

UK hits 30 million boosters as push continues to Get Boosted Now

- A record-breaking week for daily vaccinations with a rolling average of nearly 1 million top-up jabs in arms a day
- New vaccine sites have opened across the country making it easier than ever to get vital protection from Omicron

More than 30 million people, over 56% of adults in the UK, have now had their COVID-19 booster during a record-breaking week for top-up jabs.

Today saw a record number of daily vaccines administered, with a total of 1.06 million first, second and third jabs in arms. Of those, 968,665 were boosters as another daily record has been broken for UK top up jabs.

The expansion of the booster programme continues at rapid pace, with all eligible adults aged over 18 able to get their lifesaving jab by booking online through the National Booking Service, or by visiting their nearest walk-in vaccination centre. This week more vaccination sites have popped-up across the country making it as easy as possible to Get Boosted Now, including football stadiums and shopping centres.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We're continuing to smash booster and vaccine records – with 30 million total boosters in the UK and more than 1 million total vaccines on one day being an absolutely fantastic achievement. I am so grateful to people up and down the country for rolling up their sleeves to secure vital protection for themselves and their loved ones against Omicron this winter.

Every top-up jab in someone's arm means that as a country we are strengthening our wall of defence against the Omicron variant. Let me be absolutely clear – this festive season, the single most important thing you can do is come forward for your lifesaving booster jab.

I am urging you – please, keep coming forward to Get Boosted Now.

Today also saw new guidance issued which will enable the 10-day self-isolation period for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 to be reduced to 7 days in most cases. Studies also demonstrate that LFD tests are just as sensitive at detecting the Omicron variant, as they are for Delta.

Vaccines Minister Maggie Throup said:

I am absolutely overwhelmed by the public's response to our

national mission for everyone to Get Boosted Now. Today's milestone of 30 million boosters is a phenomenal achievement and a true representation of the community spirit we share here in the UK. In the race between vaccine and virus, it is thanks to the work of our wonderful NHS that we are able to stay ahead and protect ourselves and our loved ones.

Everyone can play their part. Please – keep coming forward for your lifesaving booster jab. It has never been easier, as you can book an appointment via the National Booking Service or choose to queue up at one of our vaccination centres around the country.

Dr Emily Lawson, head of the NHS vaccination programme, said:

Our NHS staff have pulled out all the stops, aided by our fantastic volunteers, to accelerate the NHS COVID-19 Vaccination Programme ahead of Christmas and we have now administered more than 30 million doses across the UK, including 26 million in England alone.

Being asked to accelerate the booster programme, the NHS has delivered lifesaving covid vaccines at an unprecedented rate, breaking daily and weekly records, and I would urge anyone yet to book in for their vital top-up dose to do so at the earliest opportunity – there are plenty of appointments available and it is the best way to guarantee protection for you and your loved ones this winter.

There is further positive news as more cutting-edge antiviral treatments for COVID-19 have been secured for NHS patients as the UK Government signs two new contracts to help tackle Omicron. The significant new deals have been accelerated following the emergence of the Omicron variant, to protect vulnerable people over the coming months. The move will help reduce hospitalisations and therefore ease pressures on the NHS.

[Ian Karet extended as Interim Chair of the Charity Commission](#)

News story

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has extended Ian Karet's term as the Interim Chair of the Charity Commission from 27th December 2021 to 26th June 2022, whilst the appointment process for a permanent Chair is conducted.



Ian Karet joined the Charity Commission Board in January 2019. He is a solicitor and a partner of Linklaters LLP. Ian is appointed as a part-time Deputy High Court Judge and is a member of the Civil Justice Council.

This interim appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. As interim Chair, Ian will serve 1.5 days per week time commitment, remunerated at £37,500 per annum (pro rata for time in service). The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Ian Karet has not declared any activity.

Published 22 December 2021

[Next step in plans for gigabit broadband in new-build homes](#)

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez has launched a [consultation](#) on proposals for changes to building regulations to ensure new homes have next-generation gigabit broadband installed in them as standard practice.

Around one in ten new-build homes are still being built without gigabit connections, mostly in smaller developments, where the cost can be higher or broadband companies have not had the time they need to install connections before houses are completed.

The changes to the law will mean home developers will be legally required to build gigabit broadband into new homes in England and make it a priority as part of building work. They will also need to bring broadband network operators on board to consider gigabit broadband installation when construction plans are submitted to local councils.

These measures will give more people access to future-proof internet connections and reduce the need for costly and disruptive work to retrospectively install them in homes. They represent another significant step in the government's plan to level up the UK and accelerate the nationwide rollout of world-class broadband.

Gigabit broadband is capable of download speeds of 1,000 megabits or one gigabit per second. It allows people to work remotely more easily and gives homes the fast and reliable connections needed for streaming ultra-HD and 4k TV and films and gaming online on multiple devices at the same time. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated just how crucial fast and reliable broadband connections are to the economy and to quality of life.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said:

We are moving rapidly in our national mission to make sure everyone can benefit from faster gigabit-speed broadband. National coverage has jumped from six per cent to sixty-five per cent in just two years.

The law changes we are consulting on today will help us go further and faster to make our homes fit for the future with the infrastructure people will need to take advantage of new technologies in the coming decades

Minister of State for Building Safety and Communities Lord Stephen Greenhalgh said:

The deployment of gigabit-capable broadband connections to new homes is consistent with DLUHC's wider work to level up communities. Fast and reliable broadband will help owners of new homes throughout the country to live and work more flexibly and will help to support social inclusion and growth.

While these legislative changes will introduce responsibilities for housing developers, the burdens are balanced through secured financial support from certain network operators who have made commitments to contribute to gigabit connections costs.

After considering respondents' views, the government will publish final details of the secondary legislation before laying it in Parliament as soon as possible. The legislation will apply to all new residential dwellings, including self-built homes in England, but excluding renovated buildings, schools, residential homes, halls of residence, hotels and prisons. The government is also consulting on whether new homes created through building conversions should also be included in the scope of the policy.

The technical consultation will be open for 10 weeks, closing on 28 February 2022, and respondents are encouraged to provide feedback on the specific

questions raised or on other elements of the proposals.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- The government's decision to amend building regulations to make sure new-build homes come with gigabit broadband was [announced last year](#).

[This resolution will save lives by ensuring that the 1988 sanctions regime poses no obstacle to delivering aid in Afghanistan](#)

The United Kingdom welcomes adoption of today's resolution, which creates a humanitarian exception to enable the delivery of desperately needed aid in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is facing the world's largest food security crisis. Over 20 million people, half the population, are in need of urgent assistance.

Donors and the public have responded generously. The UK has doubled aid for Afghanistan this financial year to £286 million. We welcome the global effort to finance the UN's Flash Appeal, and most recently the decision by the members of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation to step up their efforts.

At the same time, we have a shared responsibility to put in place the means to deliver aid, efficiently and effectively, and where it is most needed.

This resolution will help save lives, by ensuring that the 1988 sanctions regime poses no obstacle to the provision of humanitarian assistance and other activities that support basic human needs in Afghanistan. This directly responds to what the humanitarian community told us they needed.

We must ensure that the Council continues to strike a balance between enabling life-saving aid, and minimising the risk of accrual of any benefits to individuals or entities designated on the 1988 Sanctions List. The Security Council will review this after a year.

We welcome the assurances given by the Taliban to allow humanitarian access and their commitment not to tax aid. This is vital to ensure as many Afghans as possible are able to benefit from assistance, including the most vulnerable such as women, girls and members of minorities.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to all those across the UN family, including

the UN's Emergency Response Co-ordinator and his team, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and hers, as well as to the countless humanitarian actors in Afghanistan and outside, for all that they are doing to scale up the response; and I would like to express our solidarity with the Afghan people at this time of extreme hardship.

I thank you Mr President.

JCVI issues new vaccination advice for children and young people

Following extensive assessment of the risks and benefits of vaccinations for 5 to 11 year olds, including analysis of clinical trial results and real-world international data, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has updated its advice for this age group.

Children aged 5 to 11, who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed, should be offered a primary course of vaccination.

Primary course vaccination for these children should be with 2 10-microgram doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (a third of the adult dose), with an interval of 8 weeks between the first and second doses.

Further advice regarding COVID-19 vaccination for other 5 to 11 year olds will be issued in due course following consideration of additional data relevant to this age group, and on the Omicron variant more broadly.

Boosters

Separately, in response to the threat from the Omicron variant, the JCVI has advised that booster vaccinations should be offered to persons aged:

- 16 to 17 years
- 12 to 15 who are in a clinical risk group or who are a household contact of someone (of any age) who is immunosuppressed
- 12 to 15 years who are severely immunocompromised and who have had a third primary dose

The booster vaccination for these age groups should be with 30 micrograms of the PfizerBioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, given no sooner than 3 months after

completion of the primary course.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, Chair, COVID-19 immunisation, JCVI, said:

The majority of children aged 5 to 11 are at very low risk of serious illness due to COVID-19. However, some 5 to 11 year olds have underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk, and we advise these children to be vaccinated in the first instance.

For children and young people who have completed a primary course of vaccination, a booster dose will provide added protection against the Omicron variant.