

PM opening statement at COVID-19 press conference: 30 November 2021

Good afternoon,

Every day our scientists are learning more about this new Covid variant, but there is one thing we already know for sure: right now, our single best defence against Omicron, is to get vaccinated and get boosted.

If you are boosted – your immune response will be stronger.

So yesterday, in addition to offering a second dose to all 12 to 15 year olds – the independent JCVI recommended that boosters should now be offered to everyone over 18, and that we halve the minimum gap between a second dose and a booster from six months to three months.

This means that over 14 million more adults have now become eligible for a booster in England alone.

So I'm here today with the Health Secretary and the Chief Executive of NHS England to set out our plan to make this happen.

The target we have set out ourselves is to offer a booster to everyone eligible by the end of January.

And as with the first jabs, we'll be working through people by age group, going down in five year age bands, because it's vital that the older and more clinically vulnerable get that added protection first.

So even if you had your second jab over three months ago and you're now eligible, please don't try and book until the NHS says it's your turn.

We've already done almost 18 million boosters across the UK but we've got millions more to do to protect the most vulnerable.

Then we'll move down the cohorts rapidly, and working together with the Devolved Administrations, we want to ramp up capacity across the whole United Kingdom to the levels we achieved in the previous vaccination effort.

We're going to be throwing everything at it, in order to ensure that everyone eligible is offered that booster in just over two months.

Across England, we will have more than 1,500 community pharmacy sites vaccinating people near where you live.

All of our sites will increase their capacity, and we'll stand up extra hospital hubs on top of those already active.

There will be temporary vaccination centres popping up like Christmas trees.

And we'll deploy at least 400 military personnel to assist the efforts of our NHS, alongside, of course, a fantastic jabs army of volunteers.

I know the frustration that we all feel with this Omicron variant, the sense of exhaustion that we could be going through this all over again.

But today our position is – and always will be – immeasurably better than it was a year ago.

What we're doing is we're taking some proportionate, precautionary, measures while our scientists crack the Omicron code, and while we get the added protection of those boosters into the arms of those who need them most.

So we're going to get behind the men and women of our NHS, who have saved so many lives on the frontline, and run our vaccination programme for almost a year without a break, and who are going back into the breach yet again.

And I want to say on behalf of the whole country, I want to thank every one of them for their extraordinary efforts.

And the best way that we can all show our gratitude is by doing our bit and stepping forward when our time comes to get that booster.

I've been waiting faithfully for my moment to come and it's happening on Thursday I'm pleased to say.

So whenever your turn comes, get your booster and ask your friends and family to do the same.

It's time for another Great British Vaccination Effort.

We've done it before, we're going to do it again, and let's not give the virus a second chance.