

Foreign Secretary thanks medics on vaccine frontline

Foreign Secretary and First Secretary of State Dominic Raab thanked the dedicated medical teams delivering coronavirus jabs to the country's most vulnerable people during a visit today to a shopping centre converted into a vaccine hub.

His visit to The Heart centre in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, came as the UK is on track to reach the target of offering a first dose to the top four priority groups by Monday (February 15).

Mr Raab saw local residents in the 70+ age group and clinically vulnerable people who were getting their jabs.

More than 10,000 people have been vaccinated at The Heart centre since it was launched on 14 January this year. A former clothes shop has been converted to meet the challenge of the mass roll-out, and hundreds of local residents are receiving jabs there every day.

Foreign Secretary and First Secretary of State Dominic Raab said:

It's thanks to the hard work of everyone involved, including the dedicated team at this hub, that we've delivered the first dose to millions of our most vulnerable citizens.

If you are eligible for the vaccine, I would urge you to get it as soon as possible, as this is our way out of the devastating pandemic.

I'm proud that the UK is leading efforts for global access to COVID vaccines and treatments to protect more people and help end the pandemic sooner.

Dr Caroline Baker, CEO of North West Surrey Integrated Care Services, the GP federation leading the roll out of vaccinations in the area, said:

Our teams have been working tirelessly and we're so proud to have offered the vaccine to nearly all our over 70-year-old and shielding patients.

The community spirit here has been phenomenal. From our dedicated clinical teams and support staff, to our army of volunteers and enthusiastic local council and voluntary sector colleagues – everyone has played a part in making the local programme a huge

success.

Monika Wells, from Long Ditton, is a volunteer at the Walton service, helping to guide patients through the process. She said:

I wanted to support this huge effort to get the country back on its feet. The dedication of the team here is just amazing. It's like a vaccination tsunami – the pace is incredible and we're just getting it done.

It's a really rewarding role – everyone is so appreciative and often quite emotional as they've not been out of the house for over a year. This is the glimmer of hope we've all wanted.

All those who live in England, who are aged 70 and over and haven't yet had an appointment, should contact the NHS to arrange their vaccine.

It is also essential that everyone continues to stay at home if possible, whether they have had their jab or not, to protect the NHS and save lives.

Further information:

- The UK has been leading global efforts to ensure that developing countries receive doses. It is one of the largest donors to Gavi's COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), committing £548 million in UK aid to help distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.
- The UK has also helped to raise \$1bn for the COVAX AMC from other international donors.
- Through the UK vaccines delivery plan, we will offer a first vaccine to everyone in the first four priority groups by February 15th.
- The top four groups are recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and are care home residents and staff, those aged over 80, frontline health and social care staff, those aged over 70, and the clinically extremely vulnerable.