

Media Release

Date: 18 May 2021

Please extend the #GuernseyTogether spirit to the Vaccination Contact Centre (VCC)

With nearly 58,000 doses of vaccine given since the last week of January, and invites now being sent out to those who are aged between 25 and 29, you would think staff at the VCC could be easing their foot off the pedal and looking to the end of Phase 2 of the programme in July.

Alex Hawkins-Drew, VCC Lead Officer said:

‘This could not be further from the truth.

Today, and every day, call handlers are dealing with verbal abuse from islanders not happy that they cannot, for example, request a specific vaccine if there is no clinical indication for it, or asking us to change appointments as they have now booked a holiday which now clashes with their second dose appointment and they want it sooner but that is not easily accommodated and at times is clinically contraindicated.’

The situation for those who wish to take up the offer of a free vaccination against COVID-19 is as follows:

- The vaccination you are offered is determined by the Public Health Services taking into account the guidance from JCVI. We cannot deviate from that. If you are over the age of 39 with no specific contraindications you will be offered the AstraZeneca Vaccine.
- If we were to give you your vaccine of choice, those who can only have Pfizer BioNTech or Moderna due to a clinical indication or by virtue of their age would have to wait longer for their vaccine. We have a limited supply of mRNA vaccines as part of our population proportionate supply, using these on those without a specific clinical need leaves others without a vaccine and at risk
- You cannot offer to pay money (no matter how large a sum you offer) to get a vaccine of choice. The COVID-19 vaccine programme follows the ethical principles of a community vaccination programme. COVID-19 vaccines are not available on a private basis in Guernsey,

the other Crown Dependencies or the UK. This protects the vital supply chain of these vaccines, allowing them to get to those with the greatest clinical need.

- Arguing with call handlers for 15 minutes will not change the situation. It only results in the queue of people waiting to book an appointment getting longer, who are then cross that they have been waiting – and so the cycle continues.

The States of Guernsey believes that any form of harassment is unacceptable and is determined to ensure that staff and service users are treated with fairness, dignity and respect.

- Please prioritise your vaccination appointment.
- If you have questions about the suitability of the vaccine then you should, in the first instance, discuss this with your GP, VCC staff cannot provide clinical advice. Any formal requests for specific vaccines are reviewed by one of the Public Health clinicians on a regular basis. Please do not phone for an update, you will be informed of the outcome of the clinical assessment once it has been completed. If a request has been sent from your GP the Public Health response may have been sent to them.

Please be kind to the call handlers at the VCC. They are doing a great job and working extremely hard to book people in for vaccine appointments. No one deserves to receive verbal abuse from members of the public on a daily basis. #GuernseyTogether #BeKind

Ends