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Covid-19: Government will consider call to allow GPs to vaccinate in their own surgeries

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The health secretary Matt Hancock has said he will examine a call to allow GPs to administer covid-19 vaccinations in their own surgeries in the next phase of the national programme.

The promise came after the matter was raised in parliament¹ last week amid reports that some primary care networks (PCNs)—which have been coordinating local vaccination efforts by pooling staff and resources—have withdrawn from the second phase of the national vaccination programme (to vaccinate adults aged 18-49) because of workforce and workload pressures.

Figures released by NHS England on 26 April show that since the vaccination rollout began in December, 63.8% of adults in England have been vaccinated with a first dose. This week it will begin to offer vaccinations to people aged 44, followed by those aged 40-43.

But while the rollout continues apace, the Conservative MP for Rugby Mark Pawsey urged Hancock to permit individual surgeries to deliver vaccines on their own site if they choose to, to ensure access is not hampered by the withdrawal of some PCNs from the programme.

Pawsey said, “Rugby’s PCN led vaccination centre at Locke House has provided over 34,000 first and 11,000 second doses through a fantastic team of staff and volunteers. The GPs, however, have chosen not to take part in the second phase of the programme, and the centre is expected to close in mid-July as a consequence.

“Our local doctors would prefer to vaccinate phase two groups in their own surgeries, although that option is not currently available to them. What can the secretary of state do to facilitate that approach?”

In response, Hancock said, “Generally, the use of a PCN—a group of GP practices—to come together to offer one centre has worked well. That is the first I have heard of that concern, so I will take it away and ensure that it is looked at properly.”

In January, NHS England gave guidance² stating that PCN groupings “should only administer vaccines from sites other than those which have been specifically designated for covid-19 vaccination where it is considered that this will improve patient access or increase vaccination capacity.”

But GP leader Sam Everington, who chairs the Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group in east London, recently told *The BMJ*³ that he would like to see responsibility for delivering covid-19 vaccines devolved to all general practices—not just designated sites—in order to reach more people in deprived populations.

1 Covid-19 update: House of Commons at 3:35pm on 19 April 2021. www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2021-04-19b.655.0&s=GPs#g674.1.

2 NHS England. Dear colleague, covid-19 vaccine Oxford AstraZeneca: movement of vaccine. www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/12/C01009-COVID-19-Vaccine-Oxford-AstraZeneca-movement-vaccine-7-January-2021.pdf.

3 Iacobucci G. Covid-19: GPs could get extra funding to boost vaccine uptake in hard-to-reach groups. *BMJ* 2021;372:n548. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n548 pmid: 33627340

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