

Media release

7 April 2021

Wairarapa District Health Board begins its Covid-19 vaccinations rollout

Pictured: Matt Hitchiner from Wellington Free Ambulance receives his first dose

The Covid-19 vaccination rollout has officially started in Wairarapa, with Group 2 receiving first doses on 7 April at Wairarapa Hospital's 'Covid Clinic'.

Group 2 is mostly made up of frontline healthcare workers, and is expected to take 8 weeks. There are approximately 4,500 people in this group and most of them in the early stages of booking their vaccination appointments.

"Today we vaccinated the vaccination teams and the first of our healthcare workforce," said Anna Cardno, Communications Manager. "We are scheduling appointments for our DHB staff and inviting all our healthcare partners to book their vaccinations."

"In a 'normal' year we vaccinate about 9,000 for flu in Wairarapa. This year, we will be preparing to offer two doses of Covid-19 vaccinations to our entire population over 16 years of age – which is somewhere near ten times that."

"It is no mean feat and it will take a lot of time and energy, but it is our priority right now. A lot of people are pulling together to make it happen. We have a great team."

Matt Hitchiner, an Extended Care Paramedic with Wellington Free Ambulance, was one of the first to be vaccinated, rolling up his sleeves at 10am on day one. Matt has joined the vaccination team and expects to get involved in the rollout before long.

"Immunisation is important to me and I am pleased to be a small part of the protection programme," Matt said.

"I am from the UK and I know only too well the harm caused by the virus. My partner and I know far too many friends and family that have been seriously affected back at home, and we have had family members die from Covid."

"New Zealand is in a good place, and the magic ingredient to keep us there is this vaccine. It is great we have started vaccinating here in Wairarapa."

Group 2 is expected to be completed by the end of May and, after that, Wairarapa DHB will open community based clinics and start offering vaccinations to Group 3, our older persons and those with pre-existing medical conditions. Group 4, which is everyone else over the age of 16 years, will be invited to schedule their vaccination appointments from July.

"We will be keeping our community up to date with where we are at and when they can expect to receive their vaccinations," Anna said.

“We know a lot of people are very keen to be immunised, and we are working as hard as we can to make that happen as quickly as possible.”