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Dear Patient

I would like to give you an update regarding COVID-19 vaccinations and influenza vaccinations (for anyone aged between the ages of 50 and 64 years).

We recognise that you will have lots of questions about the National COVID-19 vaccination programme. Although it has been announced that GP practices will be taking part in this vaccination programme, it is universal that GP practices know little about what role this will be at this time. The Glebe Surgery has submitted a robust bid to be considered a suitable COVID-19 vaccination site but we have no guarantee that we will be selected.

What we currently know is the Government has asked the NHS to be ready to deliver a COVID-19 vaccination programme for England from December.

In Sussex, detailed planning is well progressed, building on the expertise the NHS has already in delivering immunisations like the annual flu vaccination programme.

GP practices are working alongside community and hospital partners to plan what is needed and how a vaccination programme of this scale will be offered to our patients.

A priority in all our planning is to ensure that it is as easy as possible for eligible people to access a vaccination when they become available.

The NHS, working with partners, will deliver the vaccine through a network of locations, for example to vulnerable and housebound people in their own homes, at community clinics and at large scale centres.

Eligibility for the vaccine will be prioritised by the Government's Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, based on the latest evidence of vaccine effectiveness and clinical characteristics.

The most recently published advice is that vaccines should first be given to care home residents and staff, followed by people aged over 80 and health and social care workers, before being rolled out to the rest of the population in order of age and risk.

A national public information campaign will start shortly. It will promote public understanding of the safety and effectiveness of vaccines and provide more information about when and how you will be able to access a vaccine when one becomes available.

Key messages:

- **A vaccine is not yet available (sadly)**
- **When one is available, it will be given in order of priority to those at highest risk first.**
- **We will be in contact with you with information about where and when you will need to receive the vaccine.**

As I am sure most of you are now aware, the Government has also announced that those between the age of 50 and 64 years are now eligible for a free flu vaccination. **We strongly support this, as it is likely to reduce the unprecedented levels of strain currently on the NHS by reducing the chance of influenza infection causing significant extra workload.**

Most practices have little or no stock of the vaccine required for this age group as we normally order vaccines for our campaigns a year ahead. We currently have a few available for the 50-64 year age group and have a clinic 2nd December. Appointments can be booked online via the NHS App <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/the-nhs-app/> or if you have signed up to Patient Access <https://www.patientaccess.com/> If you are 50-65 years of age **or** under 65 years old and in a known risk group, we strongly encourage you to book. We must inform you that if a patient books and is not eligible then we will decline to give the vaccination.

The Government via the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) has secured sufficient stock for patients aged 50-64 years. However, it is proving difficult for every GP surgery in the country to obtain stock from DHSC at this time. We reassure you we are doing our utmost and we will provide clinics as soon as the vaccine is available to us.

The Glebe Surgery Partners would be most grateful if you could seek health advice via our online services as much as possible currently. It is not The Glebe Surgery's preferred way to reach out to our patients but we are currently receiving nearly 2,500 telephone contacts a week meaning it takes longer to get through to a receptionist. We want to be able to take urgent calls in a timely manner while still dealing with everything else that may not be quite so urgent. The more patients are able to access our online services for routine matters, the more responsive we can be to urgent ones.

Please do not telephone us for information about flu vaccinations or COVID-19 vaccinations, as we won't have the ability to answer all your questions and continue with our work as a GP practice.

We value all the support our patients have given us in the past 12 months and hope that you all have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely

Dr Keir Newsom