# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **COVID-19 Vaccination Progress against Strategy Update** |
| **DATE**  | **20 April 2021** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health and Social Services** |

Today, following a pause at the beginning of the pre-election period, we are resuming the publication of regular factual updates on our COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

The hard work of all those involved in our COVID-19 Vaccination Programme has continued over the last few weeks and as a result of that hard work we reached the second milestone in our programme on 4 April, earlier than set out in our Vaccination Strategy. This means we have offered the vaccine to all those in priority groups 1-9. Health boards across Wales are offering the vaccine to those aged 40 and over. Some have already reached the 50% gateway that enables them to offer to the next age group so over 30s are also being called.

It is testament to the hard work of our NHS and all those working on the vaccination programme that we are maintaining the best first dose vaccination rate in the UK. A greater proportion of people in Wales have had both doses of the vaccine in Wales than in any other part of the UK. Last week we were ranked third in the world – behind only the United Arab Emirates and Israel.

Over two thirds of our adult population have had a first dose. Data published today shows that our incredible vaccination teams have now administered 1,699,092 first doses and 610,882 second doses, so have administered a total of 2,309,974 vaccinations.

There are always plans in place to ensure that no one is left behind, it is never too late for someone in the first priority groups to come forward for their vaccination. Anyone in groups 1-9 that has not yet heard about their appointment should contact their health board.  Full details are available on the Welsh Government’s [website](https://gov.wales/get-your-covid-19-vaccination-if-you-think-you-have-been-missed).

Phase 2 of the programme is well underway and the JCVI has published their final advice for this phase of the programme. This confirms that the quickest way to vaccinate everyone is to continue with an age-based approach to rollout for the rest of the population starting with the oldest adults first. Whilst also continuing efforts to extend coverage to those in priority groups 1-9. We will continue to follow this advice in Wales.

Supply is the limiting factor in our programme. We are aware of an expected reduction to the supply of Moderna vaccine to the UK. We are working through what this means for our programme in Wales. We will continue discussions with the UK Government with a focus on ensuring we meet the milestones in our national strategy.

We have been clear throughout the programme that people’s safety will always come first. We closely review vaccine safety reports and the independent regulator, the MHRA, continues to review the evidence on safety.

JCVI have advised that women who are pregnant should be offered vaccination at the same time as non-pregnant women, based on their age and clinical risk group. There is now extensive post-marketing experience of the use of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in the USA with no safety signals so far. These vaccines are therefore the preferred vaccines to offer to pregnant women. Clinicians should discuss the risks and benefits of vaccination with the woman, who should be told about the limited but emerging evidence regarding safety for vaccination in pregnancy. Pregnant women who commenced vaccination with AstraZeneca, are advised to complete their vaccination course with the same vaccine.

The Green Book chapter 14a also confirms that women who are planning pregnancy, are in the immediate postpartum (having given birth), or are breastfeeding can be vaccinated with any vaccine, in accordance with their age and clinical risk group.

The MHRA has issued new advice concluding there is a possible link between AstraZeneca COVID-19 Vaccine and extremely rare form of blood clots. The risk is of a very specific and very rare type of clot with a low platelet count (known as thrombocytopenia). The benefits of vaccination continue to outweigh any risks but MHRA advises careful consideration be given to people who are at higher risk of specific types of blood clots because of their medical condition.

JCVI has also issued advice in relation to AstraZeneca deployment that we are following. They have advised that:

* Those aged 18-29 with no underlying conditions should receive an alternative COVID-19 vaccine where an alternative is available.
* Those people who have had a first AstraZeneca vaccine dose should continue to have the second dose.
* Information should be given to individuals offered vaccination and healthcare professionals should be updated to reflect these considerations.

We take this advice very seriously and will ensure the updated advice is followed for people’s safety. The NHS in Wales will operationalise the advice in the smoothest way possible and will make available the right vaccine at the right time for individuals. Those under 30 will be offered an alternative vaccine. This is a precautionary measure or the majority of the population, the AstraZeneca vaccine is still considered to be a safe and effective vaccine.

People who have had a first AstraZeneca vaccine dose should continue to have the second dose. I continue to urge everyone to take up their offer of vaccination and I will be getting my second dose of AstraZeneca when I am called. Thank you to everyone who has continued to play their part for Wales and support our national vaccination programme by keeping their appointments. Every single dose counts.