

Public urged to get boosted as 22m top-up jabs delivered

- 22 million people in the UK have received their COVID-19 booster vaccine or third dose
- Recruitment drive for extra vaccinators, new vaccine sites opening and support from military to speed up programme

More than 22 million people in the UK have now received a COVID-19 top up jab, as the booster programme is accelerated this winter.

People aged 40 and over in England are now able to book their booster a month in advance – two months after their second dose to be vaccinated on the three-month mark. Around 450 military personnel have been 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. Extra financial support to GPs, community pharmacies and primary care staff will help boost capacity and encourage more visits to those who are housebound.

NHS England has also launched a recruitment drive for 10,000 new vaccinators, administration staff, healthcare support workers and volunteers to join the national vaccination mission.

Vaccines are the best way to protect people against COVID-19 and, in light of the new Omicron variant and following advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), the government is expanding the booster programme to all adults over 18, with all those eligible in England being offered a top-up jab by the end of January.

This week also saw the one year anniversary of the UK administering the world's first approved COVID-19 vaccine, and it was announced that innovative antiviral treatments will be rolled out from next week to over-50s and those most at risk to COVID-19 who test positive.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

I would like to thank the NHS, military and the army of selfless volunteers for their tireless work marching towards this incredible milestone – I would also like to thank every single one of those 22 million people for coming forward and doing the right thing.

Getting your booster vaccine is the most important thing you can do ahead of Christmas to protect yourself and your family.

As shown in the COV-Boost study, the booster vaccines, Moderna and Pfizer, increase the immune response substantially, which makes it more likely that protection will be maintained against Omicron. The best thing anyone can do

given the new variant, is to get a booster.

Dr Emily Lawson, head of the NHS Vaccination Programme, said:

It is fantastic that 22 million booster vaccines have now been delivered across the UK, including more than 18 million in England alone, and the booster programme is continuing to accelerate to ensure as many people as possible have the maximum protection against coronavirus.

As new cases of the Omicron variant rise, it is more important than ever to get your top-up jab, and with the NHS booking service now open to those in their 40s, I urge everyone who is eligible for the booster to book in as soon as possible to protect yourself and your loved ones this winter.

The COVID-19 vaccination programme is the largest in British history and was established at unprecedented speed, with thousands of vaccine centres set up rapidly in England and around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination clinic.

The government's Vaccines Taskforce secured early access to almost 340 million doses of the most promising vaccine candidates in advance for the entire UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories, enabling a rapid deployment once approved by the medicines regulator. New deals have been signed to buy an additional 60 million doses of the Moderna vaccine and 54 million more Pfizer/BioNTech doses for 2022 and 2023. These future supply deals include access to modified vaccines if they are required to combat Omicron and future Variants of Concern.

The UK has one of the highest COVID-19 vaccine uptake rates in the world, with 4 in 5 people aged over-65 in England already receiving their booster jab.

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.

Notes to editors:

- People aged 50 and over can sign up to the national antiviral study here: <https://www.panoramictrial.org/>
- For further information on antivirals visit here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uks-most-vulnerable-people-to-receive-life-saving-covid-19-treatments-in-the-community>