

UK marks one year since approving COVID-19 vaccine with Boost Day

- A year ago today the UK became the first country in the world to approve Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine
- Vaccination programme has been a phenomenal success with more than 115m doses administered, saving countless lives and reducing pressure on the NHS
- New deals secured for additional 60 million doses of the Moderna vaccine and 54 million more Pfizer/BioNTech doses for 2022 and 2023

The UK is marking one year since it became the first country in the world to approve Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine with a "Boost Day" call.

The one-off event to mark the milestone will see a series of adverts on major TV and radio stations. Partnerships with leading brands, including Uber, Red Driving School and Neighbourhood Watch, will encourage eligible people to get their top-up jabs to protect themselves and their loved ones ahead of Christmas, including through support for boosters on social media.

A year ago today [2 December], the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) approved the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, which allowed the UK to begin its life-saving vaccination programme earlier than other countries, with Margaret Keenan's vaccination on 8 December. Thanks to the UK Government's quick action to secure the most promising vaccine doses in advance, more than 115 million doses have been administered across the UK in almost a year, saving countless lives and allowing people in the UK to live without restrictions.

This week, in light of the new Omicron variant, the government has expanded the booster programme to all adults over 18 and announced that all eligible people will be offered a top-up jab by the end of January.

To speed up the vaccination programme, around 400 military personnel will be 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. Payments to GPs, community pharmacies and primary care staff will help boost capacity and encourage more visits to those who are housebound.

Everyone over the age of 40 who had their second dose at least three months ago will soon be able to book an appointment for their booster jab. Younger age groups will be invited by the NHS in order of age in due course.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

Our COVID-19 vaccination programme has been absolutely remarkable. It is the largest in British history and the NHS has overcome every obstacle to get life-saving jabs in arms quickly.

Booster jabs will protect the progress we have already made against the virus and help ensure we can enjoy Christmas safely with our loved ones.

The offer of a first and second dose will always be available and I encourage everybody to come forward to protect yourself and those around you.

To support the vaccination programme, brands including Uber and Neighbourhood Watch have changed their logos on social media to include branding from the advertising campaign.

A new government interactive tool has also launched within Google search and display campaigns to help make it easier to find vital information about the flu and COVID-19 vaccines. This was developed by Media Monks.

The first real-world study on the effectiveness of booster vaccines against the dominant Delta variant by the UK Health Security Agency shows top-up jabs boost protection back up to over 90% against symptomatic COVID-19 in adults aged over 50 two weeks after being vaccinated.

It is not yet known whether existing vaccines are less effective against the Omicron variant, but it is unlikely they no effectiveness against serious disease.

Vaccines remain our best way to get the protection we need against the virus, and people who have had their booster vaccine by 11 December will likely have very high protection against COVID-19 by Christmas Day.

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 which means around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination clinic.

Jamie Heywood, Regional General Manager for Northern and Eastern Europe at Uber said:

At this time of year we know how important vaccines are, which is why we are encouraging drivers and riders to get their booster.

We are also offering our thanks to hardworking NHS staff this winter by helping them get to work and home with a free Uber over the Christmas period, as well as enjoying a well-earned meal on

Uber Eats.

John Hayward-Cripps, CEO of Neighbourhood Watch Network said:

We all need to play our part in the fight against Covid. If you are eligible for a Covid vaccination, we encourage you to book it to help protect yourself, your loved ones and your community.

If you have vulnerable or isolated neighbours, consider offering your support, such as helping them book their vaccination appointment online or offering them a lift to the vaccination centre.

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 more than three quarters of over-65s in England already receiving their booster jab.

Top-up vaccines have been delivered or booked at every older adult care home in England where it is safe to do so, with 9 in 10 care homes already visited.

Vaccines give high levels of protection but immunity reduces over time, particularly for older adults and at-risk groups, so it is vital people come forward to get their COVID-19 booster vaccine to top up their defences and protect themselves this winter.

The latest evidence from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) shows that protection against symptomatic disease falls from 65%, up to three months after the second dose, to 45% six months after the second dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, and from 90% to 65% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Protection against hospitalisation falls from 95% to 75% for Oxford/AstraZeneca and 99% to 90% for Pfizer/BioNTech.

Although the vaccine effectiveness against severe disease remains high, a small change can generate a major shift in hospital admissions. For example, a change from 95% to 90% protection against hospitalisation would lead to doubling of admissions in those vaccinated.

The booster programme is designed to top up this waning immunity.

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.

Mark Winstanley, CEO of Rethink Mental Illness said:

We know that many people who are severely affected by mental illness are worried about Covid-19 and the potential impact of the new variant. We strongly encourage everyone to book their booster jab via the NHS.

The vaccine is the most effective way of protecting yourself from becoming seriously unwell this winter. We also encourage people to get their yearly flu jab. Taking these steps now will hopefully ensure that as many people as possible enjoy the holiday season free from illness and additional anxiety.

Andy Mitchell, Commercial Director of RED Driving School said:

We're backing the latest 'Boost Day' drive as part of our ongoing support for the NHS COVID-19 vaccine campaign. Along with other partners, we're updating our logo with the Booster branding as well as encouraging our drivers and customers to remain aware of ways to prevent catching COVID-19 this season.

Simple actions such as wearing face coverings, keeping spaces as well ventilated as possible and washing your hands regularly could make a big difference.

Notes to editors

Download the new advertising assets [here](#)

The new advertising campaign will involve: * A new logo for Boost Day used across TV, radio, social media and at vaccination centres.

- Radio partnerships with a cross-station 'thunderclap' takeover on 2 December.
- Mass TV takeover on 2 December, featuring 10 spots across major TV channels.

- Support from clinicians and media medics on broadcast and social media.
- Targeted multicultural activity – editorial and social content encouraging those yet to have their COVID-19, Booster and Flu vaccine to come forward.
- Advertorials with pregnancy safety messaging, supported by Royal College of Midwives, in media outlets targeting women from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Stats from the COVID-19 vaccination programme:

- The highest number of new vaccinations reported in one day in the UK was 844,285 on 20 March 2021 – that's equivalent to vaccinating the entire population of Liverpool in one day.
- The highest number of new vaccinations reported in a 7-day period in the UK was 4,215,859 between 15th-21st March 2021 – that's equivalent to vaccinating the entire population of Birmingham more than four times in a week.
- More than 3,000 vaccine sites are now available in England – double the number than February.