

Vaccines Minister on the success of COVID-19 vaccine programme

Vaccine Minister Maggie Throup op-ed in the Express today (Wednesday 8 December 2021).

A year ago today, the UK made history by administering the first approved COVID-19 vaccine in the world to 90-year-old Margaret Keenan in Coventry.

It was a truly momentous occasion in which the entire globe breathed a collective sigh of relief that we finally had a way to fight back against this devastating virus which had caused so much pain and misery.

Since then, we have administered almost 120 million doses in every corner of the UK, saving countless lives and reducing pressure on the NHS.

This is testament to the brilliant work of everybody involved – NHS, GPs, pharmacists, local authorities, volunteers and civil servants – who set up the largest vaccination programme in British history and have demonstrated what can be done when we all work together.

At the height of our vaccination programme, we administered a whopping 844,285 vaccines in a single day – that's equivalent to vaccinating the entire population of Liverpool.

With the emergence of the Omicron variant, we're doing everything we can to rapidly expand and speed up the vaccination programme once again.

This will involve opening extra hospital hubs, vaccine centres and pop-up sites in convenient locations; deploying support from the military; recruiting 10,000 more NHS staff; extra payments to GPs community pharmacies and primary care staff, and a renewed communications push targeting people who might be more hesitant to get vaccinated.

Almost 21 million boosters and third doses have been administered in the UK and, on Saturday, almost 450,000 top-up jabs were administered in a single day – showcasing the strong progress we are making.

While we do not yet know how effective existing vaccines will be against the Omicron variant, it is likely they will provide at least some measure of protection, especially against severe illness.

Those who have received their booster are likely to have a stronger immune response, so it is absolutely vital that you get boosted as soon as you can to protect yourself and your family during Winter.

And I want to stress that the offer of a first and second dose will always be available if you haven't had the jab. There is still time.

I implore everybody to join the national mission and play your part by getting vaccinated so we can fight this virus, enjoy Christmas safely with our loved ones and keep the virus at bay.