

# Your Health

Update for patients and the public in Berkshire West

January 2021



## Covid vaccination update

It started just a few short weeks ago but it's great to say that now all 12 covid vaccination sites are live in Berkshire West thanks to a massive amount of work by clinicians, surgery staff, patients and volunteers.

Thousands of local people aged 80 and over have been given the ground breaking vaccine either at the sites or in local care homes. Frontline health and social care teams have also been offered the vaccination.

If you are in the priority groups\* and haven't yet had an appointment booked, please don't worry. Anyone who is registered with a local GP will be contacted and offered an appointment. Most people will receive a letter either from their GP or the national booking system, this will include all the information you need, including your NHS number. Some surgeries are also phoning and texting patients to book appointments.

Please be assured that people in the priority groups who haven't yet been booked into an appointment have not been forgotten. Some vaccination sites were up and running before others and the roll out of the programme depends on the deliveries of the vaccines. But everyone who is entitled to a vaccination will be offered one very shortly.

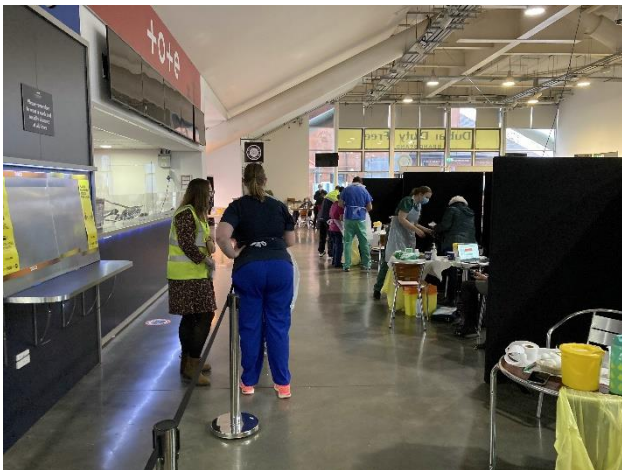
PPGs along with other volunteers from local communities have played a key role in helping the roll out run smoothly. They've been on hand directing traffic, helping elderly and frail patients through the booking-in procedure and keeping an eye on them after they've had their jab. This has often meant volunteering into the evening and at weekends and it's been a huge help in administering the vaccine to the largest numbers of people in the shortest space of time.

Dr Amit Sharma of the Brookside Group Practice/Earley+ PCN, said: "It has been a huge task of many hours of planning and preparation during what has been an incredibly challenging season in the life of any practice. We are delighted to start the Covid vaccination clinic for our patients and are going to be vaccinating many more patients over several months, moving down the national priority groups. We will contact patients as it becomes their turn!

"Like all the other Berkshire West practices, we are thankful for the support of patients and our hardworking staff in making this possible. The staff for the clinics include our regular practice staff but also external staff including volunteer marshals, administrators and former clinical staff who have returned to practice to help support this effort. The marshals have been organised by Wokingham Volunteers Centre alongside Wokingham Borough Council who have been highly supportive during the vaccination effort with staffing and facilities.'



Over in West Berkshire, the large scale vaccination site is now up and running at Newbury Racecourse with capacity to do around 1,000 patients a day, depending on vaccine supplies. The site is administering vaccines to patients from nine West Berkshire surgeries which not only streamlines the process but also frees capacity at these surgeries to continue with their other 'business as usual' work.



Patient Marina, 86, from Tilehurst, was one of the first to be vaccinated at the racecourse site. She said: "it has been fantastic. Perfect in every way. Everything ran smoothly and everyone was very relaxed and friendly and it was all so clean and tidy and efficient. If there's anything that's going to get us through this terrible pandemic and save lives, then this is it and I hope everyone takes the opportunity to protect themselves and each other. "

Some patients got in touch with their local newspaper the Newbury Weekly News and the Editor Andy Murrill said: "I've had lots of lovely calls from over 80s (including a 100-year-old) who had the jab on the first day, saying how efficient and stress-free it was. They wanted me to pass that on to the people going next. The calls were just wonderful to hear and show there's hope out there."

Wendy Bower, the CCG's Patient and Public Engagement Lay Member said: "I've felt a mixture of pride and humility when I've seen the huge amount of goodwill being shown by our PPGs and local community volunteers. This is the biggest mass vaccination programme in the history of the NHS and it's involved a huge amount of planning and co-ordinating. It's important now that we don't let our guard down and once you've received a vaccine you still need to follow the social distancing, hands face and space rules."

**Patients are being reminded that they should not contact their surgery to find out when their vaccination is due – the surgery will contact people once supplies are confirmed and a slot can be booked. Everyone eligible for a vaccine will be contacted at some point to be offered an appointment so please be patient.**

**\* The full list of groups to be prioritised for the vaccination is:**

- Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
- All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
- All those 75 years of age and over
- All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals
- All those 65 years of age and over. All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
- All those 60 years of age and over
- All those 55 years of age and over
- All those 50 years of age and over

### **Covid vaccination clarification – mass vaccination sites**

The NHS has sent out a letter inviting some people to book a Covid vaccination appointment at one of the new mass vaccination sites. These letters have come from the national NHS computerised system so you may have been offered an appointment that is some distance from where you live.

You have the choice of accepting this appointment if you wish to go ahead with your vaccination at the slot and site you've been allocated.

Alternatively, you can wait to be contacted by your own GP practice. They will be in touch as soon as an appointment slot is available at a vaccination site closer to your home. The surgery will either ring, text or write to you offering an appointment.

The NHS has drawn up a list of priority groups\* and our surgeries are working through patients in these groups. If you've not heard from your GP yet, please don't think you've been forgotten. You will be contacted as soon as it's your turn and over the next few weeks, everyone in Berkshire West will be offered the vaccine.

There's a lot more information on the FAQs section of our website which is regularly updated [www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/covid-19-vaccine/faqs](http://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/covid-19-vaccine/faqs)

## Hospital coping well under pressure

The Royal Berkshire Hospital has seen a rise in Covid numbers over the last few weeks and this is likely to continue for a while longer. However, the teams there are committed to continuing with as many services as possible and are urging people to attend for their appointments.

Acting Chief Executive Nicky Lloyd (pictured), has released a short video [https://youtu.be/laxJX0\\_VXoM](https://youtu.be/laxJX0_VXoM) to reassure the public that everything is being well managed and is under control and there are a raft of measures in place to keep patients, staff and visitors safe.



“A concern we do have is the number of patients not attending their scheduled appointments which has the potential for serious consequences if diagnosis or ongoing treatment is delayed. I want to encourage you to come if you have been asked to attend an appointment or you urgently need care, it’s vital that we see you in a timely way and ensure your condition is treated or monitored. We are a National Health Service and open for multiple diseases and conditions. You will not be a burden and we want you to be seen,” she said.

“We’ve learned a lot from the first wave of Covid and this has helped us to carry on treating other very seriously ill people and keep services going in a very safe way. We have very strict infection control policies in place including deep cleans of clinical areas between patients, many hand sanitizer stations, one way systems, socially distanced waiting rooms and we actively promote the ‘hands, face, space’ guidance,” she added.

## Winter mental health support

Seven voluntary and community organisations are to share a £20,000 NHS England grant aimed at supporting the mental health of people from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic and Refugee communities (BAMER) over the winter.

Berkshire West CCG secured the funding and has worked closely with key partners to devise the best ways of allocating the cash. Reading Voluntary Action, Involve (Wokingham) and Volunteer Centre West Berkshire have administered and will host the grant which is being shared with these organisations

1. Reading Alliance for Cohesion and Racial Equality - to fund further outreach work, engagement and raise awareness,
2. Autism Berkshire and Alafia - for advice and support sessions for parents and carers
3. Community United (a West Berkshire organisation) - to fund two online forums with small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) employers and their employees from BAMER communities on their mental well-being,
4. Reading Community Learning Centre - to expand capacity to support BAMER women with extreme mental health needs,
5. Sport in Mind – to provide tai chi sessions,
6. Time to Talk, (a West Berkshire group) - to fund culturally sensitive engagement and counselling for young BAMER adults
7. Reading Refugees Support group – to support their work with people who are asylum seekers and in need of mental health support.

Dr Heather Howells, Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) lead for mental health, said: “people’s mental health has taken a real hit during the pandemic. Recent figures from the Office of National Statistics show almost one in five adults were experiencing some form of depression during the pandemic and one in eight developed moderate to severe depressive symptoms. Those who are struggling often find winter especially challenging with the dark days and poor weather which limit their opportunities to get outside and do many of the things we know can help improve our mental health and wellbeing.



“Mental health services have been running throughout the pandemic but there has been a marked dip in referrals which is why the work of these seven groups is so important to help people who desperately need some support. I’m very pleased this funding has been earmarked for such a diverse range of really excellent projects,” she added.

**There is a range of other support for people with mental health problems. This includes:**

NHS talking therapies are a confidential service run by fully trained experts offering help with problems like stress, anxiety and depression. People can access the service by visiting their GP or referring themselves online or ringing 0300 365 2000.

Young people aged between 11 and 18 can visit KOOOTH.com a free, anonymous and confidential online counselling and emotional wellbeing support. And for those over 18 and in urgent need of help, they should ring NHS 111 who will direct them to the right support.

There is also online support on the NHS mental health and wellbeing link [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and people can also seek help by going online at NHS 111

In emergency situations or if someone is in immediate danger, people must call 999 straight away

## Little Blue Book of Sunshine relaunched

Berkshire health officials have relaunched the ‘Little Blue Book of Sunshine’, a mental health booklet for children and young people which is now available online.

It gives tips from young people themselves on how to deal with problems like anxiety, body image, relationships and anger and also includes information about where to get help.

Local GP Dr Johan Zylstra, Clinical Lead for Children and Young People at Berkshire West CCG, said “The last few months have been hard for us all, but it’s been particularly difficult for our young people. We’re really pleased to be re-launching this booklet. It’s so important that our young people know that help is out there and also that there are a variety of things they can do to help improve their mental health if they start to feel anxious or stressed.’



You can download a copy here on the [Berkshire West](#) CCG website. It is also now available in [Apple Books](#) and [Google Play Books](#).

## Free training for those working with young people

Two special events are being held next month providing free training for people who work with young people and need advice on how to talk to them about relationships and sexual health.

Brook, the country's leading sexual health and wellbeing charity for under 25 year olds, has teamed up with the Public Health and Wellbeing Team at West Berkshire Council, to deliver the two-hour online courses on Tuesday 2 and Tuesday 9 February. They are aimed at helping young people make decisions, develop healthy relationships and have good sexual health.

Sexual and reproductive health is a vital aspect of a person's health and wellbeing and is an important area of public health. But we know that not all young people in West Berkshire are necessarily making the best choices in relation to their sexual health, this is evidenced by rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in young people and their preferred methods of contraception.

Book on the 2nd February [training here](#) and 9th February [here](#).

## Hotel helps ease hospital pressure

Twenty rooms at the Holiday Inn South in Reading have been set aside to support prompt and safe discharges from the Royal Berkshire Hospital. This will free up beds at the RBH and ease pressure across the local health and social care system.

The 20 short term care beds at the hotel mean people with care needs who can't immediately return home from hospital can be looked after at the hotel whilst their convalescence and reablement needs can be assessed.

This could be a help for people who need extra support with personal care but their care package cannot be started immediately, or it could help people whose homes need adapting before they can safely return.

The Hospital Discharge Hotel is not specifically for Covid patients and no known Covid cases will be admitted. If a patient is Covid positive, they will need to have completed a 14-day isolation, or have had a negative test before they can be admitted. Safety measures are in place at the hotel and care staff are resourced with appropriate personal protective equipment.

Working closely with the hotel manager, Reading Borough Council converted 20 of the hotel's rooms into short-term care beds, The Council's Social Workers who are based at the RBH can refer people to the hotel where staff from Care 1st Homecare help care for them.

So far 64 bed days have been freed at the RBH and local community hospitals with 19 people catered for so far saving 92 bed days at hospital.

**Cllr Tony Jones, Reading's Lead Councillor for Adult Social Care, said:** "from last April through to June we created care facilities at the Holiday Inn South and freed up 14 beds at the Royal Berkshire Hospital and local community hospitals. It was clear in December as local infection rates increased we needed to set up the Hospital Discharge Hotel at Holiday Inn South again.

"I am especially proud and grateful to the Council staff who worked tirelessly over Christmas to set up this care option and continue to work hard on the frontline ensuring our most vulnerable residents get the care they need to recover."

**Nicky Lloyd, Acting Chief Executive of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, said:**  
“This is a fantastic example of how our local community works in partnership to keep patients supported and safe, beyond their care given directly by the hospital.

“The coronavirus outbreak has put huge demands on all our medical services over the last few months, and initiatives like this one are key to ensuring the smooth running of hospital services, freeing up beds for emergency patients and helping ease the pressure on our teams.”

## GP stars in new national video

Wokingham GP Dr Rupa Joshi has been filmed in a new video looking at how the Covid pandemic has affected clinicians on the front line in primary care.

You can see what Rupa has to say here - <https://youtu.be/KkvMqGQwF2c>



## Living Well Webinar

Following a miserable 2020 and a tricky start to 2021 we could all do with a bit of support, so you might be interested in a Living Well in 2021 Webinar taking place on Friday 29 January from 10.30-12.30.

This course is aimed at people keen to learn how to make new and easy changes to their daily lives to promote their wellbeing and happiness. It is also aimed at those looking for ways they can bring improvements to their community and help others in their neighbourhood.

Connecting Communities in Berkshire, Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, Recovery in Mind, Get Berkshire Active and the Happiness Lab are lined up to speak, along with others. They will talk about:

- The 5 ways of wellbeing and how they can be included in our daily lives easily.
- How to build a greater sense of community in the current climate.
- How we can improve our wellbeing and community spirit

Find further details and booking [information here](#).

## There's still time to apply for a PPV role with NHS specialised services – deadline 24 January

The application deadline for Specialised Commissioning Patient Public Voice (PPV) partner roles in NHS England and NHS Improvement has been extended to **Sunday 24 January**, so there's still time to apply. You can find all current vacancies and how to [apply here](#).

There are a wide range of roles available for user voices; for people with lived experience of specific clinical areas (for our Clinical Reference Groups) through to broader roles which require less specific experience of services (such as our Patient Public Voice Assurance Group). These are all strategic roles with an attached involvement fee in line with NHS England and NHS Improvement's [PPV Partners policy](#).

**Have your say on specialised services...** 

**Apply to become a Patient and Public Voice partner today.**



This is a great opportunity to influence how specialised services are commissioned. Please do take a look to see if there is something you are interested in applying for, and also share the vacancies through your networks.

[Find out more from the lay chair of the Patient Public Voice Assurance Group about how being involved as a PPV partner has impact.](#)

[Hear from some of their Specialised Commissioning PPV partners about why they're involved.](#)

NHS England and NHS Improvement is committed to ensuring PPV opportunities are inclusive, and that a broad range of people with different experiences and perspectives inform our work. We would particularly encourage applications from people from a BAME background and people from other groups that experience health inequalities.

## **Domestic Abuse Awareness Training**

A series of one-day Domestic Abuse Awareness trainings sessions is planned for West Berkshire professionals, community organisations and individuals is now available. It is aimed at developing people's knowledge of the effects and dynamics of domestic abuse, the types of partner violence, complexities in leaving abusive relationships, power and control and the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people

The dates are 5th March, 21st May, 25th June and 29th October 2021. All run from 10:00-16:00 at Shaw House, Newbury. Email [training@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:training@westberks.gov.uk)

## **Mount Vernon Cancer Services Review**

Review Update Webinars (Zoom and Teams)

A series of online events detailing the latest developments in the Mount Vernon Cancer Services Review, including the recent discussions by the Programme Board on the preferred options for the future of the centre.

See the [dates here](#) (until 25 March 2021) along with details of how to register.

Patients, carers, families and residents are also invited to participate in the engagement via a series of locality-based online events. Visit [their website](#) for more details.

If you do not have access to the internet you can take part in all engagement events by telephone - please get in touch with the engagement team: Email [england.eoesct-projects@nhs.net](mailto:england.eoesct-projects@nhs.net) or phone Kevin Ross - 07900 607507.