

PM opening statement at COVID-19 press conference: 15 December 2021

Good afternoon everybody,

as of today, every eligible adult in England can use the national booking service

to Get Boosted Now.

If you're over 18 and had your second jab at least three months ago, then you can get jabbed right now.

And it's absolutely vital that you do.

Because the wave of Omicron continues to roll in across the whole of our United Kingdom,

with over 78,000 Covid cases today, the highest ever daily number reported,

and the doubling rate of Omicron in some regions is now down to less than two days.

And I'm afraid we are also seeing the inevitable increase in hospitalisations,

up by 10 per cent nationally week on week

and up by almost a third in London.

But we are also seeing signs of hope,

because since we launched our Emergency Omicron appeal on Sunday night

a great national fight back has begun

and people have responded with an amazing spirit of duty and obligation to others.

And I want to say that each and every one of you who rolls up your sleeve to get jabbed is helping this national effort.

And I want to thank everyone who has come forwards,

whether you've had to queue around the block at a walk-in centre,

or whether you've booked online.

And, of course, on behalf of the whole country,

I want to thank our NHS, our GPs our pharmacists, who with barely a day's

notice – 48 hours' notice, have so accelerated the programme that we began this week

with the biggest Vaccination Monday ever in England

and yesterday the biggest booster day yet, with more than 650,000 boosters delivered across the whole UK.

And across the country, after all they have been through, those teams are going to keep going through Christmas and beyond.

Jab heroes like

Kim Kirk, leading the King's Mill hospital vaccination hub in Mansfield, who was asked a year ago to do it for four weeks and has been doing it ever since, with 180,000 jabs and counting.

Dr Laura Mount and the team at Central and West Warrington PCN, who have been organising pop-up vaccination clinics for the homeless.

Or the team at Home Park in Plymouth who have been regularly jabbing until 2am, because they just carry on for as long as there are people there wanting a booster.

And I want to thank those from every walk of life who are stepping forward to support them.

The military personnel deployed across every region of the country, including an additional 100 in Scotland from yesterday – as well as 2,500 firefighters.

And since Sunday night, we've seen more than 20,000 new volunteers signing up to help with the booster effort as stewards, taking the total number to almost 33,000.

With every day we're expanding the ranks of these healthcare auxiliaries, an emerging Territorial Army of the NHS – in a race against time to get those jabs in arms and save lives.

And if you're watching this and you want to get involved, just visit the website nsvolunteerresponders.org.uk

and do something this Christmas that you can tell your grandchildren about many Christmases from now.

In total, we've now boosted more than 45 per cent of all adults in England,

including more than 88 per cent of those aged 70 and over,

And while hospital admissions are going up,

nationwide we are starting to see admissions coming down among some of the more vulnerable older age groups where we have already got those boosters in arms.

From tomorrow, we're speeding things up even further by removing the 15 minute post-vaccination waiting time.

And while we're at it, from Monday, 12 to 15 year olds can book in for a second jab.

And we know how crucial it is to keep children in school,

so let's all make sure our children and young people are vaccinated before they go back next term.

As we take forward our national mission, we are of course supporting similar efforts by the Devolved Administrations,

which are also rapidly increasing vaccination rates across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

A COBR meeting with Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast is taking place this evening.

But already the pace of rollout across the four nations is such that the UK as a whole now has twice as many boosters per head as the EU

and more than twice as many as the United States.

So let's keep going.

Let's carry on giving Omicron both barrels.

Let's slow its spread and give the vaccines more time

Wear face masks indoors

Use ventilation

Get tested if you're going to an event where you're likely to meet lots of people

And get tested if you're going to meet elderly and vulnerable relatives.

And we're helping to get you the tests that you need

I want to thank the Royal Mail who are doubling home deliveries of testing kits to 900,000 a day from Saturday.

So let's slow down Omicron's spread

And at the same let's reduce the harm Omicron can do to us by building up our vaccine defences.

We're jabbing in hospitals, we're jabbing in surgeries,

We're jabbing in pharmacies and in pop-up centres,

We're jabbing in shopping centres and on high streets

and in football stadiums – with mass events planned at Stamford Bridge and Wembley this weekend and daily “jabbathons” at Elland Road in Leeds.

We're throwing everything at it.

Wherever you are, we'll be there with a jab for you.

So please Get Boosted Now.

Thank you very much.