

Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board

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Ms Jeane Freeman MSP
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Date: 29th October 2020
Our Ref: JG/LLPAE

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Dear Ms Freeman

Thank you for your letter requesting an update on the Renfrewshire flu programme. There has clearly been considerable public concern regarding the delivery model in this area that reflect the wider challenges faced by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde in completing this year's flu vaccination programme. This letter describes the action taken to address these concerns and provides an update on the situation in Renfrewshire.

I am very aware of the nature of the concerns raised by the public and particularly regret the anxiety felt by those people in the 65+ age group. In response, I have personally apologised to all those who have experienced difficulties in receiving their flu vaccination appointments.

We have also issued information to reassure members of the public that all remaining letters to the 65+ age group will be sent out by the end of October 2020 and their appointment will be scheduled before the end of November 2020. We have increased capacity at the vaccination centres so that those eligible, and in particular those over the age of 75, are vaccinated earlier than originally planned. We are also working with community pharmacies to utilise capacity in areas where public transport to a community vaccination centre may be an issue.

This week, changes have been made to the national SIRS system to allow older patients to be vaccinated first and this arrangement is now in place for those people within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde who will receive their appointment later this week. NSS have confirmed that by 31st October 2020 all outstanding appointment letters will be issued by first class post. Any patient who needs to alter their appointment can make contact with the appointment helpline who will re-book their appointment. In order to ensure these calls are answered quickly, we have recruited an additional 20 call handlers to handle the anticipated increase in the volume of calls. A dedicated email channel has also been opened to increase public access to the appointments system.

As you know, John Brown, Dr Linda de Caestecker and I met with our local MPs and MSPs on 26th October 2020 to address their constituents concerns and the efforts being made to resolve these issues. I have arranged a further meeting on 30th October 2020 for those MPs and MSPs who were unable to join us on Monday. We will continue to communicate directly with this group in the coming weeks.

In respect of Renfrewshire, David Leese, HSCP Chief Officer met with Neil Bibby MSP to discuss the local issues on 19th October 2020 with a further meeting planned next week.

Renfrewshire HSCP serves 33,000 people who are over 65 years of age. In planning the approach to delivering their flu programme, a number of venues were considered to establish the vaccination centre model. The approach we used to design the model considered venues that have good transport links, car parking facilities, and are preferably not being used for any other purpose. This was intended to allow safety and social distancing to be managed with the support of other design features, such as a one way flow system for entrance and exit. A single and central single location for the Flu Vaccination Centre at St Mirren Park in Paisley was the only one identified as meeting that criteria. All other sites examined were considered either not suitable, or not available. I recognise that opting for the single location has posed challenges for some members of the public and I have apologised for the distress this has caused.

Additional work has been undertaken within Renfrewshire HSCP to improve the delivery of the vaccination programme. These are:

- All individual cases raised with the HSCP are being reviewed, in collaboration with the patient's GP practice, to establish if that person is housebound and where that is the case, they will be vaccinated at home by the District Nurse.
- We have changed the delivery model for approximately 1,000 people over 65 years living in Lochwinnoch. These are patients of a GP practice that has two connected surgeries – one in Lochwinnoch and one in Beith. The HSCP has agreed with a local pharmacy that they will offer the vaccination for anyone over 65 years in these locations.
- The HSCP has also agreed that pharmacies in Bishopton, Erskine and Houston/Bridge of Weir will offer the vaccination to local people over 65 years. Vaccinations will be available by appointment with the pharmacy on a first come first served basis from 9th November 2020.

The Renfrewshire vaccination centre at St Mirren Park opened on 29th September 2020 and as at 28th October 2020, had vaccinated over 19,637 people, including housebound residents which is currently ahead of the planned level of vaccination. To date the HSCP has had positive feedback from over 450 people who have attended the centre and we continue to monitor the public experience across all our centres.

I hope this letter provides the assurance you require that we have addressed the public concern caused by the vaccination programme and that lessons have been learned from this experience. Of course, I will provide any further information you may require and would like to end by adding my personal apology to you and Scottish Government colleagues for the problems created by our handling of the programme.

Yours sincerely



Jane Grant
Chief Executive
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Cc: John Brown, Chairman NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde