

# Nationwide drive to urge vaccine take-up in priority groups

- Over 14 million of the most vulnerable have already received their first dose in the UK's largest-ever medical deployment
- Government ministers join concerted drive to further boost vaccine take-up in every region and nation of the UK

People eligible for a vaccine who have not yet had their jab are being urged to come forward this weekend in a renewed drive to roll out the vaccine to those most at risk as quickly as possible.

Thanks to the incredible efforts of the NHS, volunteers, our armed forces and local authorities, more than 14 million of the most vulnerable people in the UK have already been vaccinated – including around 9 in 10 of all over-70s.

From mosques and museums to rugby grounds and cathedrals, vaccinations are taking place at thousands of sites across the UK in the country's biggest-ever medical deployment.

Today, almost 30 government ministers are taking part in a further concerted push in every region and nation of the UK to encourage everyone eligible for the vaccine to come forward through visits and virtual meetings.

They will hear from NHS staff, volunteers helping with the deployment, and people getting their jabs, as part of continued efforts to underline the importance of getting vaccinated and protecting yourself from COVID-19.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock has visited the Stoke Mandeville stadium – the birthplace of the Paralympic movement – which is being used as a vaccination centre. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden is visiting the iconic Lord's Cricket Ground to meet doctors, nurses and volunteers supporting the national effort, and Education Secretary Gavin Williamson is hearing from military personnel helping administer vaccines alongside healthcare staff at the Whitemoor Lakes site in Staffordshire.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has met with military personnel supporting the vaccine roll-out in Stirling, following confirmation that a further 353 armed forces personnel will deploy across Scotland to support the pandemic response and Chancellor Rishi Sunak will speak with healthcare staff at Elland Road Vaccination Centre, home of Leeds United.

Home Secretary Priti Patel is volunteering at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Temple in Bedford and Environment Secretary George Eustice is having a virtual tour of Stithians' showground in Truro to thank local NHS workers.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am determined that we protect as many of our country's most

vulnerable people from this awful disease as soon as possible. It is so important that everyone aged 70 and over who hasn't yet had a vaccination comes forward this weekend and contacts the NHS to book in their jab.

Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic and it is testament to the strength of our Union and the combined power of our United Kingdom that we've seen such incredible progress in the roll-out of our vaccination programme.

I want to thank all the NHS workers, volunteers, local partners and armed forces who have done such a tremendous job so far in protecting our families and our communities.

Professor Stephen Powis, NHS medical director, said:

Thanks to the tireless efforts of staff, the NHS vaccination programme – the biggest and fastest in health service history – is off to a strong start with over 12 million people in England already taking up the offer of a vaccine at one of over 1,500 centres across the country.

People in the priority groups have not missed their chance to get jabbed and if you are aged 70 and over and haven't yet taken up the offer, please do come forward and make an appointment – the vaccine is safe, simple, and will offer you and those around you crucial protection against this virus.

The top 4 priority cohorts include care home residents and staff, frontline health and social care workers, anyone aged 70 or over and people who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

People aged 70 and over in England should now contact the NHS to arrange their jab. They can do this through the online national booking service, or if they cannot get online they can dial 119 or contact their local GP practice.

Health and social care workers should speak to their employer if they have not had their vaccine yet.

GP teams have been asked to contact their clinically extremely vulnerable patients to make sure they have been offered a jab.

We are working with communities right across the country to make sure that whatever someone's background, ethnicity or religious beliefs, everyone is able to get the protection they need as we continue to fight this disease together. Today, the government and NHS are publishing a new plan setting out the work we are doing in partnership with communities at a national and local level to increase vaccine uptake and ensure equity of access.

The government has committed to offering the vaccine to all those over 50 by May and all adults by September.