if bad weather sets in before a tray is used, and staff and patients cannot reach the centre, then there is a real risk that large quantities of the vaccine could go to waste.

On Thursday a weather alert was issued covering the whole of Powys. Snowfall was due from the early hours of Saturday, causing travel disruption right across the county.



We needed to think fast. Should we stick to our current plan and hope the snow did not come? Or, should we make sure we have a new plan so that vital vaccine doses were not wasted? **For me this was an easy decision. We must make sure that no vaccine goes to waste.**

So, from Thursday night our teams began working in earnest so that on Friday we could deliver **two days of vaccination in a single day**.

This was an enormous task:

- Bringing in extra vaccinators, support staff and volunteers so that we could vaccinate more people in a day.
- Calling thousands of people due their appointments on Saturday, to invite them to come on Friday – or to arrange a new appointment. Our booking team did not manage to reach everyone, so please do contact us if you were due an appointment on Saturday and still need to rearrange it.
- Issuing urgent alerts via our social media channels which reached thousands of people with hundreds of shares.
- Contacting patients to invite them to short notice appointments – with calls and emails continuing late into the evening on Friday.

Due the amazing efforts of our teams across the county, our wonderful volunteers, our partnership with Powys County council, and the support of Powys communities, we delivered two days of vaccination in a single day.

**By the end of Friday evening we had used all of our supplies of Pfizer/BioNTech and we could close the centres for the weekend knowing that every drop had been used, and not a single drop was wasted. There was no Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine left to use on Saturday.**

More information about the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Powys is available from our website at: [www.pthb.nhs.wales/covid-vaccine](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/covid-vaccine)

Our mass vaccination centres will now re-open as planned on Wednesday when our next supplies of Pfizer/BioNTech will be received and ready to use.

Waking up on Saturday morning the YELLOW weather warning was still in place, and snow was beginning to fall in many parts of the county. It did not come in the quantities that had been feared earlier in the week – but our Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine had already been used due to our efforts the previous day.

**It was absolutely the right decision on Thursday night to get ahead of the weather forecast. In a rural county like Powys we need to make sure that staff and patients can travel safely to our vaccination centres. We must ensure that no vaccine goes to waste.**

There will be some important learning from all our experiences on Friday, both for future adverse weather forecasts and also for our plans to expand our mass vaccination centres further when larger vaccine supplies are received.



So, what progress are we making with vaccination for people in Priority Groups 1 to 4 (who should expect their vaccination appointment by mid-February)?

- **Priority Group 1: Residents of care homes for older adults** - nearly all residents have now received their vaccination – there are some residents who should not have the vaccine yet for clinical reasons.
- **Priority Group 2:**
  - **People aged 80 and over** – all registered patients aged 80 and over should now have received their invitation – [use our online form](#) if you know someone who has not received their letter.
  - **Frontline health and care workers** – information has been sent to employers across the county to invite employees for vaccination. There is also a form on our website
- **Priority Group 3: People aged 75 and over** – vaccination is under way across the county, and you should receive your invitation by mid February.
- **Priority Group 4:**
  - **People aged 70 and over** – vaccination is under way across the county, and you should receive your invitation by mid February.
  - **People who are “clinically extremely vulnerable”** – vaccination is under way across the county, and you should receive your invitation by mid February.

We have also been able to make some important progress to respond to your feedback and all our learning from the programme so far:

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- On **travel and transport**, with GP practices joining the scheme there are now 19 locations providing COVID-19 vaccination across the county. We also took the decision last week to deliver two days of vaccination in a single day, so that we were not asking people to travel in snowy weather.
- Our **booking & appointment systems** have expanded, with a new phone system in place. There are more details later in this newsletter. We are also working with colleagues nationally to improve the booking and appointment process for people with sensory loss.
- You have been sharing information with us about **COVID-19 vaccine scams**, and we have been able to share this with the relevant authorities. There is also further information later in our newsletter.
- And we have **updated our COVID-19 vaccination web pages** at [www.pthb.nhs.wales/covid-vaccine](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/covid-vaccine) to make it easier to find the information you need

My key messages this week are therefore:

- If you are invited to an appointment at a mass vaccination centre and you CAN attend then please DO attend, as this will help us to vaccinate as many people as possible as quickly as possible.
- Thank you to everyone who supported us last week in our response to the risk of snow. If your appointment on Saturday was cancelled, please accept our apologies for any inconvenience. If we have not been able to reach you, then please get in touch to rearrange your appointment.
- If you are aged 80 and over and have not received your invitation yet then please let us know.
- If you are not able to attend your appointment due to travel disruption then please let us know – [you can use this form if you have been invited to our mass vaccination centres in Bronllys, Builth Wells or Newtown](#) – or contact your GP practice if your invitation is to their clinic
- Please wait to be contacted, and thank you for your patience.
- Vaccinations are by appointment only, and please arrive as close to your appointment time as possible to help us give everyone the best possible experience at the vaccination centres.
- You will receive your invitation when you are due for your appointment, based on the priority order across the UK. In some circumstances, you may be invited from our reserve list to help us ensure no vaccine is wasted.
- Please don't contact your GP, pharmacy, health board, hospital or local authority about an appointment – until you receive your invitation.

Thank you for everything you are doing to Keep Powys Safe – and please do feel free to share this information in your organisations, networks and communities.

Carol Shillabeer, Chief Executive, Powys Teaching Health Board



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## Thousands of COVID-19 Vaccinations taking place via GP Practices

Thousands of COVID-19 vaccination appointments are taking place via GP practices, with all 16 GP practices in Powys joining the vaccination programme last week.



Alongside the county's three Mass Vaccination Centres (Bronllys Hospital, Royal Welsh Showground, Maldwyn Leisure Centre in Newtown) this brings the number of places you can receive the vaccine in Powys to nineteen.

Last week in Builth Wells, Practice Nurse Gill Gorton was one of the first people to give the COVID vaccine at a GP practice in Powys, administering it to Mrs Pat Borland from Builth Wells. Mrs Borland was pleased to receive the vaccine (pictured above).

In Ystradgynlais Ian Stuttard was vaccinated by Julie James and was the first of over 600 people due to be vaccinated during the week by the practice team. He said "I feel privileged to be the first vaccine recipient. It could save my life. I appreciate the skills and hard work of all those involved in creating and distributing the vaccine."

With the addition of GP vaccinations, Powys is currently aiming to deliver around 7,000 vaccines per week and it is expected that this capacity will increase as vaccine supply increases in the coming weeks.

Every person over the age of 80 should now have received a letter giving them a vaccination appointment. Anyone who has not received a letter can let us know by registering at <https://pthb.nhs.wales/coronavirus/covid-19-vaccination/over-80-in-powys-and-not-received-an-invitation-to-vaccination/>

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In order to reduce the risk of people being given duplicate appointments and vaccine being potentially wasted, GP Practices are working to a list of patients supplied by the health board and are phoning patients to invite them for vaccination. Please do not call your GP directly for COVID vaccination at this time as they need their telephone capacity to make the outgoing calls to make the appointments.

[www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/covid-vaccinations-by-gps](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/covid-vaccinations-by-gps)

The COVID-19 vaccination programme presents new challenges for cold chain management, and we work closely with practices when cold chain issues occur. This includes working together to rearrange vaccination appointments as quickly as possible:

[www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/swift-action-to-reorganise-vaccine-appointments-following-cold-chain-issue-in-local-gp-practice](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/swift-action-to-reorganise-vaccine-appointments-following-cold-chain-issue-in-local-gp-practice)

## Improvements to our Booking and Appointment System

As a small health board, our telephone systems are not used to dealing with booking appointments at this scale. We know that this has been frustrating for people trying to contact our Booking Centre.

But a new partnership with Powys County Council is addressing this. This week saw the move of the COVID-19 Vaccination call centre from Bronllys Hospital to Neuadd Brycheiniog, Brecon.

The new system takes the number of available call handlers from six to over 20, and the addition of a queuing system meaning that calls no longer get cut off when all lines are busy.



Powys Teaching Health Board is very grateful to Powys County Council for their support with the move and the use of their telephony system.

Carol Shillabeer, Chief Executive of the health board said "This is a great example of partnership working in Powys. COVID affects us all and by working collaboratively with the council we are able to answer more calls than ever before. In Powys we have already delivered over 20,000 vaccinations and we plan to continue to increase our

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capacity as we move forward. The additional capacity in the call centre will be instrumental in achieving this.”

Powys County Council’s Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Engagement and Regulatory Services, Cllr Graham Breeze, said: “I’m really glad that we have been able to support the health board’s efforts to get as many people vaccinated against COVID-19, as quickly as possible, by providing telephony support. “It is crucial that we all work together to tackle the public health crisis we are facing, as greater things can be achieved when we work in partnership.”

As well as providing the office space and technology behind the call centre, PCC have also helped with staffing the additional lines, creating a truly collaborative solution.

With new appointment letters landing on doorsteps today (1 February 2021), this was the first big test for the new call centre. With hundreds of calls coming in simultaneously, please accept our apologies that at times this did still mean there were some delays in getting through despite the major expansion in call capacity. This has provided learning to help us make further improvements.

[www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/new-call-centre-partnership-with-powys-county-council-improves-service-for-covid-19-vaccination-patients/](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/new-call-centre-partnership-with-powys-county-council-improves-service-for-covid-19-vaccination-patients/)

## Vaccination Heroes: Estates Team

We have talked about a few of the different teams who have worked tirelessly to deliver vaccinations to the public at our Mass Vaccination Centres over the past few weeks.

But what about the centres themselves? We certainly didn’t have three Mass Vaccination Centres in Powys last November. They seem to have appeared as if by magic almost overnight! But of course, the truth is that they were built at very short notice by the health board’s extremely talented Estates Team.



In Bronllys, Builth Wells and Newtown they have converted empty spaces to quickly become clinical vaccination centres. Each location had it’s own challenges; from upgrading electrics, installing IT infrastructure, building covered walkways, installing

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wayfinding signage, installing flooring, heating and lighting and of course building the vaccination lanes, admin hubs and reception areas, the Estates Team have been flexible and have adapted to the myriad challenges they have been presented with.

Carpenter Gareth Davies (though everyone knows him as 'Gaz') explained "Everywhere needed different things. In Builth Wells at the Showground we had to put up 30-40 banner signs just to help people find their way even before they get to the vaccine centre for traffic control. Then in some locations we had to install additional plumbing for new sinks. There were a team of about 8 of us carrying this all out."

The Newtown Mass Vaccination Centre is the largest of the three in Powys. With 12 lanes it can vaccinate huge numbers of people at a time. The team took just six days to convert it from an empty shell to a fully operational vaccination centre.

Gaz meant it as a joke when he quipped "We did the impossible". But I don't think he was wrong.

Well done and thank you.

[www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/vaccination-heroes-estates-team/](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/vaccination-heroes-estates-team/)

## Beware of COVID-19 Vaccination Scams

Criminals have been using fake emails and text messages about COVID-19 vaccination to try to gain access to people's financial information.

COVID-19 vaccination is free from the NHS. We will not ask for your financial information.



If you receive a suspicious email, which you are not quite sure about, forward it to the Suspicious Email Reporting Service (SERS) at [report@phishing.gov.uk](mailto:report@phishing.gov.uk)

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If you receive a suspicious text message this can be forwarded to 7726 (these are the numbers that spell out the word SPAM on your key pad). This free-of-charge short code enables your provider to investigate the origin of the text and take action, if found to be malicious.

Dyfed Powys Police advises everyone to ALWAYS:

- Stop: Take a moment to think before parting with your money or information - it could keep you safe.
- Challenge: Could it be fake? It's ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.
- Protect: Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen victim to a scam and report it to the police.
- Remember: The NHS, the police, or your bank, will never ask you to withdraw money or transfer it to a different account. They will also never ask you to reveal your full banking password or PIN.
- Do not click on links or attachments in unexpected or suspicious texts or emails.

Confirm requests are genuine by using a known number or email address to contact organisations directly.

Always check the URL of a website.

[www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/beware-of-vaccine-scams/](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/news/health-board-news/beware-of-vaccine-scams/)

## **REMINDER: COVID-19 Vaccination Online Q&A Event with Carol Shillabeer**

You are invited to the next online Q&A Event with our Chief Executive, Carol Shillabeer. This will be on Wednesday 3 February from 5.30pm to 6.30pm. It will provide an opportunity to update you on the COVID-19 vaccination programme in Powys, and answer your questions

[Join the Online Q&A with Carol Shillabeer via this link](#)

### **How do I join?**

You can join the session from most web browsers by clicking on [this link](#).

### **When do I join?**

You are welcome to join just before 5.30pm by clicking on the link above. The meeting will start shortly after 5.30pm to allow people time to join.

### **How do I participate?**

This event will be provided through Microsoft Teams Live Event. It includes a Q&A function which allows you to ask questions. We regret that we may not have time to answer all the questions raised, but hope that the briefing will provide an opportunity to cover the main themes.

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### **I cannot attend – will I still be able to watch?**

If you cannot attend on the day, you can watch the event at any time using the web link.

### **I am having trouble joining**

The briefing will be recorded so that it is available for people who have trouble joining, or who are not available to join us at 5.30pm. More information about being an attendee of a Microsoft Teams Live Event is available from the [Microsoft website](#)

## **In case you missed our last edition**

Previous editions of our newsletter are available [from our website](#). Last week's edition included:

- COVID-19 Vaccination Update from Carol Shillabeer
- Newtown Mass Vaccination Centre moves to new home
- Over 80s letters have now been issued
- Invitations to people age 75 to 79 are under way
- Vaccination Heroes: Administration Team
- COVID-19 Vaccination Online Q&A Event with Carol Shillabeer
- COVID-19 Vaccination – the position across Wales
- Useful Links

## **Further Information about COVID-19 vaccination:**

More information about our COVID-19 vaccination programme here in Powys is available from the Powys Teaching Health Board website:

- [www.pthb.nhs.wales/covid-vaccine/](http://www.pthb.nhs.wales/covid-vaccine/)

More information about the national COVID-19 vaccination programme in Wales is available from the Public Health Wales website:

- [Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru](#) (CY) and [Public Health Wales](#) (EN)

The latest information about the number of COVID-19 vaccination doses delivered in Wales is available from the Public Health Wales dashboard – please remember that PTHB has the smallest population of all health boards, and is around a third of the size of the next smallest health boards (Cwm Taf Morgannwg, Hywel Dda):

- [Public Health Wales dashboard](#)

More information about the Welsh Government's strategy for COVID-19 vaccination:

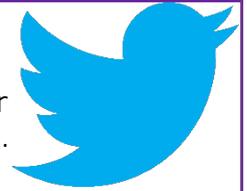
- [Llywodraeth Cymru](#) (CY) and [Welsh Government](#) (EN)

You will receive an invitation when you are due for your vaccination. You don't need to apply for an appointment – please don't contact your GP, pharmacy, health board, hospital or local authority about an appointment until you are contacted.

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You can follow Powys Teaching Health Board on Facebook, and @PTHBhealth and @BIAPiechyd on Twitter for the latest social media updates from the health board.



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