

Local Outbreak Engagement Board**6 July 2021****Purpose**

This report is to update LOEB on COVID-19 vaccination uptake for Walsall residents. Clinical Commissioning Groups and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) are responsible for vaccine scheduling and delivery, which is a devolved responsibility from NHS England (NHSE). The Council is heavily involved through its provision of vaccination sites and related support, funding for vaccination buses, communications to promote uptake, Public Health Team monitoring of coverage, and resourcing the COVID Community Champions (CCs). The PH team also participates in PCNs' Gold vaccination meetings, and a Walsall Vaccination Strategy Group.

1. Covid-19 Data

- 1.1 Overall vaccination uptake/coverage is now being monitored at System and Place levels against the NHSE targets. According to the latest published NHS England figures, uptake percentages at system level are as follows:

First dose % (using ONS denominators)

Age group	BCWB	England
80+	92.5	94.1
75-79	95.0	100
70-74	97.2	97.6
65-69	95.1	95.2
60-64	98.4	99.9
55-59	94.3	97.7
50-54	91.8	92.2
45-49	82.2	86.0
40-44	85.7	88.7
35-39	72.9	79.6
30-34	63.3	73.0
25-29	50.3	60.9
18-24	43.5	47.9

Second dose % (using ONS denominators)

Age group	BCWB	England
80+	90.2	91.9
75-79	93.2	100
70-74	95.3	96.0
65-69	92.1	92.9
60-64	93.9	95.9
55-59	88.3	92.6
50-54	84.2	86.1
45-49	56.1	59.2
40-44	46.6	47.7

Walsall is one of the best-performing local authorities within the Black Country and West Birmingham system, with 85% of all residents aged 25 and over having had their first dose of the vaccine so far (latest verified figure: 1 July). However, the borough is still behind the national benchmark, particularly in the west of the borough and among certain ethnic groups. These inequalities will be further explored later in this report.

- 1.2 Following expansion of the vaccination programme to all adults, we are encountering higher levels of hesitancy among younger people. According to the Office of National Statistics, 13% of people aged 16-29 are still hesitant about the jab.
- 1.3 The number of vaccinations given in Walsall has been consistently lower than the national target for 18-29s. Unperformed vaccinations are added to subsequent targets, so the proportion vaccinated will continue to decrease unless uptake is significantly increased. This pattern is evident across the Midlands at least
- 1.4 Monitoring current vaccination inequalities
- 1.5 We are now reporting regularly overall vaccination coverage and inequalities at Borough and Ward/Middle Layer Super Output (MSOA) resident population levels. The latter is important as it will allow tracking of the impact of CCs and practice interventions in small areas. We use small area (LSOA) Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scores summarised into quintiles and deciles to report coverage by deprivation.
- 1.6 Uptake in the Black/Black British ethnic group is still low in Bloxwich, Short Heath, Streetly and Willenhall, although actual numbers of unvaccinated people are comparatively small. Similarly, uptake in the Other/Unknown ethnic groups is low in Birchills, Darlaston, Pheasey Park Farm, Pelsall and Pleck. Several of these areas are being targeted by the vaccination bus service.
- 1.7 As noted in previous reports first dose coverage is highest in the White and Asian major ethnic groups, and much lower in the Any Other White, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, any other Asian and Chinese, and Black Caribbean sub-groups. The overall pattern of vaccination inequalities has remained consistent across age groups and there has been little improvement.
- 1.8 A variety of methods are being used in a bid to improve uptake. Including grassroots outreach within local communities by the CCs, the vaccine bus service targeting local pockets of low uptake, targeted advertising via social media and radio, direct messaging via schools and other education partners, Walsall FC players filmed, vox pops produced of people getting vaccinated, videos with health professionals, toolkit for workplaces, information and reassurance in multiple community languages, and frequent press releases and local media appearances.

3 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee notes that this update report covers all the Council's vaccination workstreams related to COVID-19 vaccination, and the NHS England coverage targets for 19/7.
- 2.2 That CMT notes the latest Walsall data on the 19/7 targets and the underperformance so far against them, and that both buses have moved to seven day a week operation to try to meet the NHSE targets, which will clearly impact the budget.
- 2.3 That CMT notes the minimal recent increase in first dose coverage in the last two months.

4 Report detail

On 18/6 NHS England announced new targets for the programme because the rate of increase in coverage, particularly in younger age groups, has been slowing markedly. The new national coverage targets are as follows:

- 89% minimum uptake in cohorts 1-10
- 85% minimum uptake in cohorts 11 and 12
- 2nd doses for cohorts 1-10 to be completed at 8 weeks
- All cohorts must receive at least 3 invites to access the vaccine
- Each PCN as a minimum in each cohort 75%.

Note that the level to which the first four targets requires is not specified here, the assumption seems to be it is the Place level.

The task is more challenging for any Places which are not affluent and/or mainly White British. Motivating younger people to get vaccinated will be an added challenge as they frequently perceive themselves to be at low risk. To make vaccination as convenient as possible, the Saddlers Centre vaccination service has extended its opening hours to 8am-7pm, seven days a week, while vaccinations are also offered at selected local pharmacies, and GP-led sites including Forrester Street surgery and Oak Park Leisure Centre, both of which run frequent walk-in clinics.

In addition to existing Vaccination Centres (VCs), a wide range of interventions have been deployed, including targeted communications activity (see section 2.4 above), pop-up clinics, and two vaccination buses which will visit priority locations including areas with low uptake and high-footfall sites such as major employers.

Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) 2021-22 is being used to cover the costs of hiring the two buses for 10 weeks initially and other associated costs e.g. insurance, and to fund the two vaccinators from Saddlers VC who will be on board each bus. The first bus is targeting unvaccinated over 50s. The second bus began working on 3 July targeting younger people. The first month's itinerary for this bus is being finalised using small resident population (LSOA) data on older unvaccinated people and local knowledge. As the programme moves into younger age groups and simultaneously restrictions are lifted, there is a need for sites which will be heavily frequented by them, which will be facilitated by the vaccination bus. Both buses have moved to seven day a week operation to try to meet the NHSE targets, which will have budgetary implications.

COVID Community Champions (CCs) have mobilised to locally promote visits of the bus, accompany patients and act as marshals at the sites of visits. CC groups are also linking up with GP practices. They will be supporting the second bus in the same way as the first.

5 Conclusion

Walsall Council has set an objective of reducing ethnic inequalities in vaccine uptake, and significant resource has been allocated to this. NHS England's new targets for the programme were announced because nationally the rate of increase in coverage, particularly in younger age groups, has been slowing. The new national coverage targets are extremely ambitious, especially as young people in particular are hesitant or opposed for a wide range of reasons. Achieving a high uptake in these age groups will be challenging.

It is crucial that all local public bodies continue to work together to promote the benefits of vaccination and encourage uptake, and the CCG and council will continue providing support and materials to enable our partners to do this.

Vaccination is safe and effective, and the best way to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community from the harmful effects of COVID-19. There is a vaccination waiting for all Walsall residents, even those who have previously declined and have changed their mind. It is important to get both doses of the vaccine, to provide the maximum protection. Details of all local vaccination services can be found here: <https://www.blackcountryandwestbirmccg.nhs.uk/your-health-services/health-advice/covid-19-vaccination>

Background papers

None

Authors

Dr Michael Soljak, Locum Consultant in Public Health Walsall Borough Metropolitan Council
Stephen Gunther, Director of Public Health Walsall Borough Metropolitan Council
Geraint Griffiths Dale, Managing Director, Walsall; Black Country & West Birmingham CCG