

Covid-19: Government plans to hire army of coronavirus vaccinators

Thomas Coughlan · 19:17, Apr 08 2021



Nearly 2000 people have completed their training to become Covid-19 vaccinators, with the Government hoping to draw on thousands more as it prepares to roll out the largest vaccination campaign in our country's history.

Another 4000 people from different parts of the health sector have completed the provisional vaccinator foundation course, signalling their readiness to be brought into the vaccinator workforce after some additional training.

The health system is assembling a small army of GPs, pharmacists and even members of the defence force to vaccinate the country.

The size of the workforce is a key constraint on getting vaccines into arms. There are currently 287,000 doses of vaccine in the country, awaiting distribution.

As of April 6, about 1800 vaccinators had completed their training to become Covid-19 vaccinators.

Most of those people were drawn from New Zealand's existing pool of authorised vaccinators, who number about 5400.

But that's not the extent of the vaccinator workforce. On top of this, there are nearly 5500 people who can also be drawn upon for the vaccination campaign. Most of these – about 3800 – are GPs, about 1600 are pharmacists and 100 Defence Force.

The Ministry of Health has also received 5000 registrations to be part of the surge workforce database, indicating even more people could be brought in to vaccinate people.

A spokesperson for Auckland DHB's vaccine programme said that most health professionals looking to train as vaccinators can do a two-day face-to-face course or a blended course of face-to-face and online learning.

Final authorisation to become a vaccinator is managed by an individual DHB's public health unit and requires a vaccinator to give the jab under supervision.

On top of this, officials at the Immunisation Advisory Centre and Ministry of Health have developed a fast-track course to train people to administer MMR and flu vaccines.

This course takes upwards of four hours, and is mainly online, with four hours of online learning, as well as online assessment and clinical peer reviews.

That particular course can be upgraded to certify people to deliver Covid-19 vaccines with an additional course.

People who then become Covid-19 vaccinators have to take further Covid-19 training, which takes an additional three hours.

While much of that training is online, all vaccinators must finish a peer assessment of their clinical skills.

"This involves an experienced, authorised vaccinator observing their vaccinations of at least two patients and assessing them against the provided peer-review form," said a spokesperson for Auckland's vaccine programme.

Associate Health Minister, with responsibilities for Māori Health, Peeni Henare said people would be able to get vaccinations from their family doctor as well.

"We're encouraging our Māori communities to go to the place where they feel safest and where they have that relationship."



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"For many it's with their local GP or through another clinic but we know Māori health providers in those densely populated Māori communities and in those hard-to-reach Māori communities play an active role and a key role in making sure they can access it."

Director-general of Health Dr. Ashley Bloomfield said there will be multiple ways people will be able to get the vaccine.

"There will be a range of options available and the number of types of vaccination centre will increase as we roll out to different groups,"

"At the moment some GP hubs are being used, and the role of GPs will increase as we get further through the programme and pharmacies will be another venue," Bloomfield said.

The vaccine will be free no matter where people decide to get it from.