

Statement from Vaccine Deployment Minister Nadhim Zahawi on vaccine deployment

Britons will again be cheered by the news that yet another vaccine has been approved for use in the UK.

Friday's authorisation of the Moderna vaccine for (coronavirus) COVID-19 means we will, by spring, have 3 safe and effective vaccines to use.

A vaccine was always going to be our best way out of this pandemic; that's why so much effort and planning has gone into our vaccination programme.

Some 1.5 million people have got the jab already and this number is accelerating rapidly.

Tomorrow we're launching our full vaccine deployment plan – the culmination of months of preparation and hard work by the NHS, the Armed Forces, and local and regional government at every level.

The basic principle that sits behind it is to save as many lives as possible, as quickly as possible. It's also essential we reduce hospitalisations from this disease, so we can reduce the pressure on our NHS.

To achieve that, we have an ambitious plan to protect our most vulnerable groups first, because they account for more than 4 out of 5 COVID deaths. We want to offer the vaccine to the top 4 most vulnerable groups by the middle of February.

It's ambitious, but I'm confident we can do it, not least because we are drawing on the strengths of 2 of this country's most treasured assets: the NHS and our Armed Forces. We're in safe hands.

Working together, day and night, they will ensure our vaccines are going into arms rather than sitting on shelves. UK forces will use techniques borne out of decades of experience of getting things done in some of the toughest conditions imaginable. They'll bring the bravery and brilliance they shown in places like Iraq and Afghanistan to these shores.

By the end of this week, we will have over 1,000 GP-led vaccination sites up and running, as well as 223 hospital sites, 7 giant vaccination centres and the first wave of 200 community pharmacies. It means it won't be too long before we can expand our programme down the priority list and more of us can get the jabs, using our new National Booking service to make appointments.

It's an exciting time, but I recognise it's also a frustrating time because we're not there yet. We're still living under some tough restrictions and the disruption that comes with them. But as our heroes set out on this vital national mission, we can all play our part by sticking to the rules and

remembering those simple steps: hands, face, space. That way their success will be our success and we can come out of this together.