

Government agrees new deals to future proof vaccine rollout in light of new variant

- Deals include 60 million additional doses of the Moderna vaccine and 54 million more Pfizer/BioNTech doses
- New agreements to future proof booster programme sped up in light of new variant

The government has signed new contracts to secure the supply of our vaccine stock to future proof the country's vaccine programme.

The new contracts with Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna were accelerated in light of the new variant, as part of the ongoing efforts to ensure the government is doing everything it can while scientists across the world learn more about Omicron. These future supply deals include access to modified vaccines if they are needed to combat Omicron and future Variants of Concern, to prepare for all eventualities.

The agreements signed through the Vaccine Taskforce are building on existing partnerships with the vaccine companies, and will see the government procure a total of 114 million additional doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines for 2022 and 2023. This is in addition to the 35 million additional doses of Pfizer/BioNTech ordered in August for delivery in the second half of next year, and the 60 million Novavax and 7.5 million GSK/Sanofi doses expected in 2022.

Following the emergence of the new variant, the Health and Social Care Secretary asked the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) for rapid advice on extending the booster programme to all those aged 18 and over. The advice was accepted this week, with operational plans being set out to speed up the vaccine programme and offer all eligible adults in England a vaccine by the end of January.

To speed up the vaccination programme, around 400 military personnel will be drafted in to support deployment, with 1,500 community pharmacy sites, additional hospital hubs, and pop-up sites opening in convenient locations across the country. More than 3,000 sites are already open in England – more than double the number in February. The government already has enough supply of both Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech for the expanded booster programme, and the new deal makes sure we will continue to have the supplies we need moving forward.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Thanks to the Vaccines Taskforce, we have an excellent track record of securing the vaccines the country needs to keep this virus at bay.

These new deals will future proof the Great British vaccination effort – which has so far delivered more than 115 million first, second and booster jabs across the UK – and will ensure we can protect even more people in the years ahead.

This is a national mission and our best weapon to deal with this virus and its variants is to get jabs in arms – so when you are called forward, get the jab and get boosted.

For the booster programme, the JCVI has advised that mRNA vaccines are offered made by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna.

Data from the COV-BOOST trial indicate that booster doses of COVID-19 vaccines are generally well tolerated and provide a substantial increase in vaccine-induced immune responses. In particular, mRNA vaccines provide a strong booster effect.

As well as ensuring we have supply to protect the public in this country, the UK remains committed to donating 100 million doses to countries in need by mid-2022. We will have donated more than 30 million vaccines by the end of 2021 and have announced plans for donations totalling 70 million doses so far.

We will continue to work to ensure that any vaccine that the UK does not need is reallocated to other nations who require it wherever possible.

The latest data shows why boosters are so vital. The most recent evidence from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) shows that protection against symptomatic disease from the Delta variant falls from 65%, up to 3 months after the second dose, to 45% 6 months after the second dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, and from 90% to 65% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. Protection against hospitalisation falls from 95% to 75% for Oxford/AstraZeneca and 99% to 90% for Pfizer/BioNTech.

The first UK real world study from the UK Health Security Agency published in November showed that boosters give over 90% protection against symptomatic COVID-19 in adults over 50, reinforcing how vital the boosters are keeping people safe ahead of winter.

These findings show that two weeks after receiving a booster dose, protection against symptomatic infection in adults aged 50 years and over was 93.1% in those with Oxford/AstraZeneca as their primary course and 94.0% for Pfizer/BioNTech.