

# Chief Executive CONNECTS



Dear Colleague,

16/02/2021

It may not be a surprise that I am again opening my blog with the COVID-19 Mass Vaccination Programme this week - and with good reason, as we have passed some significant milestones in the past seven days.

On Friday, I was delighted that we passed 100,000 vaccinations, and that number has since increased to 114,012, which is approaching 30 per cent of our total population in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. Then, on Sunday we met our target of offering the first dose of the vaccine to everybody in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan in JCVI priority groups 1-4.

To have vaccinated such a large number of people since the programme got underway on 8th December, including many of the most vulnerable people in our communities, is a staggering achievement. The organisations, teams and individuals that have come together to collectively deliver this should be extremely proud of the progress they have made to date, reaching a milestone that gives us real hope for the future.

Cohorts that have received their first dose of the vaccine will now be contacted by the Health Board and GPs for their second appointments, while people in priority groups 5, 6 and 7 will be offered their first dose of the vaccine concurrently.

People in group 5, aged 65- 69, will receive their first dose of the vaccine at their GP practice, and group 6, those who have underlying health conditions and carers and group 7, aged 60-64 will have appointments scheduled at Mass Vaccination Centres.

While we are making excellent progress and there's a lot for us to be positive about with the progress of the programme, it's vital that we ward off any complacency that may be creeping in among those who have received the vaccine - in short, we can't 'relax with the vax'.

We can't forget that there is a long way to go with the Mass Vaccination Programme, and while those who have been vaccinated are well protected, we need to think about the large number of people in the community who are yet to receive their vaccine.

We must continue working together to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect our loved ones by regularly washing our hands, wearing a face covering as required, and maintaining a two-metre social distance wherever possible.

**Len Richards**  
Chief Executive

## Lorna Bennett answers community's COVID-19 vaccine questions

Last week, MP for Cardiff South and Penarth Stephen Doughty held an interview via Facebook Live with Consultant in Public Health, Lorna Bennett, who is one of the key figures involved in delivering our Mass Vaccination programme.

The interview was a great opportunity for members of the community to benefit from Lorna's expertise in public health and valuable insights into the Mass Vaccination Programme, as she answered some of the most common queries that Stephen has been receiving from his constituents about COVID-19 vaccinations.

During the interview, Lorna gives an overview of our Mass Vaccination Programme and how the COVID-19 vaccines work, and also addresses more specific questions such as whether the vaccines are suitable for pregnant

people, and if ingredients in the vaccines are suitable for all members of the community.

The interview is still available on Stephen's Facebook page and will likely answer most questions that you may have about the Mass Vaccination Programme. It's a really information watch and will only take around 15 minutes of your time, so I would certainly recommend taking a look. You can [watch part one of the interview here](#), and [access part two here](#).

Don't forget that the Mass Vaccination Programme pages on our website has a comprehensive FAQ section and also addresses some of the common myths and misconceptions surrounding the vaccine. You can [view our Mass Vaccination Programme webpages here](#).

## Compliment for our Mass Vaccination Programme

I was very pleased this afternoon to receive the following praise for the team at the Mass Vaccination Centre in Splott.

*I would please love to heap praise on the COVID 19 Vaccination Team at the Star Centre in Splott.*

*I had the phone call on Wednesday 10 February inviting me to attend that same afternoon. I don't think I've ever been so elated at the prospect of a jab! (It was also unexpected as I'm only 63, but at my request he explained that my age group was being invited as the frontline workers had had theirs)*

*The organisation at the Centre was so efficient*

*and professional; from queuing outside (this didn't take long), the welcoming direction into the Centre, and checking-in. My nurse was really friendly and reassuring, and it felt I was through in no time at all.*

*I can't commend them enough!*

I'm pleased to say that we're receiving lots of comments of this nature about teams delivering the vaccine across various locations, which I know are greatly appreciated by the team. May I say thank you and congratulations to you all - keep up the fantastic work.

## IT update

A regular theme in my recent Q&A sessions has been issues that members of staff are experiencing with IT, which was exacerbated by the recent national IT outage.

It can obviously be frustrating when IT issues impact on our ability to work efficiently, but it's important to acknowledge that the team is working hard in challenging circumstances to make improvements to the system. Like all of us, the team has had to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has included their outstanding response working day and night to swiftly make home working available to a significant number of our staff.

Unfortunately, these challenges have caused a delay to the roll out of the Windows 10 programme, which will resolve a number of the issues being faced, such as slow machines, access to the required functionality or long login times.

However, the Windows 10 roll out is now

underway and the team has robust plans in place to work through the programme, with dedicated teams in place to sweep through the 13,000 devices involved. They'll be prioritising devices in key clinical areas such as EU to help reduce pressure, and a specialist team will ensure the compatibility of clinical apps to the new platform. It's a big logistical challenge, but you can expect to see movement on this in your area soon.

Alongside all of this, the team is working on improving the performance of Wi-Fi across our sites, bolster the Office 365 infrastructure so that it is more resilient to the increasing demands we're placing on it, and redevelop the helpdesk so that it is able to more quickly respond to people's needs.

More funding has been made available to make all of this happen quickly. Please be patient while the team continues to work as quickly as they are able to make these improvements, which will benefit us all.

## Electronic Test Requesting Update

Electronic test requesting (ETR) is the preferred method of requesting laboratory tests in our Health Board. We started a phased switch away from paper to only ETR in some of our departments from 2nd February 2021.

We can report good progress has been made and ETR has been rolled-out in the Haematology department, which has received a positive response from Haematology staff who have been using ETR in the unit and Day Centre. We are also currently working with the Emergency Unit to roll-out ETR in the coming

weeks, as part of further improving patient safety with faster test turnaround times and accurate requesting.

# Laboratory Services User Feedback Survey

Public Health Wales and Laboratory Medicine are looking for feedback from the Health Board's secondary care staff. If you have used any of the pathology or laboratory services in the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

region, please tell us about your experiences by [completing the Cardiff and Vale / Public Health Wales Laboratory Services User Feedback survey, here.](#)

## Good news from the RECOVERY clinical trial

You may have seen in the news over the weekend that there has been a new treatment breakthrough for COVID-19. What you may not have realised is that once again, research and development staff here at Cardiff and Vale UHB have contributed to the finding.

The RECOVERY (Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 thERapY) trial has been testing a range of treatments for COVID-19 since we became the first Health Board in the UK to open the trial in March 2020. Tocilizumab, an intravenous drug used to treat rheumatoid arthritis, was added to the trial in April 2020 for patients with COVID-19 who required oxygen and had evidence of inflammation.

The study, which is led by University of Oxford, has demonstrated that tocilizumab reduces the risk of death when given to hospitalised patients with severe COVID-19, and that it also shortens the time until patients are successfully discharged from hospital and reduces the need for a mechanical ventilator.

Cardiff and Vale UHB was a leading recruiter to the arm of the trial that in June 2020 found the low-dose steroid treatment, Dexamethasone reduces deaths of hospitalised patients with severe respiratory complications of COVID-19, and this rapidly became part of standard-of-care given to all such patients.



The research has now found that combined, tocilizumab and dexamethasone reduces mortality by one third for patients requiring oxygen, and by almost one half for those on a ventilator.

R&D staff are often unsung heroes for the vital work they do to identify and analyse new treatments for patients, but have deservedly received recognition for their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm hugely proud of the significant contribution that we have made here at Cardiff and Vale, thanks to the exceptional collaborative effort between clinical teams, ward staff and the research team.

May your incredible work continue both in the face of COVID-19, but also for all patient groups in the years ahead.

# All sites to be smoke-free from 1st March

As some of you will be aware, today marks just two weeks until hospital grounds become smoke-free.

New laws, being introduced across Wales on 1st March, build on the smoking ban introduced in 2007 and will protect more people from harmful second-hand smoke and help those trying to quit.

The new law means that all parts of the hospital grounds will be smoke-free. Anyone found breaking the law by smoking in the hospital grounds could face a £100 fine.



We know the harms smoking can do to health, so I look forward to having the backing of our staff, patients and visitors, to ensure we all play our part in building a healthier Wales for the future. [Read more about what the smoke-free legislation means.](#)

## An emotional pair of poems

In the last couple of days I have become aware of a pair of excellent poems that I wanted to share with you this week.

The first, is a heart-warming poem that was written by Peter Edwards when he was a patient with us on T5 at UHW, which reflects on the care that he received during his stay on the ward.

Peter is sadly no longer with us, but his family have given their blessing for me to share his wonderful poem in my blog this week. It highlights that despite the challenges the NHS is facing at the moment, staff are continuing to show incredible levels of care and commitment to their patients.

I understand that Peter was a keen writer, which certainly shines through in his [poem](#), [which I'd urge you to take a moment out of your day to read, here.](#)

The second poem is by Haematology Trials Unit Manager, Emma Williams, which was shared on social media over the weekend. Emma encourages us to take a moment to reflect, both on the difficult times we have faced over the last year or so, but also on the hope offered by research in improving our understanding and identifying new treatments.

Emma's poem certainly caused me to stop and reflect for a moment, both on the tough times we've faced and what lies ahead. You can [read Emma's poem here](#) and see what emotions it stirs in you.

## Addressing problem parking

You may be aware that, due to there being fewer numbers of vehicles on site and the increased urgency with which some groups of staff would need to get parked up and into their area of work, we took the decision earlier in the pandemic to relax some of the usual enforcement measures around car parking at our sites.

I have recently been very disappointed to hear that a small group of people are taking advantage of this, and ignoring some of the important rules relating to specific areas of our sites, such as around maternity and midwifery at UHW.

I would urge everybody to please comply with the signage and consider the potential consequences of your actions when it comes to parking at our sites. We should never take what may seem like the easy or convenient option if that could impact on the safety or efficiency with which our services are able to run, or put the safety of other car park users at risk.

Reintroducing parking enforcement remains an option to us, but is for the time being something that we want to avoid if possible. I'll be keeping an eye on this situation and will take action if it doesn't improve.

## A heartfelt thank you to all of our staff members #HelpUsHelpYou

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to each and every staff member across the Health Board for your ongoing efforts and hard work in our united fight against COVID-19. I understand the pressures and strains you are all dealing with and you continue to show courage, compassion and resilience as we meet our daily challenges.

I need to reiterate the critical importance of adhering to the basic rules of physical distancing, good hand hygiene and wearing face coverings where appropriate. Staff not adhering to COVID-19 safety rules are a small minority, but this small number of people are responsible for a large proportion of COVID-19 transmission risk.

As we see great success with the roll out of our vaccination progress, there is a danger that people will start to feel completely protected from risk but this is sadly not the

case. We must continue to comply with the well-communicated small actions within our control to #KeepWalesSafe.

Please consider the number of contacts you have during a day and ensure you're doing all you can to keep yourselves and each other safe during daily activities like coffee breaks and walking into and out of work. Please change into and out of clinical uniforms on site and if car sharing is essential for your work commute, please ensure passengers are wearing masks and maintain physical distance.

Please remember the critical importance of complying with all of the COVID-19 safety rules. Lives really are in our hands and every small action we take makes a significant contribution to our recovery.

Please continue to work together to keep yourselves and each other safe. We can do this!

# Other News and Events

## There's more to Barry

Our Arts for Health and Wellbeing team commissioned artist Haf Weighton to work with pupils at Ysgol Bro Morgannwg on a project exploring Barry's rich history, with a number of interlocking themes including Barry as a centre for wellbeing.

[Read More](#)

## Water bottle refill scheme launches at St. David's

Two new water refill stations have been installed for patients, visitors and staff to fill up reusable water bottles for free, helping to cut down on single use plastic.

[Read More](#)

## 3 Peaks, 5 Healthcare Professionals, 24 Hours

Five members of staff who work in the Cardiac Catheter Theatres at The University hospital of Wales are planning to tackle the national three peaks challenge for the British heart Foundation in July.

[Read More](#)

## Health Charity says 'thank you' to Captain Sir Tom Moore

Cardiff & Vale Health Charity has been reflecting on the impact of Captain Sir Tom's incredible fundraising on our patients and staff.

[Read More](#)