



Freemasons invited to volunteer for vaccination drive

09 February 2021

The Freemasons are encouraging its 200,000 members to roll up their sleeves and volunteer to help vaccinate the population.

To help protect all UK citizens during this difficult time, the Freemasons have also offered their lodges to administer the vital jabs and many buildings are being used as Covid-19 vaccination centres.

In Hertfordshire, for example, Halsey Hall is being used as a vaccination centre and supporting three local GP surgeries. The centre has been operational since 15 January and once fully scaled, there will be up to 1,000 vaccinations given each day at the centre.

NHS frontline staff members are also administering the jabs at the Freemasons building in Essex. Meanwhile, Freemasons in south Wales are opening the doors of Barry Masonic Hall to local medical practices to help in the mass vaccination against Covid-19, from 21 January.

Two halls are also being used as vaccination centres in west Kent. At the Westwood Masonic Centre in Welling, more than 2,000 people were vaccinated on 9-10 January 2021, while the Tunbridge Wells Masonic Centre opened its doors for vaccinations on 14 January.

In addition, the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), the governing body for Freemasonry in England and Wales, is encouraging Freemasons to donate their time and efforts to help fight the virus. It also emphasised that those volunteering should not participate if they are in an at-risk group.

Freemason Alec Hurley is a retired RAF senior medical officer and a self-employed medical examiner for the Civil Aviation Authority. During these difficult times, he is back on duty working 12-hour shifts three times a week for clinical Covid-19 assessment, and as a clinical supervisor at the Stevenage super hub for vaccinations.

In many provinces, Freemasons are volunteering to help. In Devonshire, Lincolnshire, Leicester and Wiltshire they are assisting at vaccination sites, while in Dorset they are driving ambulances and working as volunteer vaccinators.

More than 100 Freemasons from Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire have volunteered with St John's Ambulance to help the NHS Covid-19 vaccination team. St John's Ambulance is providing full training for the volunteers, while the Freemasons have made their buildings available to the St John's logistics team.

Meanwhile, in Cheshire, Freemasons are working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to provide the local Masonic Hall as a major vaccination hub to protect patients.

The UGLE campaign is being carried out through its monthly email to members and official social media channels. The idea is to reach as members as possible, to encourage them to help immunise the population.

Dr David Staples, chief executive of the UGLE, said: "In 2018, more than 18.5 million hours of volunteer work were undertaken by Freemasons. Now that we have the vaccine in the UK, it is crucial that we help in every way we can to protect the population. If the NHS needs people, then we are happy to encourage and emphasise the importance of this to our members.

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“We want to support the NHS and show our gratitude for its people’s efforts and the amazing job they have done during the pandemic. Freemasons always stand behind our core values of friendship, integrity, charity and respect – and we are proud to help so many people.”

According to the NHS, more than six million people had received a vaccine by 28 January. Britain has ordered 140 million vaccine doses – enough to protect the entire population. But the NHS faces a race against time to protect everyone before a possible new wave.

More than ever, efforts to vaccinate those most at risk from serious illness are now paramount, and there is a need to ensure that the NHS has as many volunteers as possible. To help the NHS in the vaccination campaign, volunteers should sign up at: <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk>

Volunteers will then receive an email with login details to sign up online and be asked to download the GoodSAM app, which will match the person to their area.

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Editors’ notes:

- Interviews available on request

Web links:

NHS - <https://nhsvolunteerresponders.org.uk>

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About the United Grand Lodge of England:

- The Premier Grand Lodge, which became the United Grand Lodge of England, was founded at the Goose and Gridiron Pub in London in 1717.
- It has 48 Provinces across the country and more than 7,000 Lodges, with students over the age of 18 able to join one of the 85 University Scheme Lodges.
- Freemasons use four important guiding principles to help define their path through life: integrity, friendship, respect and charity.
- One of the oldest social and charitable organisations in the world, Freemasonry's roots lie in the traditions of the medieval stonemasons who built our cathedrals and castles.
- Membership is open to people from all backgrounds and the organisation's aim is to empower members to be the best they can be – it's about building character, supporting members as individuals and helping them make a positive contribution to society.
- Freemasonry is one of the largest charitable givers in the country, contributing more than £48m to deserving causes in 2018 alone. Freemasons do not only donate money – more than 18.5 million hours of volunteer work were undertaken by Freemasons in 2018.

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