



HM Prison &
Probation Service



29th January 2021

To: HMPPS Executive Directors, Heads of Group, Prison Group Directors, Prison Governors and Directors (England)
NHS England and Improvement Health & Justice Commissioners

VACCINE ROLL-OUT IN ENGLISH PRISONS TO THE MOST VULNERABLE PRISONERS

Distribution of the first batches of COVID-19 vaccines to the prison estate in England has now begun, for administration to the most vulnerable prison residents. This will protect the NHS and help save the lives of those in our care. Deliveries are being made in stages depending on the numbers of eligible prison residents at each site, so more establishments will receive doses in later deliveries.

Vaccines will be given to the most vulnerable prison residents, according to the priority list set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and in line with the national roll-out for the wider population. The vaccines are demonstrated to be safe and effective. The four groups currently eligible are:

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

The vaccine programme across England is led by the NHS, but swift and successful delivery will require continued close partnership working. Prison health teams are responsible for the oversight and administration of the vaccines to eligible prison residents, and HMPPS staff responsible for facilitating deliveries and access to prison residents.

We appreciate that this is already an incredibly busy period, with many competing demands on staff time and many staff absent or needing to work remotely. But rapid deployment of the vaccines is one of our most effective tools to save lives, so this should be a top priority for all our staff.

It is important that we work in partnership in the following areas:

- Programme roll-out plans
- Up-to-date data and intelligence sharing, while respecting medical confidentiality
- Joint messaging to stakeholders
- Continuity of care from custody into the community

- Joint learning to improve delivery and maximise participation
- Managing queries and concerns from staff and residents
- Identification of resources to support enablement

It will be particularly important to maximise participation in the vaccine programme among all eligible residents and prison and health colleagues will work together on communications and engagement with prison residents.

Research has shown some hesitancy in accepting the vaccine in some groups. It is important that health and prison colleagues work together to engage with any individual or groups that are unsure about being vaccinated. As in the community, we must provide additional support to those struggling with literacy or language barriers and work to reduce health inequalities.

The delivery of this important programme will be subject to a high degree of scrutiny and we have already seen some high-profile media coverage. Our internal information may be mis-interpreted if it reaches the public domain so please ensure all messages are unambiguous and emphasise that the programme is based on the same eligibility criteria as in the wider community.

We recognise vaccinating prison residents may raise questions from staff about their access to vaccinations. Currently, the focus of the overall vaccination programme is on the priority groups identified by the JCVI to reduce deaths. All staff who are in those priority groups will therefore be offered the vaccine. We are working closely with the JCVI and the Department of Health and Social Care to consider the risks inherent in prison settings and the case for prioritisation as part of the next phase of the vaccination roll-out.

We would like to thank everyone who has been working to prepare for the vaccination roll-out in the NHS, in local healthcare teams, and in HMPPS. We are hugely grateful for the continued efforts of all our staff for your continued efforts to support each other and those within your care.

Your sincerely,



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