**DRAFT REGIONAL RELEASE**

* **VACCINATORS TO BE THE FIRST IN [NHS BOARD AREA] TO RECEIVE COVID-19 VACCINE AS HEALTH BOARD ENCOURAGES PATIENCE**

[NHS Board] today encouraged people across the region to be patient as vaccination of those responsible for administering the COVID-19 vaccine gets underway.

The vaccine, developed by Pfizer and BioNTech which has been approved for use by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, is expected to be available in the [NHS area] from this week.

[Insert name] encouraged people to follow FACTS and the Scottish Government guidance for the area to protect themselves and others from the virus, as the first eligible groups are prioritised.

Following the vaccination of vaccinators, the programme will then follow the independent advice received from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which recommends prioritising those with the greatest clinical need - residents in a care home for older adults and their carers, all those aged over 80, and frontline health and social care workers. The Pfizer vaccine needs to be stored at well below freezing point, meaning logistics around delivery to care homes are more challenging and are currently under consideration.

Everyone being vaccinated will need two doses, 28 days apart.

[xxx, xxx of (NHS Board Area], said:

“Seeing the first delivery of COVID-19 vaccines in our area will be a very welcome sight. While it will be a huge logistical challenge in rolling out vaccination, this is a real stepping stone in bringing an end to the pandemic.

“I’d urge those eligible in this first wave to take-up the COVID-19 vaccine and for others to please be patient as we work through priority groups in line with the vaccine that we have available to us and the settings in which the vaccine needs to be delivered.

“I would also ask people to keep following the FACTS around coronavirus. There is still a long winter ahead of us so protect yourself, your loved ones and the NHS.”

Health Secretary Jeane Freeman said:

“This is the best news than any of us have heard about the virus since the pandemic began.

“Safety of the vaccine is paramount, with each vaccine passing a rigorous and independent three-phase testing process, reviewed by independent regulatory and advisory bodies to ensure it is effective and safe for use.

“The global scientific, research and pharmaceutical community has come together and worked as never before. That is why we are seeing this front running vaccine delivered in months rather than years, but it is not at the expense of safety.”

“For all the difficulties that lie ahead, the arrival of the first vaccine should give us all real hope that the end of the pandemic is on the horizon.”

For further information on the COVID-19 vaccination programme visit [www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccines](http://www.nhsinform.scot/covid19vaccines)

Issued by Smarts – health@smarts.agency