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Covid-19: All doctors should be offered first vaccine dose by mid-February, government says

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The UK government has promised that every adult in the UK will be offered a covid-19 vaccination by the autumn as it set out plans to rapidly scale up its mass vaccination programme.

The UK covid-19 vaccines delivery plan,¹ published on Monday 11 January to coincide with the opening of seven new regional vaccination centres, said England will have capacity to vaccinate at least two million people per week by the end of January. This will be delivered across 206 hospital sites, 50 vaccination centres, and 1200 local vaccination sites run by primary and community care teams, it says.

The expansion of capacity means that everyone will live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre, or, in the case of a small number of highly rural areas, have access to a mobile unit delivering vaccinations, the plan says.

The plan confirms that all frontline health and care workers, all care home residents, everyone aged over 70, and all clinically extremely vulnerable people should be offered their first dose of the vaccine by 15 February. Everyone else in the nine high risk groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation should be offered a vaccine by spring, it stipulates.

Phase two of the vaccination programme will look at how to achieve protection for the whole UK population, and may include vaccination of people at high risk of catching covid-19 or delivering key public services, it adds.

Over 80 000 health professionals have been mobilised to help deliver the programme across the different vaccination sites, and over 200 000 additional members of the public have expressed their interest in helping with non-clinical tasks such as administrative support, logistics, and stewarding, it adds.

Health and social care secretary Matt Hancock said, “Our vaccine delivery plan maps our route back to normality, but it does not mean we can be complacent and it is mission critical that everybody abides by the restrictions in the coming weeks.

“The next few months will present a significant opportunity to turn the tide of battle. I am looking forward to watching these plans bring more reassurance and hope back to people’s lives after a difficult year.”

Interim chair of the government’s vaccines taskforce Clive Dix said, “The UK has led the world in procuring, authorising, and deploying vaccines and I am confident that, working closely with manufacturers, we are ready and able to meet the government’s target for vaccinations.”

The launch of the plan came amid calls from scientists for the government to release more data to show how the rollout of covid vaccinations in the UK is aligning with a long term strategy to tackle the pandemic.² Members of Independent Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies voiced concerns about an absence of a coherent policy to control the spread of the virus amid reliance on emergency lockdowns and promises that “vaccines are coming.”

1 Department of Health and Social Care. UK covid-19 vaccines delivery plan. 11 January 2021. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951284/UK_COVID-19_vaccines_delivery_plan.pdf.

2 Limb M. Covid-19: Data on vaccination rollout and its effects are vital to gauge progress, say scientists. *BMJ* 2021;372.