

# Support package to protect care sector this winter

- Package of new measures announced to protect the social care sector from COVID-19
- Extra support for booster programme to protect the vulnerable and those providing care
- £300 million fund to help recruit and reward social care workforce
- Updated guidance on care home visiting and testing to keep residents, staff and visitors safe

Additional support is being offered to the social care sector as part of a package of new measures to protect people from the spread of the Omicron variant.

Vaccines remain our best line of defence and the NHS will redouble efforts to reach those care home residents who haven't yet had their boosters.

Specialist vaccination teams are being expanded and deployed to guarantee all care home residents and staff, as well as people who are housebound and their caregivers, are offered the booster – with those most at risk prioritised for the jab.

Care homes will be able to request follow up booster visits from vaccination teams for staff and residents and home visit payments for GPs will be increased to further ramp up the home care programme.

More than 70% of older adult care home residents have already received a booster jab and 97% of older adult care homes have been visited by vaccination teams. Those who haven't been visited, normally due to an outbreak, will receive visits shortly.

Care workers will benefit from a £300 million extension, in addition to the [£162.5 million announced in October, to support recruitment and retention](#). It can be used to pay for bonuses and bring forward planned pay rises for care staff, fund overtime and staff banks increasing workforce numbers up until the end of March.

This will in turn help reduce pressure on the NHS this winter by alleviating delays to discharge – freeing up beds and ensuring people are being cared for in the right place.

Recognising the importance of companionship for the health and wellbeing of residents, visits to care homes will continue under updated guidance that permits 3 visitors and an essential care giver per resident, in order to balance the current COVID-19 risk and the need to keep people safe in line with clinical advice.

Staff testing will be increased from 2 lateral flow tests per week to 3 as well as a weekly PCR test. Fully vaccinated residents visiting out will be

asked to take a lateral flow test on alternate days for 2 weeks after a visit. Those not fully vaccinated will be expected to isolate following a visit out.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Throughout the pandemic we have done everything we can to protect the adult social care sector, and the emergence of the Omicron variant means this is more important than ever.

This new funding will support our incredible workforce by recruiting new staff and rewarding those who have done so much during this pandemic.

Boosting the booster rollout in social care and updating the visiting guidance will help keep the most vulnerable people in our society safe from the virus this winter.

The Omicron variant has led to infections doubling every 2 to 3 days and estimates by UKHSA of 10,000 cases with increased transmissibility.

Care settings will be given extra guidance for infection prevention and control measures and PPE. The government has already committed to providing free PPE in care and announced an additional £388 million to support testing and infection control in September.

Minister for Care Gillian Keegan said:

Vaccination remains our best line of defence and we are going further and faster to ensure social care staff and those receiving care, whether in a care home or their own home, are prioritised for boosters.

Our priority throughout the pandemic has been the safety of those who are the most vulnerable however we need to balance this with the tremendous benefits that visiting provides.

These changes are in line with the latest clinical advice and are designed to support our fantastic social care staff in the months ahead.

These measures support the government's wider plan to improve social care. The 'People at the Heart of Care' white paper announced earlier this month, backed by £5.4 billion, provides a limit to the cost of care for everyone in the adult social care system for the first time, and significantly increases state support.

The transformed social care system will apply to people in both residential and at-home care and will set daily living costs at a lower rate than

originally proposed, helping people save more money. It will mean nobody is forced to sell their homes in their lifetime.

Further measures will be kept under review in line with the latest scientific advice.

Updated guidance on visiting will be published in due course.

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## [Heads of Mission joint statement on Tunisia: 10 December 2021](#)

World news story

Heads of Mission in Tunisia reaffirm the importance of socio-economic and financial stability in Tunisia and a swift return to functioning democratic institutions.



# UK Government

Joint statement by the Heads of Mission of the Embassies of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Delegation of the European Union:

As the Heads of Mission of the Embassies of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Delegation of the European Union in Tunisia, we strongly support the people of Tunisia in their pursuit of effective, democratic, and transparent governance.

We reaffirm the importance of socio-economic stability in order to provide for the Tunisian people. We encourage, and stand ready to support, the swift implementation of the steps necessary to strengthen Tunisia's economic and financial situation, including those under discussion with international partners, to protect the most vulnerable, and to create the basis for sustainable and equitable growth.

As Tunisia takes its sovereign decisions about economic, constitutional and electoral reforms, we restate the importance of respect for all Tunisians' fundamental freedoms, and inclusive and transparent engagement with all stakeholders, including diverse political and civil society voices, with a clear timeline allowing for a swift return to functioning democratic institutions, with an elected parliament playing a significant role. This will help to ensure widespread and lasting support for Tunisia's future progress. We stand ready to support Tunisia and its people in addressing the challenges ahead.

Published 10 December 2021

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## [An important first step towards restoring the democratic transition in Sudan](#)

Mr President, let me begin by thanking SRSR Perthes for his briefing and for all his work over a challenging three month period since we last met, the work of him and his team in difficult circumstances. I would also like to thank Ambassador Jürgenson for this tireless service on the 1591 Committee, thank you Sven.

I will focus my intervention on three issues – the coup and 21 November Political Agreement; the human rights situation; and the Juba Peace Agreement and situation in Darfur. □

The military coup on 25 October, which we condemn in the strongest possible terms, jeopardised the hard won progress made by the civilian-led government

since the 2019 revolution. Regional organisations and this Council expressed their serious concern at the events.□□

We recognise the 21 November Political Agreement as an important first step towards restoring the democratic transition. All parties must take a genuinely inclusive and consultative approach to delivering the democratic transition. We encourage the prompt formation of a Cabinet, the Transitional Legislative Council and other governance institutions as part of setting out plans for inclusive and credible elections.□□

We also reiterate our call for the immediate release of all detainees since 25 October. Such steps are a vital part of rebuilding trust and confidence with the Sudanese public and international community after the coup.

The United Kingdom commends UNITAMS' continued efforts to support dialogue and the transition process in challenging circumstances. We also welcome the Mission's efforts to strengthen relationships with civil society to build public support for the transition.

Mr President, the deterioration of the human rights situation since the coup is deeply concerning. It is essential that freedoms of expression and assembly are protected and that people can protest without fear of violence. We condemn the loss of over 43 lives, probably many more and welcome the Sudanese authorities' commitment to investigate the deaths of protestors since 25 October.

The United Kingdom also welcomes the UN Human Rights Council's appointment of Adama Dieng as the Expert on Human Rights in Sudan and urges Sudan to engage with him in this work.

Working closely with OHCHR, we also urge Sudan to establish an effective and independent National Human Rights Commission in support of restoring the democratic transition.

Mr President, we welcome the establishment of the Joint High Military Committee for Security Arrangements, and the Permanent Ceasefire Committee in Darfur, which UNITAMS chairs, as important steps towards implementing the security provisions of the Juba Peace Agreement.

It is, however, regrettable that the coup has further delayed progress on the implementation of the JPA. We urge all parties to engage in an inclusive dialogue to rebuild trust among members of the Eastern Track and non-signatory armed groups. □□

Resurgent intercommunal violence in Darfur and other parts of the country is deeply concerning. The United Kingdom deeply regrets the loss of life and stresses the need for the underlying causes of such violence to be addressed.

We reiterate our call for swift implementation of the National Plan for Civilian Protection, particularly through the deployment of the joint security keeping force and related provisions in the Juba Peace Agreement.

Finally, Mr President, I would like to reiterate our solidarity with the

people of Sudan and assure them of the United Kingdom's support in their demands for freedom, peace and justice. The hard won gains since the 2019 revolution must be protected, and we urge this Council and international partners to continue to shine a spotlight on Sudan and press for progress.

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## 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.

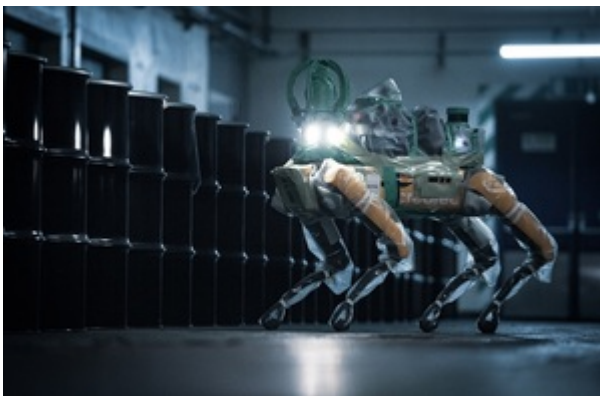
Notes to editors:

- 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>
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## [Robotics in the Spot-light](#)

News story

Our latest robot recruit has delivered a spotless performance on its first real test.



Spot the robot dog made its debut on the Sellafield site in October this year, and has once again been going through its paces by completing its first shift in an active area by collecting valuable information through laser scanning and gamma radiation imaging.

The robot completed its work wearing a specially designed suit, which protected it from any radioactive contamination.

Our remediation technical and engineering and maintenance teams are leading on Spot's deployment for Sellafield Ltd, working with Cumbria-based engineering consultant Createc, the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) and its US manufacturers Boston Dynamics.

Chris Hope, remediation capability development manager, Sellafield Ltd said:

This was a really challenging task – we deployed Spot into a complex, cluttered, highly contaminated area with a mission to capture information.

The quality of the data we captured is fantastic and will help us with our decommissioning and waste planning.



Until now, this type of survey has relied on our operators manually deploying equipment in hazardous environments wearing full protective equipment.

This proves that Spot can help us take humans away from harm. This allows us to free up our workers to deliver other value adding work.

The protective suit did its job too – the robot was monitored and cleared by our health physics team, and was able to leave the Sellafield site.

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