

Winter booster will be available to over 65s first

People aged 65 and over will be first in line for a winter booster jab to protect the most vulnerable from Covid-19 and to ease the pressure on NHS staff and hospitals.

Letters with appointment times will be posted out in the coming weeks so that NHS Lothian can get ahead of any potential surge in infections.

The booster jabs will be given at the same time as the flu vaccine to those eligible where possible – NHS Lothian say that evidence shows that administration of both vaccines together is a safe and efficient way to deliver maximum protection over the winter months.

Frontline health and social care workers are also eligible for a winter booster jab, and the online portal for booking vaccination appointments will be available from 22 August.

Appointments for all other priority groups will be made available as the programme progresses – people in those groups should wait until they are contacted or called forward.

The programme follows advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccinations and Immunisation (JCVI) which recommended vaccinating people as soon as possible to have the best chance of mitigating the impact of Covid-19 over the winter.

Pat Wynne, Nurse Director for NHS Lothian who is overseeing this year's programme, said: "All adults aged 65 years or over will be contacted shortly with a scheduled appointment for their Covid-19 booster and flu vaccination.

"Covid-19 vaccine immunity reduces and the flu virus changes over time, so it's important those eligible top up their protection by getting vaccinated this winter.

"I'd encourage those who receive an appointment letter through the post to attend. If you're unable to attend, please cancel or reschedule so we can offer the appointment to someone else."

Health Secretary Humza Yousaf said: "As was the case in previous rounds of the vaccination programme, spring/summer boosters have enjoyed very high uptake among eligible groups with 86% of older adult care home residents and 93% of those aged 75 and over gaining an important additional layer of protection at a time when Covid cases rose sharply.

"I'd like to thank all those who have worked so hard to ensure that Scotland still has the highest overall uptake of first, second and third doses in the UK.

"Following the JCVI's recommendations, we will roll out the Winter Booster Programme getting jabs in arms from early September to ensure those most at risk are protected over winter.

"Vaccination remains the best way to protect your health and those around you – I strongly encourage everyone to book in as soon as you get the call up."