



Go North East's vaccination centre shuttle buses

Feb 01, 2021 11:18 GMT

## Further Nightingale Hospital vaccination centre shuttle buses added from both the Metro and Sunderland in partnership with Nexus and a dynamic new arrangement to help to support local SME business

Go North East, the region's largest bus operator, working in partnership with Nexus, has added two additional shuttle bus services to further improve public transport links to the vaccination centre at the NHS Nightingale Hospital North East at the Sunderland International Innovation Centre.

This swiftly follows on from the introduction of [one of the UK's first dedicated vaccination shuttle bus services](#) on Monday 25 January.

A new 'MetroShuttle' from Heworth Interchange (Stand D) started on Thursday (28 January) and runs every 15 minutes from around 7am until 8.45pm, seven days a week, to provide a connection from the Tyne & Wear Metro, and other local bus services.

As with the existing 'ConnectorShuttle' service from Concord, connecting passengers should scan or show their tickets or passes from their incoming services in the usual way, although travel for the shuttle element of their journey to the Vaccination centre is free to use.

Holders of English National Concessionary Bus passes in Tyne and Wear can use these before the usual 9.30am eligibility time if they have a vaccination appointment and show the letter, e-mail or text message and their pass upon boarding.

Thanks to a contract from Nexus, a third service starts today, Monday 1 February to provide a direct and free bus service link from Sunderland, Pallion, Hylton Retail Park, and Castletown to the Nightingale Hospital every 20 minutes between 7am and 9pm, 7 days a week.

The 'SunderlandShuttle' branded service will be operated by JH Coaches, a small family owned coach and bus operator from Birtley, under a dynamic new partnership arrangement with Go North East using their vehicles, branding, customer service support and technology.

The arrangement will ensure a consistent standard of service across all three bus links to the hospital, operating under the Go North East 'shuttle' brand and providing customers with a single point of contact for service information and customer service through the Go North East customer support team, website and smartphone app, including live vehicle tracking.

It also enables a local SME business to access valuable work and revenues during the current challenging economic climate, providing work for eight people in JH's driving team to operate the three buses.

Just like the first 'ConnectorShuttle' service, the 'MetroShuttle' and

‘SunderlandShuttle’ services both provide an easy to use public transport link to this important health service facility and the buses themselves pay tribute to the fantastic efforts of the NHS throughout the pandemic by featuring ‘thank you’ messages, as well as a rainbow design which has been associated with key workers throughout the pandemic.

Commenting on the new services and special partnership arrangement, Go North East’s managing director, Martijn Gilbert, said: “We’re proud to be working with the NHS and Nexus to bolster transport links by delivering a connection to the Tyne and Wear Metro and to have been chosen by Nexus to take the lead on a contract to deliver a third bus link from Sunderland to the North East’s Nightingale Hospital vaccination centre.

“This is a really important facility that is providing this essential vaccination effort to local people. Both of these services have, again, been mobilised in record time by our team with just a few days notice.

“We’re committed to doing all that we can to work with partners to ensure that public transport plays its part in supporting this very important national effort and we are delighted that we’ve also been able to work with JH Coaches, a local coach and bus operator, for part of this.

“The current Covid crisis has had a particularly challenging impact on coach operators across the country, so to be able to ensure that this operation benefits at least one of them will be helping further support our local economy and employment. It is an example of collaboration that is very much the spirit of the pandemic response.”

Ian Shipley, director of JH Coaches, said: “We’re excited to be working with Go North East and, in turn, Nexus and the NHS, to help deliver this very important shuttle bus service. It is great seeing a large PLC operator work to support the communities it serves and with a smaller business like ours.

“The current economic challenges for coach operators are now well known through things like the Honk for Hope campaign, so this additional work is a helpful addition to our business, which provides many other essential services such as school transport and other local bus contracts.”

More information on the new MetroShuttle and SunderlandShuttle service can

be found on the Go North East website at [www.gonortheast.co.uk](http://www.gonortheast.co.uk).

Birtley based JH Coaches has over 35 years' experience in providing professional coach hire services to customers throughout the North East. More details can be found on its website at [www.jhcoaches.co.uk](http://www.jhcoaches.co.uk).

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[Go North East website](http://www.gonortheast.co.uk)