

Rural Rother vaccination site – Etchingham

Statement for partners / social media / media

Update on COVID-19 vaccination service – GP led service set to go live in Etchingham next week

Thanks to an extraordinary effort by the NHS across Sussex, a new GP led vaccination service is due to go live next week to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to people in Rural Rother.

The GP led vaccination service at Etchingham Village Hall will be a partnership between Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust and the following GP practices:

Fairfield Surgery, Ferry Road Health Centre, Martins Oak Surgery, Northiam and Broad Oak Surgery, Oldwood Surgery and Battle Health Centre, Rye Medical Centre, and Sedlescombe and Westfield Surgeries

The service will offer vaccine appointments to registered patients at the GP practices in line with the national priority groups, starting with those who are over the age of 80.

Preparations at Etchingham Village Hall are being finalised this week with the aim that the first vaccines will begin to be administered at the start of next week, subject to a confirmed vaccine delivery date.

The GP practice teams have been identifying their patients who are eligible at this stage and appointments will be booked in over the coming days.

In terms of the way the vaccination programme is being rolled out, the model for GP vaccination services has been agreed nationally and each area is typically allocated one GP-led vaccination site where all patients from a group of GP practices receive their vaccinations.

Each of the GP practices in Rural Rother have small sites and small staff numbers compared to large urban GP practices, and so did not feel they could continue to provide high levels of care for their patients and support the programme initially in the way it had to be implemented according to the national model.

However, this new GP led service will mean the GP practices and SCFT work together to bring all of their local knowledge to support the roll out of the vaccination programme to patients.

We recognise that at the current time, with one site at Etchingham, some people will have to travel further than others to get their vaccination depending on where they live in the local area.

We would like reassure everyone that there are discussions about further locations in the area and how the vaccination can be transported and offered from GP practices. This is a fast moving programme and over the coming weeks, there may be the option to provide the vaccine from more sites across our communities very soon.

The location of the GP-led vaccination service does not affect the speed by which people living in the Rural Rother area will receive their vaccination. The timing for when people will be able to get their vaccination depends largely on the availability of the vaccine and the priority group they are in.

If anyone is concerned about how they will travel to get a vaccine during lockdown, it should be noted that, under the national guidance, it is permissible to receive a lift from someone, pay for transport if you are able or there are some community transport providers offering this support in terms of transport for medical appointments.

You can find information about community and non-emergency transport on the East Sussex County Council website, or call the community hub on 01273 099956.

People are asked not to contact your GP practice but to wait until you are contacted. You will be contacted as soon as an appointment is available for you.

We are also asking people not to turn up early for their appointments. Arriving on time will help us manage the number of people at the venue and help keep our patients and staff safe.

The Covid-19 vaccination programme is the biggest immunisation programme ever undertaken by the NHS. As we roll out vaccines, we'd like to remind people of 3 things:

1. The NHS will contact you when it's your turn, so please do not contact us beforehand.
2. Please act on your invite when it comes.
3. Remember Hands, Face, Space. It will save lives and help the NHS

Why is the vaccine not available at other locations?

As soon as the NHS started to make plans for the COVID-19 vaccination programme we began exploring where we could offer the COVID-19 vaccine to our patients in Rural Rother.

The sites need to be able to accommodate large numbers of people on a daily basis (at least 300 a day.) We also need space for people to wait for their appointment and be monitored for a short while after their vaccination.

The site also needs to have internet access, IT and facilities to be able to carry out the vaccination safely and in line with government guidance.

We have received incredible support from our communities and our partners with helpful suggestions of locations. However, the tight criteria meant that other sites, some of which were more centrally located, were not suitable.

More information on the COVID-19 vaccination programme is available here:

<https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk/keepsussexsafe/sussex-covid-19-vaccination-programme/covid-19-vaccination-sites/>