31. The use of rapid COVID-19 tests, which use lateral flow devices to identify infections within 30 minutes, is important as an additional safety measure. They work alongside the range of existing measures in place across workplaces and other settings including schools, healthcare settings and organised events. Testing does not replace a range of other measures in place in wider society, such as social distancing, hand hygiene and face coverings.

32. Only people with no symptoms of the disease should use rapid COVID-19 tests. Anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate and book a PCR test immediately.

33. While asymptomatic testing is available to everyone in Northern Ireland, the Department of Health is actively encouraging employers to get involved in workplace testing through its NI SMART: Asymptomatic Testing Programme. Two different schemes are available: a collect system where test packs are provided to employees for self-testing; and assisted testing where the process is undertaken for them. While the workforce testing scheme is available to any business with 10 or more employees, efforts to expand the scheme are being focussed on the hospitality, close contact services and events sectors.

34. People who cannot access tests through their workforce, but who are coming into contact with people outside of their bubble when going to work, education or attending events can also receive free rapid COVID-19 tests through a range of Collect sites across Northern Ireland, or by having tests delivered to their home. Further information is available at www.health-ni.gov.uk/rapid-tests

HEALTH PROTECTION SERVICES: COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME

35. The NI COVID Vaccination Programme began on 8 December 2020, with the vaccination of priority group 1 and by 26 May 2021 the programme had been extended to the last part of the final cohort, priority group 12, therefore everyone aged 18 years and over is currently eligible to receive a vaccine. The latest uptake information is now available at https://covid-19.hscni.net/ni-covid-19-vaccinations-dashboard. As of 2 August 2,267,414 doses have been administered in Northern

Ireland. This includes 1,219,332 first doses and 1,048,082 second doses, which represents an adult population coverage of 83.92% and 72.13% respectively.

Table: Vaccination by dosage data as of 2 August 2021
Source: DoH COVID-19 Daily Dashboard

Age	1st Dose	% of Cohort	2nd Dose	% of Cohort
18-29	173,450	61.42%	85,927	30.42%
30-39	179,420	71.38%	140,482	55.89%
40-49	203,350	84.02%	183,073	75.63%
50-59	235,274	91.68%	224,648	87.53%
60-69	197,062	100%	192,412	98.33%
70-79	144,839	100%	140,722	98.21%
80+	85,937	100%	80,819	99.06%
Total	1,219,332	83.92%	1,048,082	72.13

36. Vaccination remains a primary line of defence and we are now reaching the final phase where we are pushing hard to ensure as high an uptake rate as possible is achieved. Modelling indicates that if we could have achieved 90% first dose take-up by the end of July, this could have reduced hospital admissions by 50% at the peak of the current wave. Our vaccination coverage in NI continues to be slightly lower than other parts of the UK, as described above.

37. Vaccination rates to date by age are shown in the table above. A final push has now been launched to encourage anyone aged 18 years or over to come forward to receive the vaccine. Trust vaccination centres ceased administering first doses on the 31 July, this is to enable the various centres to be vacated, as per contracts, by the second week of September. Targeted vaccinations in the form of pop up clinics will be an integral part of the vaccination programme across the summer, helping to further boost vaccine take-up. These are being deployed to those areas with low take-up rates, while in addition, mobile clinics are being deployed in areas of high population density to encourage vaccine uptake, particularly in the younger age cohorts. This work will be extended to locations across Northern Ireland in the