

Portsmouth City Council: Taking vaccines out to the homeless



Overview

Reference: 35

Location: Portsmouth

Target Group: Homeless
Population

Initiative type:
Mobile Clinic

Contact

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Top Tip

Engage with the homeless voluntary sector because they will be really keen to support you as much as they can.

Why is this important to us?

From a Public Health perspective, the homeless move around a lot so to contain the spread of the infection we needed to vaccinate this group. We were always concerned that if we had COVID-19 outbreaks in the hostels it would be really challenging to manage, but amazingly we managed to get through the first wave with very few cases.

A central challenge is that the homeless population is not a priority group. The homeless population are particularly affected by the inverse care law – where those who need care the most get it least. We need to reach out to them and make it easier for them to be vaccinated as they may not have credit on their phone to book an appointment and they may not remember to go because of the chaos that's going on in their lives.

What are we doing?

We have been able to vaccinate people in interim accommodation such as former student residences and existing hostels by going to them. We have since gone back into two main hostels to do the second doses and pick up anyone that was missed out. To vaccinate the 'harder to reach' group of people rough sleeping in the city, we used a community engagement vehicle from Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service. The whole side of the vehicle opens up, providing good ventilation, a disabled access ramp and seating inside. One person could come into the vehicle at a time to be vaccinated by a nurse. We ran our sessions while a volunteer group ran a soup kitchen in the city centre which is well attended. The trusted volunteers were encouraging their service users to get vaccinated. We were also able to vaccinate some people in the street who would not come to the vehicle - you need to respond to every opportunity.

Who is involved?

A network of partners was developed between Brunel Primary Care Network, the Homeless Healthcare Team and Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service, the latter provided volunteer drivers. The voluntary sector and homeless outreach services who know a lot of the people experiencing homelessness were able to engage homeless people and encourage them to come onto the van to get their vaccine. They were all really supportive of the initiative.

What works for us?

The biggest thing that enabled it to happen was the Primary Care Network saying we will vaccinate this group, they are a priority. Then it's been about trying to work with the agencies to encourage uptake. **We've vaccinated 100 first doses and 33 second doses so far through these outreach interventions.** We are going back in 2 weeks to repeat the initiative, to target those who were not on site.