Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 June 2021

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for today's coronavirus briefing.

I'm joined to my left by Dr Nikki Kanani, Medical Director for Primary Care at NHS England, and Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England (PHE).

Today I'd like to bring you the latest on our vaccination programme, and our work to get even more people protected from this deadly disease.

We've come a long way since we gave the world's first clinically authorised vaccine just over 6 months ago.

Since that very special day, we've now given a first dose to 82 per cent of all adults in the UK, and today I can confirm we've reached the milestone of 3 in 5 of all adults getting the protection of a second dose.

Because we've been able to move at such pace, any adult in the UK is now able to book their first dose.

In the 2 days after we opened up our booking system to anyone over the age of 18, there were 6 appointments being booked every second and I've been absolutely thrilled to see videos of young people coming forward at some of our major vaccination events last weekend, and I'm sure they will be doing the same this coming weekend.

The enthusiasm is making a huge difference.

We've already given first doses to almost half of all 25 to 29 year olds in England, and only a week after the programme opened up to all adults on Friday a third of people aged between 18 and 24 have had their first dose.

To all the young people who've stepped up, I want to say a huge thank you. You've protected yourself, you've protected your families and you've protected your communities.

Because the one thing we know is the vaccines are making a real difference, the vaccines are our way out of this pandemic.

The latest data show that the vaccination programme has already saved over 14,000 lives, and I can share with you that now it has prevented over 44,500 hospitalisations in England alone – that's 2,500 hospitalisations prevented in the past 2 weeks.

And when you look into the make-up of hospital admissions you can clearly see

our vaccination programme is working.

Can I have the slide on screen, please.

In January, people over 65 made up the vast majority of hospital admissions, that is why we vaccinated them early in the programme. If you look at the most recent data they show that now they make up less than a third.

So when we look at the protection that the vaccines deliver it is clear from that slide that it is extremely effective, especially with 2 doses, against the Delta variant.

Recently published data from PHE looked at around 500 hospital admissions with the Delta variant.

Of these admissions, 324 patients, so over 60%, were unvaccinated; 87 had received only one dose of a vaccine and 40 had received 2 doses.

So fewer than one in 10 people in hospital with the Delta variant had received 2 doses.

This really does show the importance of getting the jab, and critically, getting both doses.

So our mission is now to get as many people protected as we can.

And protect them as quickly as we can.

Last week we took the difficult but I think essential decision to pause step 4 in our roadmap for 4 weeks, with a review of the data after 2 weeks. And we will absolutely have that review and share that with the nation.

We’re going to use these 4 weeks to give our NHS a bit more time so we can get those remaining jabs into the arms of those who need them.

Let me give you an example of why it is so important.

Two weeks ago there were over 2 million over 50s in England who’d had a first dose but not their second dose.

Now 2 weeks’ later it’s under 900,000.

This pause has saved thousands of lives, and will continue to do so, by allowing us to get more of the second doses into arms of those most vulnerable to COVID before restrictions are eased further.

We’ve also reduced the interval from first to second jab for over 40s to 8 weeks and I’d urge everyone watching, if you are over 40, come forward and have your second jab early. You can do that by going online through the National Booking Service, or by calling 119.

We’ve seen phenomenal uptake and enthusiasm for our vaccination programme so far.

The UK has one of the highest rates of vaccine confidence in the world.

9 in 10 people say they've taken the vaccine, or that they want to take the vaccine

It's something we can all be proud of, but it's no accident.

We got here because we've actively, and Nikki will very much explain how we've done it, gone out to really address people's genuine concerns, and have open two-way conversations about these vaccines – about how safe they are and how important they are in saving lives. And because we've worked with local communities on the design of the vaccination programme, so we can deliver it in a way that works for people in a place they trust by people they trust.

Our vaccination programme has been delivered in the community, by the community, for the community and it's been brilliant to see vaccinations being given in churches, synagogues, mosques, gurdwaras, and many other pillars of the community all across the whole UK. And to see the determined effort of the brilliant people, real partners on the ground, to reach communities where uptake is lower.

This concerted community-led effort has truly paid off, and we're seeing positive results.

If you look at the latest ONS data, vaccine hesitancy has halved in the past few months among black and black British people since February and it's halved among Asian and Asian British people too in the same period.

This is real progress. But we know there's more to do.

As we look to tackle and take on those final steps, those hard yards on the road to recovery, we need to make sure as many people are protected as possible.

So we're intensifying, doubling down our efforts to get more people to come forward and we are seeing real results in places like Bolton and of course in the North West and elsewhere.

We're honing in on areas where uptake is lower, for example in London, where the percentage of first doses is slightly behind other areas of the UK.

The London team is doing an incredible job and I can confirm today we are supporting them with a London Summit, that will take place on Friday, bringing together senior officials, the NHS in London, the Mayor of London, clinical experts and community leaders from across the capital so we can see what has worked and how we can learn from it and scale it, and focus on how we can boost uptake over these crucial few weeks ahead of the 19 July.

Thanks to our vaccination programme, our incredible NHS, this country is getting a little bit safer every day.

Whatever your age, whatever your background, the vaccine will protect you, it will protect your family and all the people you care about.

So, please, come forward, and get both doses so we can take the final steps on our road to recovery. Thank you.

Now I’d like to hand over to Dr Ramsay to talk us through the latest data and then we’ll hear from Nikki Kanani.