

Nationwide drive to urge vaccine take-up in priority groups

- Over 14 million of the most vulnerable have already received their first dose in the UK's largest-ever medical deployment
- Government ministers join concerted drive to further boost vaccine take-up in every region and nation of the UK

People eligible for a vaccine who have not yet had their jab are being urged to come forward this weekend in a renewed drive to roll out the vaccine to those most at risk as quickly as possible.

Thanks to the incredible efforts of the NHS, volunteers, our armed forces and local authorities, more than 14 million of the most vulnerable people in the UK have already been vaccinated – including around 9 in 10 of all over-70s.

From mosques and museums to rugby grounds and cathedrals, vaccinations are taking place at thousands of sites across the UK in the country's biggest-ever medical deployment.

Today, almost 30 government ministers are taking part in a further concerted push in every region and nation of the UK to encourage everyone eligible for the vaccine to come forward through visits and virtual meetings.

They will hear from NHS staff, volunteers helping with the deployment, and people getting their jabs, as part of continued efforts to underline the importance of getting vaccinated and protecting yourself from COVID-19.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock has visited the Stoke Mandeville stadium – the birthplace of the Paralympic movement – which is being used as a vaccination centre. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden is visiting the iconic Lord's Cricket Ground to meet doctors, nurses and volunteers supporting the national effort, and Education Secretary Gavin Williamson is hearing from military personnel helping administer vaccines alongside healthcare staff at the Whitemoor Lakes site in Staffordshire.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has met with military personnel supporting the vaccine roll-out in Stirling, following confirmation that a further 353 armed forces personnel will deploy across Scotland to support the pandemic response and Chancellor Rishi Sunak will speak with healthcare staff at Elland Road Vaccination Centre, home of Leeds United.

Home Secretary Priti Patel is volunteering at the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Temple in Bedford and Environment Secretary George Eustice is having a virtual tour of Stithians' showground in Truro to thank local NHS workers.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am determined that we protect as many of our country's most

vulnerable people from this awful disease as soon as possible. It is so important that everyone aged 70 and over who hasn't yet had a vaccination comes forward this weekend and contacts the NHS to book in their jab.

Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic and it is testament to the strength of our Union and the combined power of our United Kingdom that we've seen such incredible progress in the roll-out of our vaccination programme.

I want to thank all the NHS workers, volunteers, local partners and armed forces who have done such a tremendous job so far in protecting our families and our communities.

Professor Stephen Powis, NHS medical director, said:

Thanks to the tireless efforts of staff, the NHS vaccination programme – the biggest and fastest in health service history – is off to a strong start with over 12 million people in England already taking up the offer of a vaccine at one of over 1,500 centres across the country.

People in the priority groups have not missed their chance to get jabbed and if you are aged 70 and over and haven't yet taken up the offer, please do come forward and make an appointment – the vaccine is safe, simple, and will offer you and those around you crucial protection against this virus.

The top 4 priority cohorts include care home residents and staff, frontline health and social care workers, anyone aged 70 or over and people who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

People aged 70 and over in England should now contact the NHS to arrange their jab. They can do this through the online national booking service, or if they cannot get online they can dial 119 or contact their local GP practice.

Health and social care workers should speak to their employer if they have not had their vaccine yet.

GP teams have been asked to contact their clinically extremely vulnerable patients to make sure they have been offered a jab.

We are working with communities right across the country to make sure that whatever someone's background, ethnicity or religious beliefs, everyone is able to get the protection they need as we continue to fight this disease together. Today, the government and NHS are publishing a new plan setting out the work we are doing in partnership with communities at a national and local level to increase vaccine uptake and ensure equity of access.

The government has committed to offering the vaccine to all those over 50 by May and all adults by September.

Sporting legends led by Sir Geoff Hurst urge over 70s to get Coronavirus vaccination

Rallying cry comes as Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden visits vaccination centre at Lord's and thanks DCMS sectors for their help in the vaccine roll-out to date

England's 1966 World Cup hero Sir Geoff Hurst has led some of Britain's sporting legends to urge people aged 70 and over yet to receive their coronavirus vaccination to join them in getting the jab.

Crystal Palace and former England Manager Roy Hodgson, former England cricketer turned commentator David 'Bumble' Lloyd, 1969 Wimbledon Ladies Singles Champion Ann Jones CBE, five-time British Champion Jockey Willie Carson OBE and 1981 Grand National winner Bob Champion CBE have all received their first vaccination from the NHS, as members of the [top 4 priority groups](#). They are set to receive their second doses within 12 weeks.

These top 4 groups account for 88% of COVID deaths, which is why the vaccines will play such a crucial role in saving lives and reducing the demand on the NHS.

With over 60s due to receive the vaccine soon, former England Rugby Union captain Sir Bill Beaumont CBE and double Olympic Decathlon Champion Daley Thompson CBE have said they will step forward and receive their jabs when asked to do so.

More than [13 million people have now received their first dose](#) of a COVID-19 vaccine across the nation, as part of the largest vaccination programme in British history. This includes 1 in 4 adults in England, over 90% of everyone over 75 and over 90% of eligible residents of care homes for the elderly.

This week the Prime Minister and Health Secretary urged anyone aged 70 and over who has not yet been vaccinated to contact the NHS by visiting www.nhs.uk/covid-vaccination or calling 119 to arrange a jab.

Sir Geoff Hurst said:

Three weeks ago today my wife and I got our first AstraZeneca vaccines at 10.06 and 10.08 in our local Cheltenham Fire Station.

It was well organised as you'd expect, and didn't hurt a bit.

This is a global pandemic. For goodness sake, just get it done. It's in your interest, as well as that of your family, friends, workmates, and your country.

Roy Hodgson said:

A few weeks ago I was lucky enough to get the notification that it was my turn to receive the coronavirus vaccine, so I didn't hesitate to go along to my local medical centre. The process was simple, everything was extremely well organised. The jab, which one hardly feels, was over in seconds and in no time I found myself back at home.

I urge anyone like me, aged 70 and over, if you haven't yet received your vaccine, please come forward and make an appointment as soon as you can. Or, of course if you have grandparents, relatives and friends over 70, please encourage them to book an appointment and join the millions of us that have already done so.

David Lloyd said:

I'm over 70 and I've had my first NHS coronavirus injection. They were all set up at the local cricket and rugby club and it was great! Sleeve up, jab in...job done! Don't hesitate, just do it...every single jab makes us all safer. Bumble says get on with the jab!

Ann Jones CBE said:

I had my vaccination about a month ago in my doctor's surgery in Birmingham. It was painless, and I'd like to thank the NHS and all their staff for everything they are doing. I would encourage everyone who has the opportunity of getting vaccinated to take advantage of it and book an appointment. Like so many people, I'd like to get back to being able to enjoy life again, and everyone getting vaccinated offers the best opportunity of us all returning to some sort of normality as soon as possible.

Willie Carson OBE said:

Four weeks ago I got one of the best phone calls I've received this year – the appointment for my first coronavirus vaccination at Cirencester Hospital. I encourage everyone to get it quick – make a nuisance of yourself! The jab will make you safer.

Bob Champion CBE said:

Last week I was very excited going to my GP surgery to receive my vaccination from the surgery nurse. It is wonderful to have thousands of doctors, nurses and volunteers helping to make us safe and hopefully get us back to some normality in the near future.

The whole process was extremely well organised and the injection didn't hurt at all. So please do not hesitate if you are aged 70 and over, and haven't yet received your vaccine. Come forward and make an appointment as soon as you can. Encourage any grandparents, relatives and friends over 70 to book an appointment too. Every jab makes us all a bit safer. It will offer you and those around you crucial protection against this virus.

Sir Bill Beaumont CBE said:

Given the challenges presented by coronavirus, it is fantastic that this year's Six Nations is going ahead as planned. I know it has been an enormous effort to make it happen – it's a real tonic to have live sport to watch. I urge everyone who is eligible for a vaccine to get it as soon as possible. Immunisation will help open up society, get the community game back up and running, and to enable crowds at live sports.

Daley Thompson CBE said:

I'm looking forward to my jab, as it will help protect those most important to me. If not for yourself, have the vaccine for the safety of others. I'm loving the thought that we are all getting closer to normal, one injection at a time.

Yesterday Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden visited Lord's Cricket Ground, where he met doctors, nurses and volunteers supporting this national effort. The [Home of Cricket opened its doors as a makeshift COVID-19 vaccination centre to its local community in January](#), and reached the milestone of vaccinating 10,000 people last week.

It is just one of more than 80 elite and grassroots sport venues that have been partly converted into either a large vaccination centre or GP-led service in support of the vaccine rollout – ranging from Villa Park in Birmingham, Epsom Racecourse and the Manchester Tennis Centre, to Harlow Sports Centre and Glossop Cricket and Bowling Club.

Vaccinations have also been taking place in a number of arts and cultural venues, including the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley, the Thackray Museum of Medicine in Leeds and the Derby Arena.

The NHS is delivering COVID vaccinations at [more than 1,500 sites across England alone](#), from mosques, to museums and cathedrals. Sites have been chosen to ensure that the vast majority of the population live within 10 miles of at least one vaccination service.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Sports have played a magnificent role in helping us fight this virus, from hosting test centres, to providing food to frontline workers, to calling older fans at risk of loneliness. And now venues such as Lord's are helping deliver the biggest and fastest vaccination programme in Britain's history.

Our elderly have shown us the way by enthusiastically rolling up their sleeves, so let's keep this going. I urge any over 70s to join our sports legends and contact the NHS if they haven't had the vaccine yet. The vaccine will save lives, livelihoods and get us back to the things we love.

The public has a vital part to play in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines and the government has called on people to:

- Help out: help those eligible for the vaccine by supporting friends, family and loved ones with their appointments, as well as volunteering to help those in the community
- Join up: sign up to clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines, as well as treatments
- Stay informed: keep up to date with accurate and trusted NHS advice and make sure to share the facts with friends and family

Further plans on expanding the vaccination programme to the other priority groups will be set out soon.

Notes to editors:

Vaccines have been offered to all elderly care home residents and staff in England and Wales.

All vaccines being used in the UK have undergone robust clinical trials and have met the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

I dig u – 2,000-year-old Cupid figurine among Roman artefacts found on major route

The almost 2,000-year-old figurine depicting Cupid, the Roman God of love was discovered along with a bow-shaped brooch, and a Roman or early Saxon skeleton.

The items were found along the proposed 3.4-mile stretch of the new A417 Missing Link route and go some way to showing what life in the area was like thousands of years ago.

The Cupid figurine is a rare find, with less than 50 known in the UK, and is one of only three that have been found as part of an archaeological dig as opposed to by metal detectorists.

Made of solid bronze with wings and holding a flaming torch, the figurine was discovered in a deposit of charcoal, suggesting it could be an offering to the Gods.

All the finds are part of early survey works on the £435 million A417 Missing Link route, which aims to better connect the Midlands and North with the south of England.

Survey work saw 335 trenches dug in fields around the route over a period of four months to help the project team learn more about what life was like on the site during Roman times, nearly 2,000 years ago.

Michael Goddard, Highways England Senior Project Manager for the A417, said:

The archaeology works we are undertaking along the A417 give us a significant insight into life on the site thousands of years ago, providing a unique glimpse into the past.

It's fascinating to see that Romans would have lived in the area in a similar way to how we do today – drawn to the area's stunning beauty, something we are aiming to maintain with this landscape led scheme.

It's also fascinating to see that the Romans also left offerings to the God of love to keep them happy and help shape their own lives – with Cupid now a staple of Valentine's Day celebrations all over the world.

These finds help us understand the relationship between the improvement scheme and the surrounding historic environment which will ensure the protection of any historic finds for generations to come.

Jim Keyte, Archaeology Lead for the project, added:

The area of the project is rich in history, and the existing A417 largely follows the former Roman Road between Cirencester and Gloucester; Birdlip itself has its origins as a Roman settlement.

It has been fascinating to reveal more about the area and the people who once lived here. Our investigations will continue as the project progresses, and we expect more interesting discoveries to come.

The A417 Missing Link improvement scheme is located within a rich archaeological landscape, with evidence dating back up to 2,000 years ago right through to the modern day.

The land was intensely utilised during the Later Iron Age and Romano-British periods – with a major Roman road and a number of Iron Age and Roman sites recorded across the wider area.

Commencing with a study of the early historical records, and then a series of geophysical surveys – an archaeological technique to look for features buried beneath the ground – the team then undertook evaluations to unearth any finds.

While the most significant find was the figurine of Cupid, the brooch discovered at the same settlement also gives an insight into daily life as a Roman, who would have used the brooch to fasten their cloak to keep out the wind that still blows strongly across the landscape. The brooch is ornate, and shaped like an archer's bow- it's likely that the owner would have been quite wealthy.

The skeleton has proved a little more unique though. Oriented north to south, archaeologists consider that it is unlikely to be Christian, meaning the remains date to either before 4th Century Roman or early Saxon (5th-7th Century).

Researchers were also baffled by the fact the remains were buried face down; potentially suggesting the mystery person was not well liked, for instance a criminal.

However, the team will never really know as the skeleton will be left in situ and not studied further.

Mel Barge, Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England, said:

We have been advising Highways England on this proposed road scheme alongside the County Council Heritage Team.

The cupid statue is a rare and exciting find. It will tell us about the lives and beliefs of the small Roman community that lived

alongside this road 2,000 years ago.

And discoveries like these are being unearthed at Highways England schemes across the country.

In the north west, work on the A585 Windy Harbour to Skipool bypass and junction improvement project has provided a glimpse of early life on a watery Fylde peninsula thousands of years ago.

Similarly, as part of an improvement of the A1 in North Yorkshire, archaeologists discovered the Romans settled in the area at least a decade earlier than previously thought, producing coins and interacting with local people.

They also found evidence of early investment in infrastructure and 2,000-year-old attempts to fix potholes.

In the south west, Highways England is carrying out a huge amount of work in advance of the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme near Stonehenge, involving more detailed investigations than for any other road scheme in the country.

Geophysical and archaeological surveys have been undertaken of the ground that would be disturbed by the scheme both within and outside the World Heritage Site, including the location for the new Longbarrow Junction and the whole of the Winterbourne Stoke northern bypass route.

Survey work has uncovered some interesting but not unexpected finds, including quantities of worked flint and pieces of pottery and a vessel containing a cremation burial dating back as far as 4,000 – 5,000 years.

Outside the construction footprint of the scheme – which includes a two-mile tunnel, a further 50 metres away from the Stonehenge monument – a small hengiform monument and bones from a crouched burial, and a further cremation burial have been found.

And over in the east of England mammoth tusks, rare Roman coins, and Britain's oldest beer brewing have all been among the amazing archaeological finds on Highways England's £1.5 billion programme upgrading the A14.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

High-tech route for silo waste

News story

We know that removing nuclear waste from our Pile Fuel Cladding Silo is one of our biggest challenges at Sellafield.



The high-tech Direct Import Facility

To do it we'll fill tens of thousands of specially created boxes. And move them to specially built stores through our multi-million pound Box Encapsulation Plant Product Store Direct Import Facility (BEPPS-DIF).

We now know the process for moving the boxes works – because we've tested it.

Work on building the infrastructure to deliver our mission has continued through COVID-19 and a harsh winter. BEPPS-DIF will be integral to dealing with the waste brought from our legacy silos.

It's the DIF part of the operation that will bring the 3 metre cubed boxes full of waste safely and securely into our stores.

This high-tech facility is the vital bit between the waste coming out of the silo and being stored in one of our product stores.

The project has now brought a test package through the path from the DIF into the facility's transfer cell, completing the latest round of commissioning and showing, on the video below, the route our waste will take.

The current date for real waste to start coming through the facility is summer 2022.

This week the project celebrates another milestone as we move towards that date – the handover of its first pipework system to commissioning. System 905 will provide process air supply to the air skates that will lift the crane maintenance area shield door.

Project manager Mike Robinson, Sellafield Ltd said:

Achieving this milestone will complete level 2 commissioning on the shield door, is vital for the completion of all plant performance demonstrations and will provide invaluable learning to support the handover of the remaining pipework systems.

Here's how the facility will help us create a clean and safe environment for future generations.

[The Box Encapsulation Plant Product Store and Direct Import Facility – High-tech route for waste](#)

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Chancellor prioritises climate change and urged support for vulnerable countries in first UK G7 Finance Meeting

News story

The Chancellor today called on his international counterparts to make climate and nature considerations a central part of all economic and financial decision-making in 2021.



- Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak co-hosted the first G7 meeting with Governor of the Bank of England Andrew Bailey (Friday 12 February)
- the Chancellor called on the G7 to take the lead in shaping support for vulnerable countries in 2021, and makes climate and nature

considerations a central priority for this year's Finance Agenda, paving the way to a truly green global economic recovery

- attendees included Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors from across the G7 nations, representatives from the European Commission, European Central Bank, and Eurogroup, and leaders of the IMF, World Bank Group, OECD and Financial Stability Board

Chairing his first meeting of the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors under the UK Presidency, Chancellor Rishi Sunak set out his priorities for the year ahead which also include protecting jobs and supporting the global economic recovery, working to reach a global solution to the tax challenges created by digitalisation of the economy and providing necessary support for the world's most vulnerable countries.

Hosting the meeting alongside Governor of the Bank of England Andrew Bailey, the Chancellor urged his counterparts to match the UK's ambitions ahead of COP26, and stressed the importance of working together to support a smooth and effective transition of our economies to net zero.

Ministers and Central Bank Governors exchanged views on how best to shape and respond to the phases of the global recovery from Covid-19, including supporting workers and businesses in the near term while ensuring sustainability in the long term.

The Chancellor also highlighted the moral, health and economic case for rapid and fair vaccine distribution across the world and called on the G7 to take the lead in shaping support for vulnerable countries in 2021. The G7 must ensure that International Financial Institutions have the right tools to equip and enable vulnerable countries to respond to the pandemic, and the Chancellor called on private sector creditors to play their full part to help ensure sustainable debt treatments for the poorest countries, paving the way for a truly global recovery.

Making progress on reaching an international solution to the tax challenges of the digital economy was noted as a key priority. The UK underlined our commitment to this issue, and called on the G7 to work together towards reaching an enduring multilateral solution by the mid-2021 deadline agreed by the G20. To this end the Chancellor pointed to the need for constructive joint work across the G7, G20 and OECD.

Joined by counterparts from the G7 the Chancellor also warmly welcomed US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen to her first G7 meeting in her new capacity.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak thanked his colleagues for the call, and closed by stressing this once in a generation opportunity to work together in our efforts to save lives, support jobs, and build a fairer, greener and more prosperous world.

Further information

- the G7 comprises of the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States and the EU

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