

## Leading the way in protecting our vulnerable community

South Canterbury is leading the way in ensuring the vulnerable members of our community are being vaccinated against COVID-19.

The Ministry of Health recently congratulated the South Canterbury DHB (SCDHB) for the region having the highest percentage of our high-needs disability clients vaccinated in NZ.

COVID-19 Immunisations Disability Lead Trish Dovestone says the SCDHB has been offering support and information to individuals, family and whanau – as well as the support services – of disabled people in the region.

“We want to ensure they are aware that they’re entitled to a vaccine, Trish says. “Support services, family and whanau have been given Easy Read information on the vaccine and the vaccination process.”

She says this simplifies the information and helps clients to make an informed decision.

“Consent is always an important part of the vaccinating process. At any stage, a person can change their mind about having the vaccine.”

Trish says the support offered by SCDHB to the disability sector in the region has included running a vaccination clinic at a support service facility as well as having a separate clinic for a group of clients at the Woollcombe Street clinic.

“Both these clinics had extended appointment times to reduce stress and anxiety for clients,” Trish says.

“The vaccination teams have also gone to people’s homes when their disability does not allow easy access to a clinic.”

She adds that checking with individuals or family/whanau members on what extra support they may need when they visit a clinic is also an important part of the service. This includes letting clinic staff know of any extra supports needed or of concerns i.e high anxiety.

“The support services in the region have been receptive and engaged in assisting to get their clients who choose to get vaccinated,” Trish says.

“We have had very positive feedback from both individuals, clients and support group managers following the vaccination clinics saying they felt safe and appreciated the extra time,” she adds.

Trish also has high praise for the kind and welcoming nature of vaccinating teams.

“Having a team of professional, understanding health workers, as well as friendly and welcoming administration staff and accessible clinics really enhances our response to the disabled community in our region,” she adds.



COVID-19 Immunisations Disability Lead Trish Dovestone

## Easy, quick and painless!

Leo Argent was keen to roll-up his sleeves and get his COVID-19 vaccination in an effort to help keep South Canterbury protected against the pandemic.

In early July, the 24-year-old systems administrator got his first dose of the vaccine at the Woollcombe Street clinic in Timaru. Leo, who has Asperger’s, qualified for his vaccination under the Group 3 rollout, which includes those in the community with a disability – as well as their families and caregivers.

Leo says he was surprised by the ease and pain-free vaccination and strongly encourages others – especially those with disabilities – to get vaccinated.

“Not only does it protect me from getting sick, but it also ensures that I am not a carrier,” he said. “I would hate to be responsible for unknowingly spreading COVID-19 around.”

Leo believes it is important that the disabled – and

their families – have access to vaccinations and he is full of praise for the way the SCDHB is reaching out to the community.

“It is especially important that those who are physically challenged or have other disabilities are able to get their vaccinations,” he adds.

“It is reassuring that the SCDHB looking out for the vulnerable members of our community.”



Leo Argent all set for his vaccination

### South Canterbury DHB: COVID-19 Vaccine Update



11,651

First dose



10,136

Second dose

**Total: 21,751** as at 11 July 2021.

For general information about the COVID-19 vaccine, or the national rollout, please visit the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

[www.covid19.govt.nz](http://www.covid19.govt.nz)

## Who qualifies?

Disabled people, for the purposes of the COVID-19 vaccination in Group 3, includes anyone who has an impairment expected to last for six months or longer which limits their ability to carry out daily activities or participate in society “on an equal basis to others”.

The Ministry of Health says this can be due to the interaction of a person’s impairment with societal and environmental barriers such as inaccessibility, rather than caused by the impairment itself. This includes physical, neurological, mental/psychiatric intellectual, sensory and other types of impairment. Meaning interaction with societal and environmental barriers, limits their ability to carry out daily activities and/or participate in society on an equal basis to others.

This also includes people in a position of caring for a person with a disability.

They are eligible for vaccination – irrespective of whether the disabled person is eligible for the vaccination (i.e. they are under 16) – and covers family and whanau of disabled people.

Those people in the disability community – along with their families and carers – who have not already been contacted about getting a COVID-19 vaccination can phone

**0800 886 633**

for a booking.



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