

Transport Secretary hails work of transport industry in vaccination roll-out

February 15, 2021



Transport Secretary Grant Shapps hailed the efforts of transport operators and employees across the country who have gone above and beyond to help the nation's coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination roll-out.

From the NHS and Metrobus working together to launch the UK's first COVID-19 mobile vaccination unit and a bus targeting hard-to-reach communities in Crawley through to rail and bus operators changing routes, adding stops and putting on free bus services, the industry is playing a vital role in helping people get their vaccinations.

It comes as the Transport Secretary met Dr Hilary Flett, GP clinical lead for vaccination roll-out, and volunteers at a mass vaccination centre at St Helens rugby league club's stadium to see first-hand how the roll-out is being delivered.

The Totally Wicked Stadium hosts both the GP-led Primary Care Network (PCN) vaccination clinic as well as the mass vaccination centre for St Helens and surrounding boroughs.

More than 14 million people have now received their first dose of the vaccine.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “Throughout this pandemic, our transport heroes have been at the frontline keeping the country moving. Now they are stepping up yet again to help deliver the vaccinations and get people to vaccination centres, helping us fight back from COVID-19.

“We also owe a huge debt of gratitude to the medical staff and volunteers at St Helens, supporting people to get their vital jabs.

“I urge everyone aged 70 and over who hasn’t yet had a vaccination to come forward and contact the NHS to get their jab.”

Dr Hilary Flett, St Helens GP and clinical lead for the PCN vaccination rollout in St Helens, said: “All 33 GP practices in St Helens have been working together since before Christmas to provide a service to vaccinate eligible patients, including house-bound and care home residents, and care home staff.

“To date, we have vaccinated 80% of our GP registered population who are in priority groups 1 to 4, which is over 25,000 residents.”

As well as working tirelessly to help keep the trains and stations running safely throughout the pandemic, Network Rail has continued to contribute towards overcoming COVID-19 away from the tracks by volunteering to help set up the new large-scale vaccination centre near Exeter, Devon.

Workers recently gave up their time to unload around 100 pallets of equipment from articulated lorries and set it up inside the main building at Westpoint, Exeter.

Graham Vidler, Chief Executive of the Confederation of Passenger Transport, said: “Bus and coach operators across the country have been delighted to be able to play their part in the national effort to vaccinate against COVID-19.

“Operators have provided extra services and stops to help get people to vaccination centres and local GP surgeries across the country, showcasing the vital role buses and coaches play in helping people move from A to B.”

Over the course of the pandemic, the transport sector has stepped up to support the vaccination roll-out in a wide range of ways, including:

- the NHS and Metrobus have launched one of the UK's first COVID-19 mobile vaccination units in a bus in Crawley, targeting hard-to-reach and vulnerable communities
- Great Western Railway has put in place additional station stops on trains between Paddington and Bedwyn to help those travelling to the new vaccination centre established at Newbury Racecourse
- in Hartlepool, Stagecoach's Tees Flex bus, a partnership service with the Tees Valley Combined Authority, is offering a bespoke service for healthcare workers travelling between Hartlepool and North Tees Hospital
- Go North East, Nexus and Go Ahead have worked together to put on 3 free-to-use vaccination centre shuttle buses operating to Nightingale Hospital vaccination centre in Washington, and have set up a new dedicated bus stop
- in Newcastle, Go North East has launched a network of vaccination shuttle buses for the North East Nightingale Hospital and is set to launch a vaccination bus in the coming weeks
- Arriva will be operating 2 free shuttle services, in partnership with Shropshire Council, to the new NHS Vaccination Centre at Sports Village in Sundorne Road, Shrewsbury
- Arriva's Derby's Pride Park and Ride's Saturday timetable will be increased to run every 30 minutes throughout the day, from 7.30am to 6.00pm, to provide a service for the public attending the NHS vaccination centre at Pride Park
- the Oxford Bus Company and *Stagecoach have amended services to provide links to the new mass COVID-19 vaccination centre at the Kassam Stadium, Oxford
- Harrogate's leading bus operator, the Harrogate Bus Company, is to provide a free bus service to make travel easier for COVID-19 jab appointments at the town's vaccination centre
- LNER has made more than 370 free car parking spaces available for people attending the NHS COVID-19 vaccine clinic at Newcastle's Life Science Centre
- local and national firms have offered free travel to vaccination centres including in Burnley, Shrewsbury, while Uber is offering free rides so people can get their jab right across the country.

Photo credit: Vudi Xhymshiti / Shutterstock.com