

West Midlands 'Mass-Vax' Strategy



Update from Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP

How we accelerate roll out of Covid vaccinations across the West Midlands

The Covid case rate has seriously escalated over Christmas across the West Midlands. A new national lockdown has been imposed with huge implications for lives and livelihoods.

The only way through is through mass vaccination.

The Government's proposal will take too long.

At a rate of 1 million vaccinations a week nationally, it will take until late-April to deliver both doses of the vaccine to everyone who needs it.

Although the government hopes to scale up to 2.3 million a week, it has not published a timetable for achieving this.

But the target is not ambitious enough. And we can do better than this.

The only way out of lockdown is through mass rollout of a vaccine

Our NHS has performed miracles in already delivering over a million vaccinations.

The government's current pace is around 1 million vaccinations a week with a goal to step up to 2.3 million people a week.

If the pace of 1 million vaccinations does not improve, it will take until the end of April to vaccinate the 1.6 million people in the top six priority groups in the West Midlands with their first dose, thereby eliminating 99 per cent of deaths and hospitalisations.

If we step up the vaccination plan to 3 million / week nationally - with 300,000 a week in the West Midlands - we could have all 1.6 million in the top six priority groups who live in the West Midlands, vaccinated by Valentine's Day, and everyone over the age of 50 in the region vaccinated by the 10 March.

Both Astra Zeneca and Johnson & Johnson have both said more vaccines are there if we have the capacity to efficiently distribute them. In particular we need to act now to agree supply from both AstraZeneca and Johnson and Johnson which is expecting approval any day now.

If the UK shows it has the capacity to deliver the vaccine, the pharmaceutical companies will deliver.

We need a 5 point plan to transform our capacity to deliver the vaccine:

1. Establish coordination:
Establish a Mayor's Taskforce to galvanise and coordinate the West Midlands 'mass-vax' plan, bringing together the NHS family, local pharmacies, authorities and Government departments.
2. Confirm supply:
Confirm with Government a forward pipeline of 3 million a week for the UK, and **300,000** a week for the West Midlands and streamlining processes across the supply chain.
3. Diversify settings:
We need a region-wide call for places to deliver vaccinations, starting with community pharmacies with the capacity to host a consultation room (the

current minimum standard) and store and administer over 1000 vaccines a week. Alongside this we need a region-wide call for organisations with space to house appropriate refrigeration and to work with local authorities to identify community settings in the way we create polling stations as places where the vaccine can be delivered

4. Transform staffing:
We need to kick-start a region wide call for volunteers with a standardised sign-up form to identify those with experience of administering jabs and those who could be trained.
5. Implement systemisation:
We need to establish good digital records of vaccinations which interacts with the Patient's Care Record and lateral flow tests. This should be built into a health passport or Covid Pass that allows us to reopen the West Midlands.

Transforming the Government's target would mean that 99% of deaths would be prevented by the middle of February.

This would need a national supply of 12 million vaccines a month and can be achieved by bringing additional settings online and 30,000 more trained staff to administer the vaccines.

In the West Midlands, to deliver 300,000 vaccinations a week, we need to recruit a vaccination field force of just 2,600 people.

Background

Across the West Midlands, there is already a post-code lottery of provision¹ with ten West Midlands constituencies lacking a vaccination hub:

- Birmingham, Yardley
- Bromsgrove
- Cannock Chase
- Coventry South
- North Shropshire
- Nuneaton
- Staffordshire Moorlands
- Tamworth
- The Wrekin
- Walsall North

Furthermore, hospital leaders have been given almost no visibility into the pipeline of when vaccines will arrive. This is making it extremely difficult for them to build a forward programme that is able to distribute to vulnerable people.

We now need to transform coordination, along with settings and staffing, and put in place good systems to create a personal Covid Pass, that allows us to re-open our region.

Today's plan for vaccine rollout has been devised by the NHS and focuses on using GP's and vaccination super centres. This has been an extraordinary effort.

However, to ramp up we need to bring many more locations online. Community pharmacies are the obvious choice.

Pharmacies deliver millions of flu-shots every year and are nearby to where residents live. Surveys have found that almost 70 per cent of respondents visited a pharmacy during the pandemic, which shows that people feel comfortable at their pharmacy and were able to get to their local pharmacy during the lockdown.

However, at the moment, pharmacies must show that they have "fridge space to store at (2-8oC), around 1000 vaccine doses at one time or confirmed plans to have fridge capacity in place, and capacity to administer 1000 doses per week, ensuring all doses are administered within appropriate shelf life."

This is too high a threshold for small community pharmacies. Lowering this threshold increases the number able to provide vaccines. Even 50 per cent of community pharmacies at 100 vaccines a week would add

¹ See <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/black-country/11-parts-birmingham-midlands-no-19556219>

550,000 extra doses nationally each week to capacity - that's 25% of the extra capacity we need.

However, Simon Dukes, the chief executive of the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, has told the BBC that: 'the government knows we are here, but so far haven't thought of us as a primary point of delivery in the way they do the traditional annual flu jab'².

Alongside this, Local Authorities should be asked to identify community settings like polling stations that can be equipped with the requisite freezer capacity.

To deliver the number of shots to everyone over the age of 50 by the middle of February, we need to deliver [300,000] jabs a week in the West Midlands.

Supply

There are four vaccines in play.

1. The Pfizer vaccine: Several million vaccines in the UK in December. 1 million have been used. 40 million booked.
2. The Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine: 2 million vaccines a week available by the week after next. In February this could be pushed up further to 3 million vaccines or more. Provided

that they know that amount can be absorbed.

3. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine: A single-shot vaccine like the AstraZeneca. 30 million doses booked, with option of 22 million more. Due to file for approval in early February. Ready to ship in February. In March, it could ramp up further production.

4. The Moderna vaccine: This is an mRNA vaccine similar to Pfizer. Israel's regulatory authority has now granted approval. Booked 7 million doses.

Based on these estimates, we should be able to access the following:

- End of January: 3 million a week
- End of February: 4 million a week
- End of March: 5 million a week

We therefore need to ensure that we have a system ready to deliver that capacity now.

Staffing

In order to deliver the expanded and accelerated vaccine programme, we believe the government should also draw on the following categories of people:

- Retired medical experts
- Health-care professionals
- Medical students

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-55485012>

- Qualified first aiders

Mobilising these teams would substantially reduce pressure on hard-pressed NHS staff.

The average time for a flu jab appointment - such as those administered by expert pharmacists and fully trained St John Ambulance crew - is 20 minutes, including a ten-minute observation period. The target for any trained vaccinator should be to administer three jabs per hour.

The West Midlands is home to a large number of medical schools, and medical students. We should therefore now call on our medical schools to help us surge capacity into the mass vaccination programme.

Therefore, to deliver 300,000 shots a week in the West Midlands, we need around 100,000 hours a week of vaccination capacity; at 38 hours a week, this implies a vaccination field force of around 2,600 people.

Systems

Finally, we need to be able to record good systems to record who has been vaccinated so that we can equip people with a Covid Passport. This will allow us to unlock the economy quickly. NHS Track and Trace should now be integrated into local systems for providing this.

The West Midlands Data

Prepared by the House of

Commons Library

Estimated population in Covid-19 ARG vaccination groups in the West Midlands

Vaccination Group	West Midlands Combined Authority	West Midlands Region	UK total	West Midlands/ UK
1 Residents in care home for older adults	18,400	44,200	500,000	9%
Their carers	18,400	44,200	500,000	9%
2 All aged 80 and over	132,000	303,000	3,000,000	10%
Frontline health and social care workers	147,000	264,100	2,500,000	10%
3 All aged 75 to 80	88,200	215,700	2,200,000	10%
4 All aged 70 to 75	113,500	291,100	3,300,000	9%
Clinically extremely vulnerable	100,800	138,900	1,400,000	10%
5 All aged 65 to 70	121,300	295,500	3,300,000	9%
6 16-64 with underlying health conditions	n/a	n/a		
Sub-total in Top 6 priority groups		1,596,700	16,700,000	10%
7 All aged 60 to 65	137,700	321,000	3,800,000	
8 All aged 55 to 60	167,500	379,300	4,400,000	
9 All aged 50 to 55	183,400	406,000	4,700,000	
10 Everyone else	1,985,700	3,722,300	37,000,000	
West Midlands Total		6,425,300		
UK total		66,600,000		
West Midlands population as proportion of UK				10%

Sources:

[NHS workforce data September 2020](#)

[Skills for Care: social care workforce 2019/20 estimates](#)

[CQC care directory as at 1 December 2020](#)

[Mid 2019 population estimates accessed via Nomis](#)

[NHS Digital Shielded patient list as at 3 December 2020](#)

Calculating the end date of vaccination scenarios

6/1/21	Vaccination in WM (10% of UK jobs)	Weeks to complete West Mids priorities	End date
West Mids: number in Priority groups 1-6		1,596,700.0	
Vaccinations at 1M/ week	100,000	16.0	27 April
Vaccinations at 2.2M/ week	230,000	6.9	23 February
Vaccinations at 3M/ week	300,000	5.3	12 February
West Mids: All groups		2,703,000	
Vaccinations at 1M/ week	100,000	27.0	14 July
Vaccinations at 2.2M/ week	230,000	11.8	29 March
Vaccinations at 3M/ week	300,000	9.0	10 March