

Adults & Public Health Policy and Scrutiny Committee Report

Date:	21 March 2022
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Update on COVID-19 Vaccinations
Wards Affected:	All
City for All Summary	This report provides an overview of the Local Authority's support to the covid vaccination programme.
Financial Summary:	Not applicable
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Westminster currently has 71% of residents aged 50 and over and 56% of those aged 12+ fully vaccinated (dose 1 and 2).
- 1.2. Westminster City Council's role is to support the NHS with the rollout of the vaccination programme ensuring uptake opportunities are maximised and accessible by all, including utilising local assets and understanding and responding to barriers and need.

2. Background

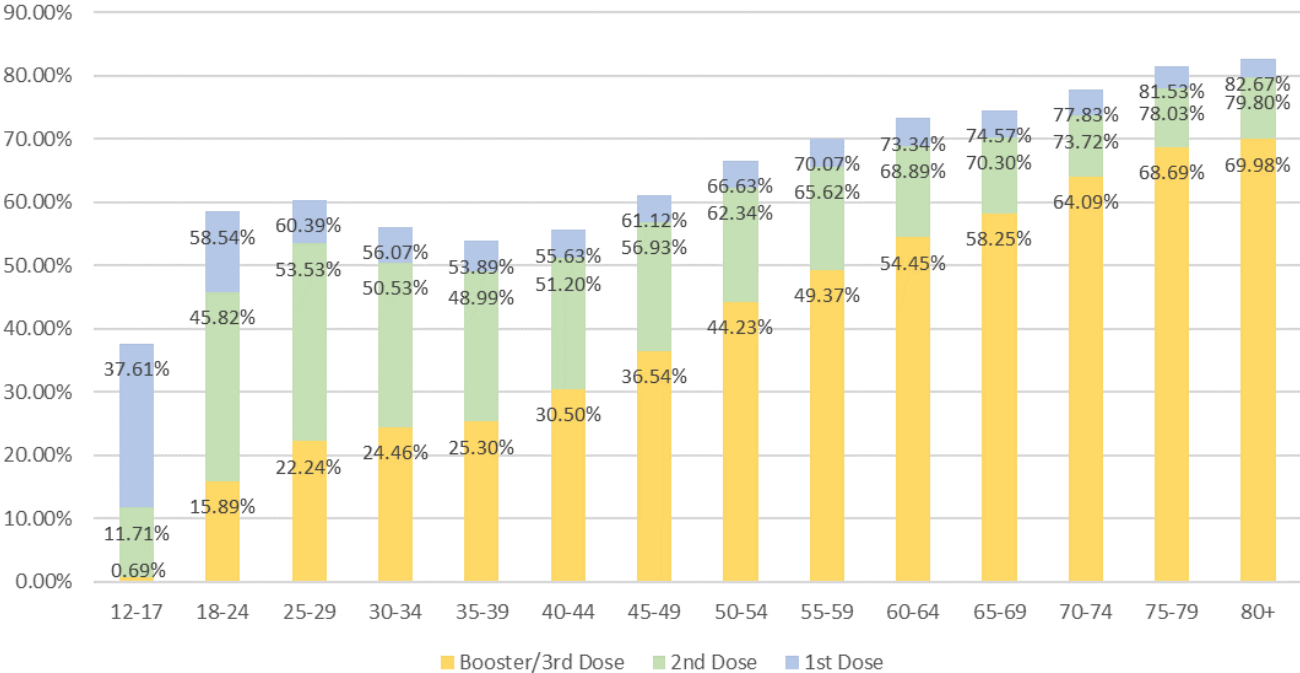
- 2.1. The roll out of COVID-19 vaccinations commenced in late December 2020 and has progressed throughout 2021. The local authority has had a key role from inception in supporting the NHS with monitoring uptake, identification of local vaccination sites, communication and promotion of the vaccination programme as well as providing information on locations and groups to target where inequalities and low uptake impact most including through coordinating community engagement and outreach, clinical support, and volunteers.
- 2.2. Seasonality, unvaccinated cohorts, waning immunity and a more transmissible variant in omicron has resulted in a significant resurgence of COVID-19 in December 2021 and early January 2022.

- 2.3. Continuing to maximise uptake in 'evergreen' groups (those currently unvaccinated), increasing uptake with second vaccinations, as well as booster jabs for eligible groups, is vital to protect the health and wellbeing of residents as well as supporting NHS winter planning to reduce the severity of infection and transmission of the virus.
- 2.4. Multi-agency steering group meetings have been held to coordinate the local authority support of the NHS vaccination programme. Utilising our frontline staff and services including mobilising volunteers and vaccine champions, the Local Authority has worked productively with NHS colleagues to build the local offer, encourage awareness and facilitate uptake throughout the year.
- 2.5. In partnership with the NHS, Westminster City Council has more recently continued to support the NHS with the acceleration of the vaccination programme to enable a speedy roll out of the booster jab across all eligible cohorts aged 18 plus. There was a particular focus on maximising activity and uptake in December 2021 both before and during the festive period due to the omicron variant threat and as it was anticipated groups and households would potentially mix indoors in larger numbers.
- 2.6. The main Westminster vaccination Primary Care Network (PCN) sites have operated collectively over 5 days per week in December, located in Council venues at Little Venice Sports Centre and the Abbey and Stowe community venues.
- 2.7. As a part of the accelerated vaccination programme from December, the NHS increased the offer to include temporary mass vaccination sites during and post festive period with access to vaccinations available 7 days a week. Vaccination sites stood up during this period included:
 - St Mary's Hospital
 - Salvation Army Regent Hall
 - Harris Academy
 - Royal Horticulture Society
 - Gordon Hospital
- 2.8. In addition, 9 Pharmacy sites in Westminster currently administer Covid vaccinations (and 3 more pharmacies are finalising approval to also participate) and the Bi-Borough vaccine bus remains a key asset for delivering vaccinations targeting unvaccinated and underserved communities and groups.
- 2.9. 12–15-year-olds have been offered COVID-19 vaccinations via a schools-based offer which began in Autumn term of 2021. The offer has now been extended into PCN sites and young people can book via the national booking system and visit any of our eligible sites.
- 2.10. There is currently excess walk-in capacity at all our PCN vaccination sites which are underutilised although activity has begun to pick up following a post New Year dip. We continue to work through communications and community engagement to promote uptake across all groups.

3. Vaccination Uptake

- 3.1. At present, 56% of 12+ and 71% of 50+ residents in Westminster have had two doses of the vaccine. 32% of the 12+ population have had their booster (or 3rd vaccine). Its important to note that 61.5% of those eligible who have had a second vaccination have received a booster.
- 3.2. Vaccination uptake in the population has been observed to decrease with age. 82.7 % of those aged 80 plus have now received a first vaccination, 79.8% have received two vaccinations and 70% have received a booster. This compares to 37.61% of those aged 12-18 who have received a first vaccination and 11.71% who have had a second dose. It is important to note in this interpretation that the roll out for vaccinations for younger cohorts including 12–15-year-olds has been more recent, and many are only just becoming eligible for a second dose following the national 12-week duration between dose one and two.

WCC vaccine uptake by age cohort
Source: NHS England



- 3.3. Vaccination rates remain among the lowest in London and England and concerted interventions continue in support of NHS partners to improve uptake with our residents including those set out in section 4 of this paper.
- 3.4. Westminster continues to tackle inequalities and sustain targeting initiatives to maximise uptake including focusing on areas with high numbers of unvaccinated cohorts.

4. Initiatives

4.1. The Council has adopted a comprehensive and hyper-local approach to supporting uptake of the vaccinations.

Our interventions throughout 2021 have included (these activities are not exhaustive):

- Promoting latest government guidance on COVID-19 safety and efficacy, including distribution of tailored information via community champions, covid health champions and VCS stakeholders.
- Promoting our local vaccination sites and delivering our vaccine bus, ensuring clinical support, accessibility, and reach to all groups and residents.
- Phone calls to all unvaccinated residents in the first nine Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) cohorts (those aged 50 plus and high-risk groups) to flag local vaccination offers.
- Delivery of a series of events and activities targeting our BAME communities hosted in conjunction with faith leaders, government Ministers, local celebrities, the Chief Nurse for London, the Director of Public Health for London, and the Leader, to improve uptake.
- Encouraging vaccine uptake with pregnant women through targeted events and promotional activity which has resulted in Westminster having the highest vaccine uptake in pregnant women in NW London.
- Prioritising vaccination uptake in our most vulnerable settings and groups, particularly in care home residents. NHS roving teams visited our homes in November and December. As of the 11th January 2022, 94.2% of Westminster Care Home Residents have received booster doses.
- Ensuring all frontline Care Home staff received 2 vaccinations by 11th November 2021 (or alternatively those not compliant were redeployed) resulting in compliance with new regulations and no change to the service offer. Daily calls continue to Care Homes to encourage booster uptake in staff.
- Supporting and coordinating NHS roving immunisation teams with the rollout of the 12–15-year-old vaccination programme in all eligible state and independent schools from September 2021. All children aged 12 to 15 years are now being offered 2 doses of the vaccine as part of the school-based COVID-19 vaccination programme.

5. Next Steps

5.1. In November 2021, further amendments to the Health and Social Care Act require new cohorts of specified workers who have direct, face to face contact with service users to have received a complete course of Covid 19 vaccines, subject to limited exceptions, by no later than 1st April 2022. All first vaccinations will need to have been received by 3rd February 2022. The regulations protect vulnerable people and individual workers in health and social care settings, including hospitals, community services and where care is delivered in a person's home.

- 5.2. To comply with the further new regulations by 1st April 2022, the Council is monitoring and tracking uptake in all council services of primary and secondary care and support that apply, modifying terms and conditions of employment to ensure vaccination compliance (for new employees in designated staff groups from 1st February 2022), and making every effort to ensure ease of access to vaccinations for staff locally. Council is also supporting, advising and assisting (where necessary) Provider services to understand impact and build compliance to meet new regulations.
- 5.3. The Council will work with the NHS to support the next stage of the roll out of first vaccinations - to clinically vulnerable 5–11-year-olds, NHS guidance on this is currently awaited.
- 5.4. In December 2021 the Public Health department of Council applied for a grant for a Community Vaccine Champions programme. The bid was successful, and the local authority has secured £485,000 funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 5.5. The DLUHC sponsored ‘Community Vaccine Champions’ scheme will be delivered from 17th January 2022 and work alongside current community engagement initiatives to promote vaccine uptake amongst underserved and hesitant communities in areas with low uptake rates focused on:
- Understanding further local barriers and needs eg. Training, supervision and incentivising volunteers to support outreach and have one-to-one tailored contact to understand needs and barriers to vaccinations and respond accordingly.
 - Building on the existing community engagement infrastructure and develop new networks of champions to promote COVID-19 vaccine take up eg. Work with the existing Public Health Community Programme to dedicate a core group of Vaccine Champions within projects running in the 5 areas of highest unvaccinated need across the borough, managed by local VCSE partners, with in-reach into the most disproportionately impacted communities and groups with highest unvaccinated absolute numbers.
 - Developing and deliver practical solutions such as recruiting Community Champions, as well as provision of funding to local organisations eg. training on Health Coaching, becoming vaccinators and having challenging conversations to tackle misinformation, clarify messaging and restore trust.
 - Coordinating activities through partnership work eg. Strengthening links with Primary Care Networks (PCNS) including primary care, community, mental health, link workers, social prescription service and local pharmacies to improve clinical support, and access and engagement with health-inclusion groups, with data-sharing agreements.

If you have any queries about this report, please contact:

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