

Dear Patients,

We are writing to ask for your support as we continue to struggle with the consequences of the pandemic. Demand has soared due to winter pressures and an exponential rise in Covid cases, but at the same time we are managing staff illness, staff shielding and self-isolating which means we often have fewer doctors, nurses and receptionists available.

We are now also responsible for designing, implementing and staffing the Covid vaccination programme for you. A significant number of our staff are already occupied with this, working round the clock in an attempt to get the service up and running, so our communities can be vaccinated as quickly as possible. Significantly more of our staff will be required to run these clinics the coming weeks and months.

Unfortunately, with this in mind, we cannot continue to operate as normal, and this will be the case for many months. This means we need to ask for both your understanding and cooperation. Information on our website outlines options for self-care, and services to which you can self-refer. Of course we are here for you and if you are worried at all about anything we will be happy to help, but please consider alternative options first.

**Please do not contact the practice to ask for a COVID-19 vaccination. You will be contacted when you are eligible.**

To make sure everyone gets the vaccine in a safe and controlled way, a strict prioritisation list has been established nationally so the vaccine can be given to those who need it most first. We will contact you when you are eligible to receive the vaccine and provide you with information about location and date, so please don't contact the practice to ask for a vaccine before then.

We are working hard to plan the delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations, while continuing to vaccinate people against flu and support our patients with routine and urgent health requests. On that basis, we are unable to answer additional questions about the COVID vaccine. However, some key issues to note are as follows:

- The vaccine will be given in order of priority to those at highest risk first

- We will be in contact with you with information about where and when you will need to receive the vaccine
- Please act promptly on your invitation when it arrives, and make sure you attend your appointments when you arrange them
- The quickest and most efficient way for us to invite patients is by text message, which will include a link to book your appointment directly. **If we do not already have a mobile phone number for you on record please let us have this** as soon as possible by filling in the following form: <https://www.al-shifamedicalcentre.nhs.uk/navigator/change-of-personal-details/>
- Patients without mobile phones will not be disadvantaged, we will still contact them by landline to book their appointments, although at times when vaccine doses become available at short notice this may be logistically very difficult
- Please continue to follow all social distancing and hand hygiene guidance, which will still save lives

### **What are the priority groups?**

1. Residents in a care home for older adults and their carers
2. All those 80 years of age and over and frontline health and social care workers
3. All those 75 years of age and over
4. All those 70 years of age and over and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals (excluding pregnant women and those under 16)
5. All those 65 years of age and over
6. All individuals aged 16 years to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious disease and mortality
7. All those 60 years of age and over
8. All those 55 years of age and over
9. All those 50 years of age and over
10. Rest of the population (priority to be determined)

We will keep you regularly informed about the progress of the vaccination programme as we move through the priority groups, so please do not ring us to ask where we are up to. More information about the vaccine and the programme can be found here:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/)

With kind regards and best wishes, AL-SHIFA MEDICAL CENTRE.