



Weekly Covid Vaccine Newsletter from Swansea Bay University Health Board

Date: March 24th, 2021 (Please note: This newsletter is now issued every Wednesday.)

Edition number: 11

Introduction:

The programme is continuing apace, with vaccinations taking place simultaneously across JCVI priority groups 6, 7, and 8 this week.

We hope to complete the majority of group 8 vaccinations this week and then next week we will be inviting those aged 50-54 for a vaccination and we remain firmly on course to hit our next milestone of offering everyone in groups 1-9 a first dose by mid April.

Many second doses are also being carried out for those who were vaccinated towards the start of the programme.

So, with first and second doses combined, we passed the 200,000 dose mark on Monday, March 22nd. Three out of four people in groups 1-9, which runs from care home residents and care home workers to frontline healthcare workers, those who are clinically extremely vulnerable, have underlying health conditions and are unpaid carers and the 50+ age group, have received at least one dose.

This is a remarkable achievement in a programme which has only been running for 15 weeks.

And we're able to maintain this momentum thanks to good vaccine supply over the past couple of weeks – the downturn in supply won't be felt until around Easter time – and high vaccination capacity across our Mass Vaccination Centres (MVCs) and GP practices.

We're also putting on extra vaccination sessions for group 6 – one of the largest of the priority groups – at the Bay and Gorseinon MVCs this weekend, with almost

2,500 first-dose appointments being made available for unpaid carers and people with underlying health conditions. We have also scheduled an additional session for group 6 patients on Good Friday.

That's an overview of where we are. But there's plenty more to tell you so let's get cracking.

Latest figures

Please note: Figures correct as of 2pm on Wednesday, March 24th, 2021. These figures are for the Swansea Bay University Health Board area, not the whole of Wales.

1st dose: **158,454**

2nd dose: **49,236**

Doses given in GP practices (first and second doses): **61,345**

Running total (1st and 2nd doses): **207,690**

Latest news

Attention if you're 60+: we're not leaving anyone behind! The success of this mass vaccination programme is testament to the skill and commitment of staff. So far, almost nine out of 10 people aged 60+ across Swansea and Neath Port Talbot have received their first dose.

But when trying to reach such huge numbers of people, it's not uncommon for there to be a few anomalies which cause anxiety.

With this in mind we are launching a mop up of those aged 60+ who have not yet been invited for their first dose.

If you haven't heard from us we're sorry and we'll book you in as soon as possible. Please ring 01792 200492 or 01639 862323 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Saturday or email: sbu.covidbookingteam@wales.nhs.uk

Thank you.

Safety and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine After rigorous study of data from some European countries which had reported a very small number of incidents of clots in those who had received the vaccine, both the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) issued statements confirming the safety of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and that there is no link between it and the clotting incidents.

You may also have seen on the news in the past couple of days that the long-awaited results of the US trials of the vaccine are out and conclude that it is safe and highly effective. More than 32,000 volunteers took part, mostly in America, but also in Chile and Peru.

The vaccine was 79% effective at stopping symptomatic Covid disease and 100% effective at preventing people from falling seriously ill.

And there were no safety issues regarding blood clots.

If you've got more questions about the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, go to our fact checker FAQs on our health board website.

Second doses – an update - Why are some people getting their second dose quicker?

The standard dosing gap according to UK guidance is 11 to 12 weeks for both the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines.

However, operational reasons meant those who had Pfizer for their first dose, predominantly health and social care workers and the over 70s, received their second dose sooner at around five weeks. This was the case across Wales. This week we expect to complete any Pfizer 2nd doses where people were vaccinated before 14th February.

In future the Pfizer dose interval will revert back to 11 weeks.

This week GP practices began giving second doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine to the over 80s.

All those due for a second vaccine dose will be called automatically.

First doses back at the Bay MVC After concentrating on 2nd doses for a while, the Bay Field Hospital Mass Vaccination Centre will once again be administering first doses to residents of the Swansea area from the end of this week.

Transport

Remember there is a free bus funded by Swansea Council and First Cymru, the number 51, to the Bay MVC for both those patients going for blood tests and vaccinations. It now stops nearing the front doors.

It departs from Bay D at Swansea's main bus station every 20 minutes between 8am and 8pm, stopping at Sainsbury's on the way.

Go to this page for the full timetable.

If you have serious mobility problems, you can also arrange free transport to our MVCs:

- Swansea residents can contact: 07538 105244
or amymeredithcovid@scvs.org.uk
- And Neath Port Talbot residents can contact: 07494 966448
or covid19discharge@nptcvs.org.uk

How do we compare to the rest of Wales? Vaccine coverage in the Swansea Bay University Health Board area compares really well with other health boards and, for many groups, exceeds the Welsh average.

The latest summary report, which includes data up to March 14th, shows that we have the highest or among the highest first dose take-up rates in Wales in categories including: ages 80+, older adults in care homes, and from ages 60 to 75.

Immbulance update Our mobile vaccination unit continues to go out to hard-to-reach communities and groups, including those in the homeless community. Keep an eye out as we expect it to be featured in further TV news reports.

What happens after groups 1-9? We'll be moving on to what's known as phase two of the vaccination programme, which means the 16 to 49 age group. We are still on course to meet the end of July milestone of offering everyone aged 16 to 49 their first dose.

And finally... Our vaccination centre staff have received lots of kind cards and notes from those who've had appointments. But one email from a man who brought his nervous mother-in-law to our Bay Field Hospital MVC particularly touched colleagues.

We've been given permission to share this anonymised version with you today:

Hello/Shwmae,

I just wanted to take time to thank you for the way you looked after my mother-in-law at the Bay Field Hospital today when she attended her COVID vaccination appointment.

Your staff and volunteers were skilled, efficient, polite, professional, caring and compassionate - everything that makes the NHS a great service and a national treasure.

From the staff greeting us at the car park, to armed services personnel, nurses and administrative assistants supporting the vaccination effort - everyone we met went above and beyond to make visitors feel safe, comfortable, cared for and valued.

My elderly mother-in-law has suffered from a lifelong fear of needles, blood and medical procedures; just the mention of these can cause her to faint. When I escorted her to the Bay Field Hospital, she was trembling and anxious. Thankfully, I was allowed to sit with her in the bay where she had her vaccination, as she would have been even more fearful had I been made to wait elsewhere leaving her alone.

When the nurse administering the vaccination, Michelle, introduced herself, she took time to ask my mother-in-law how she was feeling and realised straightaway how uncomfortable she was. She quickly found a bed for my mother-in-law to lie on, a screen for privacy, and checked on her throughout the time we were there - before, during and after the vaccine was administered. She even went as far as to ask my

mother-in-law if she had eaten breakfast today and brought her a Kit-Kat biscuit and a bottle of water.

As we waited following the vaccination, a couple of other nurses also checked briefly that everything was ok during our visit without being overly fussy or overwhelming my mother-in-law. All were professional, supportive and friendly without being over-familiar or condescending, preserving her dignity in spite of her vulnerability in the situation.

As we waited, another elderly woman next to us in the bay was kindly greeted by a member of the armed services who politely addressed her as 'madam' and offered to take her (in her wheelchair) to the exit. She laughed and smiled, responding thankfully: just another example of the excellent service we observed. Even as we left, car park staff made eye contact and said goodbye with a smile.

Considering the severity of the COVID crisis and the immediacy of the need to vaccinate huge numbers of the population quickly, you would have been forgiven for merely creating a 'jab-em and move them on' conveyor belt of a service. Instead we were greeted with compassion and humanity that my mother-in-law has been largely isolated from for over a year due to shielding during the COVID pandemic.

The best complement I can pay your staff is that my mum-in-law didn't faint. As I was on driving and 'catching' duty today, you saved me a job and kept me in my wife's good books for not letting her mum hit the deck.

That's all for this week. Many thanks for reading.

We'll catch up again next week.