# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **COVID-19 vaccination – Second spring booster offer to most vulnerable** |
| **DATE**  | **21 February 2022** |
| **BY** | **Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

As we know, getting vaccinated is the best course of action people can take to protect themselves from COVID-19 and it is pleasing to note that 70% of those eligible have now received a COVID-19 booster dose in Wales. Every vaccine given helps to keep Wales safe. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), as part of its latest review of the vaccination programme, has today published a statement, which recommends an additional spring booster dose for our most vulnerable individuals.

The Committee has recommended, as a precautionary strategy, a second booster dose in the spring for:

* **adults aged 75 years and over;**
* **residents in a care home for older adults, and**
* **individuals aged 12 years and over who are immunosuppressed (as defined in in the** [**Green Book**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-the-green-book-chapter-14a)**)**

In making this recommendation they considered available data from the UK and internationally which suggests that older people are more likely to experience waning of immunity due to a decreased capacity of the immune system to respond effectively to infections or vaccines, and much more likely to experience severe disease if infected. Practically, because they were prioritised for vaccination at the start of the COVID-19 vaccine programme, older persons are also now furthest in time from their last vaccine dose. I have accepted this advice and have asked health boards to plan for when they can start deployment. Health boards are already planning to offer the vaccine to all five to 11 year olds from mid-March onwards and they will now also be factoring in the need to prioritise a spring booster for the most vulnerable during this time.

Winter remains the season when the threat from COVID-19 is greatest both for individuals and for health communities and, for the purposes of longer term planning, the JCVI has also signalled an autumn 2022 programme of vaccinations will be indicated for people who are at higher risk of severe COVID-19, such as those of older age and in clinical risk groups. Precise details of an autumn programme will be made available at a later stage. As the COVID-19 pandemic moves further towards endemicity in the UK, the JCVI will continue to review the vaccination programme and I thank them for their expert advice.

Whilst we continue to roll out our successful booster programme, it is not too late for anyone who needs a first, second or booster dose to be vaccinated. Health boards are actively following up on anyone who has not been able to take up their offer of a booster. As ever, I am extremely grateful to the NHS and everyone involved in the vaccination programme for their continued hard work.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.