

LMC COVID update call
Thursday 27th May 2021

Dr Iain Morrison welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the guest speakers for joining.

The aim of the meeting is to highlight the Lothian Enhanced Service COVID Vaccination Mop-Up Programme that was agreed earlier in the week and what that means for practices.

The updates from each of the speakers were as follows;

Lorna Willocks, Consultant in Health Protection, NHS Lothian

Lorna firstly thanked General Practice for taking this programme - it will make such a difference.

Lothian have now delivered 700,000 COVID vaccine doses, however clearly there are a number of people who have not received their vaccine – approx 50,000 across cohorts 1-9, the cohorts with higher risk of severe outcomes. The key advice in the CMO letter of 18th May is to maximise our uptake in these groups. Those least likely to have attended are those from more deprived neighbourhoods, ethnic minority groups and the homeless. A lot of good work been done to encourage attendance but the consensus is that people are more likely to respond to those most trusted – their GP practice. Additionally, there have been a lot of returned envelopes due to wrong addresses, etc, so many of this population will also be very keen to attend.

This is also a good opportunity to properly code for refusal of vaccine and to update addresses where needed – identification of groups who are refusing is really helpful for Public Health team as they've struggled to get this data so far. The majority of those who haven't attended have been more logistical rather than refusal.

Chris Bruce, NHS Lothian lead on Equalities and Human Rights.

There is a real drive to ramp up delivery of the vaccine, particularly in the more deprived/minority group areas. DNA rates in the most deprived areas are 17%, compared to 9% in the areas with less deprivation.

The latest national figures for uptake based on ethnicity are:

White Scottish & British – 95%

White Polish – 58.5%

Black African – 71%

Bangladeshi – 80%

Some of the challenges in these areas are not receiving their letter/not having an address, unable to read the letter in English, don't have access to transport to get to the vaccination site.

2 videos have been made in 11 different languages covering 1) Test & Protect and 2) Why it's a good idea to get the vaccine.

Where practices sign up to the Mop-up ES and are in a deprived/minority community, the Equalities team are keen to link with the practice to try and encourage attendance for vaccine using community leaders.

It's also hoped that patients with mental health issues will be more confident to come into practice for their vaccine rather than further afield to a less familiar venue. Those with physical disabilities may also find their practice easier to access.

Nicola Rigglesford, Service Manager, Lothian Analytical Services

Data from GP IT systems and also the national TURAS recording tool backs up the deprived area attendance challenges.

In the top 15% of deprived areas, vaccine uptake is around 75-80%, compared to 95-96% in low deprivation area.

Of the 50,000 missed appointments, approx 32,000 are >40 and can receive the AZ vaccine.

<40s are recommended to receive a different vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna), and as these are less suitable for practices due to large pack sizes or have significantly lower supply levels, it's unlikely these will be provided to practices. It's therefore recommended that while practices may still want to contact the <40s patients to identify if they want the vaccine or check address details, etc, they may only be able to then help direct the patient into the national system. However, there may be very rare cases where the patient is <40 and clinically extremely vulnerable with very limited other option available – in these cases, the practice may decide to administer AZ.

Stephen McBurney, Associate Director, Pharmacy Services

Prior to the mop-up programme being agreed we were collecting remaining 2nd dose vaccine supplies from practices and there are still 100 practices with AZ stock with June/July expiry dates. Once we know which practices sign up, a reconciliation will be done to make sure we don't take vaccine away from these practices.

Distribution will move to a "pull" rather than "push" approach, and a generic mailbox for Lothian Pharmacy will be set up to request further supply of AZ vaccine –partly due to there being more unknowns around the quantities needed for each practice this time around. Deliveries will continue to be done by Movianto and orders needs to be place by a Monday to have delivery the following week (eg order placed Mon 31/5 for deliveries w/c 7/6). Please be aware of this lag time between order and delivery. In the meantime, if you sign up to the ES and have vaccine in your practice you can start vaccinating.

The plan is to continue to supply practices with AZ, and further details of the order process, central mailbox and remaining stock will come to practices in the next few days.

Iain Morrison, LMC Chair

The Enhanced Service will hopefully be issued to all practices early next week, and practices can sign up at their discretion. The terms are the same as for the earlier >75 + CEV, with a change in the age range.

The original ES offers payment for coding and we would encourage all practices who sign up to claim payment for all patients coded.

We are fully aware of the current workload and demand pressures on practices and appreciate the additional challenges this work brings. However we remain in the midst of a pandemic and as society continues to open up, the threat of further illness remains and the longer term complications of COVID are falling to GPs to look after. It is entirely voluntary to sign up to the mop-up ES, however we hope practices understand the rationale behind this approach and consider signing up.

As the national programme accelerates through the younger population (18,000 vaccines per day) it's difficult to get those who have been missed back into the national system in a timely manner, so this approach is a great way to get the most at risk people vaccinated promptly in the face of a new, highly transmissible variant.

Thanks to the Vaccine Programme Board who continue to work very hard to get us through this. And a massive thanks to all in General Practice for their time and consideration.

Any questions, as always please contact the LMC office.