

# UK vaccine rollout set to begin with queen in line for jab

December 6 2020

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Britain's Queen Elizabeth II will receive the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus vaccine within weeks, reports on Sunday said, as the biggest immunisation programme in UK history begins next week.

The monarch, 94, and her 99-year-old husband Prince Philip are in line

to get the jab early in the rollout, which gets underway Tuesday, due to their age and will not receive preferential treatment, several newspapers reported.

Britain's most senior royals will "let it be known" they have been given the inoculations "as a powerful counter to the [anti-vaccination movement](#)," the Sunday Times said.

The Mail on Sunday added they hope "to encourage more people to take up the vital jab".

The queen has spent much of the pandemic in self-isolation in Windsor because of her age, and will this year forego her traditional family Christmas at her Sandringham estate in eastern England with other royals.

A Buckingham Palace spokeswoman declined to comment on the vaccination reports, noting "medical decisions are taken personally".

Britain on Wednesday became the first country in the world to approve the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and [health officials](#) have already drawn up criteria based on age and vulnerability to decide who will receive it first.

## **'Rise to the challenge'**

Britain has pre-ordered 40 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in total, and is set to receive an initial batch of 800,000 to kickstart Tuesday's rollout.

Elderly care home residents and their carers will be the very first in line, followed by those aged 80 and over and frontline health and care staff.

Other [elderly people](#) and the clinically extremely vulnerable will be next,

with the rest of the population then prioritised by age.

The first doses were transported to the UK this week from a Pfizer plant in Belgium and will begin to arrive at dozens of "hospital hubs" nationwide by Monday.

Among those first to be inoculated will be the eldest patients already attending hospital as an outpatient, those being discharged home and others invited in.

The effort faces significant obstacles because this vaccine must be stored at -70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit).

However, it can be kept for up to five days at 2-8 degrees Celsius.

"Despite the huge complexities, hospitals will kickstart the first phase of the largest-scale vaccination campaign in our country's history from Tuesday," Stephen Powis, national medical director of the state-run National Health Service (NHS), said.

"Hardworking staff will once again rise to the challenge to protect the most [vulnerable people](#) from this awful disease," he added, noting the NHS had "a strong record" in vaccine delivery.

## **Vaccine airlift**

UK regulators were forced to defend their world-first approval, insisting it met all [safety standards](#), after US and European officials queried the rapid process.

The Sunday Mirror reported a string of high-profile figures in Britain had committed publicly to getting the [vaccine](#) in a bid to boost take-up.

They include Monty Python star Michael Palin, 77, 69-year-old Bob Geldof and rocker Ronnie Wood, 73, the tabloid said.

"I will absolutely and immediately take it as soon as humanly possible," Geldof said.

Meanwhile, plans are reportedly being stepped up to ensure any complications arising from the end of the Brexit transition period on December 31 do not hit the rollout.

The Observer said ministers have drawn up contingency plans to fly millions of doses into Britain on military aircraft in the event of Brexit-related disruption at UK ports.

"We will do this if necessary," a health department spokesperson told the newspaper.

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Citation: UK vaccine rollout set to begin with queen in line for jab (2020, December 6) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-12-uk-vaccine-rollout-queen-line.html>

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