Government further boosts chances of UK receiving COVID-19 vaccine

- An additional 60 million doses of a potentially lifesaving COVID-19 vaccine have been secured by the government
- the agreement with GSK and Sanofi Pasteur increases the UK's chances of getting access to a safe and effective vaccine by adding a new type of vaccine candidate to the UK's growing portfolio
- almost 72,000 people have volunteered in the past week to receive information about joining vital clinical studies to speed up vaccine research – but many more still needed

A deal to secure early access to a promising new coronavirus vaccine has been announced by the government today (29 July), enhancing the UK's growing portfolio of vaccine candidates to protect the public and to save lives.

The agreement with GSK and Sanofi Pasteur, which combined have the largest vaccine manufacturing capability in the world, will supply the UK with 60 million doses of their COVID-19 vaccine, which is based on existing DNA-based technology used to produce Sanofi's flu vaccine.

If the GSK and Sanofi vaccine candidate is proven effective in human studies, the UK could be able to vaccinate priority groups, such as frontline health and social care workers and those at increased health risk, as soon as summer 2021. Human clinical studies of the vaccine will begin in September followed by a Phase 3 study in December 2020.

With today's announcement, the government has now secured early access to 4 different types of immunisation and a total of 250 million doses, giving the UK the most likely chance of finding a safe and effective vaccine at the quickest speed.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

> Our scientists and researchers are racing to find a safe and effective vaccine at a speed and scale never seen before. While this progress is truly remarkable, the fact remains that there are no guarantees.
>
> In the meantime, it is important that we secure early access to a diverse range of promising vaccine candidates, like GSK and Sanofi, to increase our chances of finding one that works so we can protect the public and save lives.

This latest agreement comes as the government confirmed that almost 72,000 people have volunteered to receive information about participating in future vaccine studies following the launch of the NHS COVID-19 vaccine research

registry last week.

Only large-scale clinical studies can give scientists and regulators the assurances they need that vaccines secured are safe and effective for use. That is why the government is urging the British public to back the national effort to speed up vaccine research by signing up to www.nhs.uk/coronavirus to receive information about becoming a volunteer for clinical studies. The aim is to get 500,000 people signed up by October.

Kate Bingham, Chair of the government's Vaccines Taskforce, said:

> Through this agreement with GSK and Sanofi, the Vaccine Taskforce can add another type of vaccine to the 3 different types of vaccine we have already secured.
>
> This diversity of vaccine types is important because we do not yet know which, if any, of the different types of vaccine will prove to generate a safe and protective response to COVID-19. Whilst this agreement is very good news, we mustn't be complacent or over optimistic.
>
> The fact remains we may never get a vaccine and if we do get one, we have to be prepared that it may not be a vaccine which prevents getting the virus, but rather one that reduces symptoms.

Thomas Triomphe, Executive Vice President and Global Head of Sanofi Pasteur commented:

> With our partner GSK, we are pleased to cooperate with the UK government as well as several other countries and global organisations as part of our ongoing efforts to ensure a safe and effective vaccine is available to everyone as quickly as possible. We greatly appreciate the UK government's support of this shared vision.

Roger Connor, President of GSK Vaccines added:

> We believe that this adjuvanted vaccine candidate has the potential to play a significant role in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic, both in the UK and around the world. We thank the UK government for confirmation of purchasing intent, which supports the significant investment we are already making as a company to scale up development and production of this vaccine.

Earlier this month, the government announced it had secured 90 million COVID-19 vaccine doses thanks to partnerships with the BioNTech / Pfizer alliance and Valneva. A deal has also been agreed to secure access to

treatments containing COVID-19 neutralising antibodies from AstraZeneca, to protect those who cannot receive vaccines such as cancer and immunocompromised patients.

This is in addition to an existing global licensing agreement signed with AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford to research, develop and manufacture a COVID-19 vaccine for the UK public. AstraZeneca will work to produce 100 million doses for the UK in total.

Notes to editors

When coronavirus invades the body, the immune system fights back in multiple ways including by producing antibodies to neutralize the virus. These antibodies bind to the spike protein on the surface of the coronavirus and prevent them from entering the cells.

GSK and Sanofi's vaccine includes the coronavirus spike protein and the immune boosting adjuvant to trigger a strong and long-lasting immune response (including the production of neutralizing antibodies) against COVID-19 especially in the elderly who are likely to be a priority population for early COVID-19 vaccination.

The 4 different vaccine classes that the government has secured to date for the UK are:

- adenoviral vaccines (Oxford/AZ)
- mRNA vaccines (BioNTech/Pfizer & Imperial)
- inactivated whole virus vaccines (Valneva)
- protein adjuvant vaccines (Agamemnon)

In addition the UK has secured rights to AstraZeneca's antibody treatment to neutralize the virus which can be used both as a short term prophylactic for those people who cannot receive vaccines (for example cancer and immunosuppressed patients) and front line workers exposed to the virus, as well as a treatment for infected patients.

Volunteering for COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials

A new NHS service has been launched to enable people across the UK to sign up for information on COVID-19 vaccine trials.

The NHS Covid-19 vaccine research registry, developed in partnership with NHS Digital, will help large numbers of people to be recruited into trials over the coming months – potentially meaning an effective vaccine for coronavirus can be found as soon as possible.

The service was commissioned as part of the UK government's Vaccine Taskforce in conjunction with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Northern Ireland, Scottish and Welsh governments.

Anyone living in the UK can sign up online to take part in the trials through the NHS, giving permission for researchers to contact you if they think

you’re a good fit.

Once you sign up, you can withdraw at any time and request that your details be removed from the COVID-19 vaccine research registry. The process takes about 5 minutes to complete.

Find out more: www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Vaccine priority groups: interim advice

Interim advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) on the groups that should be prioritised for vaccination, if and when a vaccine is available.

The committee advises priority vaccination of the following groups:

1. frontline health and social care workers
2. those at increased risk of serious disease and death from COVID-19 infection stratified according to age and risk factors

There is ongoing work within the UK to refine the identification of persons at risk of serious disease and mortality from COVID-19 infection. As well as age and underlying co-morbid conditions, the committee notes that early signals have been identified of other potential risk factors, including deprivation and ethnicity. As more evidence on at-risk groups emerges, this work will inform the review of the composition, and order of priority, of groups for vaccination.

More information is available at Priority groups for coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination advice.