

£22.5m of funding announced in new community push to get nation boosted now

- Additional £22.5 million to help areas with low vaccine uptake encourage hard to reach people to come forward
- Army of vaccine ambassadors deployed in run up to Christmas in popular areas including Liverpool One, Brighton Pier and King's Cross
- Part of urgent appeal launched by the Prime Minister and NHS England to Get Boosted Now

An additional £22.5 million in funding and an army of vaccine ambassadors have been deployed across the country to encourage vaccine uptake in the run up to Christmas and the New year.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has today (19 December 2021) announced it will be giving £22.5 million to councils to encourage people to come forward and get vaccinated. The Community Vaccines Champion scheme will target 60 local authorities with the lowest vaccine uptake.

It will be used to run events in communities across the country to make sure everyone has access to the most accurate and up-to-date health advice, and fund pop-up vaccination centres in places of worship. This includes in North Lincolnshire where an Imam has run pop-up vaccination clinics and information sessions in his Mosque, and in Great Yarmouth, Community Champions have made doorstep calls in areas where vaccination rates are low.

The community Vaccine Champions will tap into their local networks to provide advice about COVID-19 and the vaccines. Champions will also work with councils to identify barriers to accessing accurate information and to provide tailored support, such as phone calls for people who are digitally excluded, helplines, and linking to GP surgeries.

Around 900 people will also form 'street teams' and visit 21 popular areas across England, including Liverpool One Shopping Centre, King's Cross Station and Brighton Pier, every day from today (19 December) to Christmas Eve to urge people to get their jabs to secure vital protection against the virus amid rising cases of Omicron.

A series of initiatives, such as a travelling vaccine bus, extra pop-up sites and new vaccine centres in prominent locations will make it as easy as possible for people to get their jabs. The teams will be distributing leaflets on the Get Boosted Now campaign, as well as information on testing and advice to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the run up to Christmas.

It comes as the UK hits 26 million boosters and third doses administered following a rapid acceleration of the vaccination programme.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We are in a race between the virus and vaccine and we are doing everything in our power to get jabs in arms as quickly as possible.

We are calling on people to Get Boosted Now as part of our national mission to reinforce our wall of defence against the rapid spread of Omicron.

I want to thank the thousands of people who have heroically stepped up to support our vaccine drive. We're all in this together – please play your part.

Each team of vaccine ambassadors will have a branded van, six staff, banners and leaflets containing information on vaccines and COVID-19. The teams are comprised of people who speak 33 different languages between them.

They will cover the entire country – from Newcastle to Brighton – in areas where there is likely to be a large number of people, including council-organised Christmas activities, supermarkets, train stations.

Vaccines Minister, Maggie Throup said:

It is extremely important everybody gets their COVID-19 vaccine now – whether this be your first, second or booster dose.

Vaccines are the best way we can protect ourselves and a booster will strengthen your immunity against the new variant which is quickly spreading across the country.

Thank you to all the selfless people for stepping up to join this crucial national mission.

More than 14,000 volunteers have joined the [Community Champions scheme](#) – helping the vulnerable and isolated across the country throughout the pandemic. The government is now building on this success and launching the Community Vaccine Champions scheme – with local people using their trusted voice to encourage people in their community to come forward and get vaccinated.

Faith Minister Kemi Badenoch MP said:

In the past year I have seen first-hand the outstanding work of councils, faith groups, the community and voluntary sector up and down the country helping the people in their local areas during the pandemic.

It is vital we now build on that success as we encourage everyone to Get Boosted Now in the fight against Omicron.

The funding will also support areas to tackle misinformation and encourage take-up as the vaccination programme continues across the country.

Data published by the UK Health Security Agency shows vaccine effectiveness against symptomatic infection is substantially reduced against Omicron with just two doses over time, but a third dose boosts protection back up to over 70%.

In response the government and NHS England launched an urgent national appeal to Get Boosted Now. This includes advertising across TV and out of home calling on people to book their jabs.

A total of 750 armed forces personnel have been drafted in to support deployment of booster vaccines across the UK and extra vaccine centres and pop-up sites have opened to make it as easy as possible for people to get vaccinated.

Emily Benbow, a Street Team member, said:

It's so important to get vaccinated which is why I'm working with the NHS and speaking to the public on the ground and reminding them of the importance of getting vaccinated.

I'm really proud to be supporting the drive, it's never been more important to get vaccinated so please get boosted now and if you're in one of the Street Team locations come and say hi and learn more about the vaccines!

Both booster vaccines – Pfizer and Moderna – increase the immune response substantially and show good effectiveness, although with some reduction compared to Delta.

All adults are now eligible for their booster, provided it has been at least three months since their second jab. People can visit a walk-in centre or book via the National Booking Service.