

All adults to be offered COVID-19 boosters by end of January

- 400 military personnel to get jobs in arms
- More hospital hubs, vaccination centres and 1,500 community pharmacies to offer jobs
- People urged to get booster when it's their turn as UK hits 18 million top-up jobs

All eligible adults in England aged 18 and over will be offered a COVID-19 booster vaccine by the end of January.

Following advice from the independent experts at the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), everyone who is currently eligible – including those aged 40 and over, health and social care workers and those at increased risk from the virus due to health conditions – will be able to book their jab from three months after their second dose, meaning an additional 7 million people over 40 are now eligible.

The government and the NHS are urging younger people to wait until they are called forward by the NHS – with the more vulnerable continuing to be prioritised for their booster, to top up their immunity to the virus as soon as possible.

Younger age groups will be invited by the NHS in due course in order of age, grouped into 5-year age bands.

To speed up the vaccination programme, around 400 military personnel will be drafted in to support deployment, with 1,500 community pharmacy sites, additional hospital hubs, and pop-up sites opening in convenient locations across the country. More than 3,000 sites are already open in England – more than double the number in February.

Payments to GPs, community pharmacies and primary care staff will increase to £15 a dose until the end of January. To increase capacity on Sundays, when many community pharmacists are not normally open, the NHS will offer an additional £5 a shot.

To ensure the most vulnerable are prioritised, the NHS will also offer £30 extra for vaccinations delivered to those who are housebound until the end of next month.

More than 18.2 million life-saving top-up jabs have now been given across the UK, with 318,671 recorded yesterday. The daily number of jabs has gone up a third since the start of November.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Since we learnt of the new Omicron variant a few days ago, our

strategy has been to buy the time we need to assess it while doing everything we can at pace to strengthen our defences.

Our best weapon to fight the virus is to get as many jabs in arms as possible. That is why I asked the JCVI to urgently look at expanding and accelerating the vaccination programme in light of the Omicron variant.

Thanks to their rapid advice we are now able to put our booster programme on steroids – and protect even more people even more quickly.

We have set an ambitious target to offer booster jabs to all adults in England by the end of January, while ensuring those most vulnerable to the virus will continue to be prioritised for their booster, and having the gap between second doses and boosters.

This is a national mission and we all have a role to play – so step up, roll up your sleeves, and get protected when the time comes.

The move follows updated advice published yesterday (Monday 29 November 2021) by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), who advised that the offer of a booster jab be extended to people aged 18 to 39 in priority order by age and clinical risk. They also advised the dosing gap be reduced from six months to three after people's second dose.

The JCVI advised yesterday that those who are immunosuppressed and have received a third dose of the vaccine will also be offered a fourth dose to boost their defence. Second doses of the vaccine will be offered to 12 to 15 year olds, with at least 12 weeks between doses, to ensure they have maximum protection against this virus.

The Health and Social Care Secretary asked the JCVI to rapidly advise on extending the booster programme to 18 to 39 year olds as well as reducing the gap between the second dose and booster following the emergence of Omicron. The government accepted this advice.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

It's truly a testament to the brilliant work of our NHS and its volunteers that over 18 million booster jabs have now been provided across the UK.

We're now asking them to undertake another big and critical step up in the programme, with millions more boosters being offered over the next few months.

Getting your jab is the most important thing you can do ahead of Christmas to keep yourself safe from the virus – do not delay in booking as soon as you're eligible.

NHS chief executive Amanda Pritchard said:

The NHS Covid vaccination programme was already in its most complex phase and staff are now working at breakneck speed to respond to the new variant and the expansion of the booster programme, which has already administered more than 15 million doses across England.

The NHS will roll out this latest phase of the programme to the most vulnerable first, offering the booster jab to those over 40 who would have previously had to wait six months, before moving on to younger age groups – there is no need to contact the NHS, we will contact you when it is your turn to book in with the NHS working hard to ensure every adult who is eligible is offered a chance to book in for their booster by the end of January.

The first UK real world study from the UK Health Security Agency published showed that boosters give over 90% protection against symptomatic COVID-19 in adults over 50, reinforcing how vital the boosters are keeping people safe ahead of winter.

These findings show that two weeks after receiving a booster dose, protection against symptomatic infection in adults aged 50 years and over was 93.1% in those with Oxford/AstraZeneca as their primary course and 94.0% for Pfizer-BioNTech.

More than 50.9 million first doses and 46.3 million second doses have been given across the UK. The latest evidence from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) shows that protection against symptomatic disease from the Delta variant falls from 65%, up to 3 months after the second dose, to 45% 6 months after the second dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, and from 90% to 65% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Protection against hospitalisation falls from 95% to 75% for Oxford/AstraZeneca and 99% to 90% for Pfizer/BioNTech.

Vaccine confidence is high, with data from the Office for National Statistics showing nearly all (94%) of those aged 50 to 69 say they would be likely to get their COVID-19 booster if offered, with the figure rising to 98% for those over 70.

Flu is another winter virus that can be serious. To give people the best protection over winter, those eligible for a free flu vaccine should come forward and book an appointment at either their GP practice or their local pharmacy, or take it up when offered by their employer or other healthcare provider.

The government has launched a nationwide advertising campaign, encouraging people eligible to get their booster and flu jabs to protect themselves and their loved ones and help reduce pressures on the NHS. This includes outdoor billboards, broadcast and community radio and TV.

The offer of a first and second COVID-19 vaccine remains open to anyone who

is eligible. Vaccines are available free of charge and from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England.

The UK remains committed to donating 100 million doses by mid-2022. We will have donated more than 30 million vaccines by the end of 2021 and have announced plans to reach 70 million doses in total so far.