

Government to use Vaccine Taskforce model to tackle health challenges

- Funding for innovative research into improved treatments, including cancer immune therapies or vaccines and game-changing weight loss medication and technologies, to accelerate their development and rollout
- Prime Minister, Health and Social Care Secretary and Business Secretary will meet with key industry experts, global CEOs and NHS leaders to leverage further investment and ensure NHS patients benefit from cutting-edge new treatments
- Builds on £1 billion investment since publication of Life Sciences Vision and delivers on commitments to cement the UK as a life sciences superpower

NHS patients are set to benefit from cutting-edge new treatments and technologies as the government introduces a Vaccine Taskforce style approach to tackling some of the biggest public health challenges facing the UK.

The government has today announced over £113 million to fund research into four healthcare missions – cancer, obesity, mental health and addiction – to unlock the next generation of medicines and diagnostics to save lives, transform patient care and ensure UK patients are the first to benefit from medical breakthroughs.

Building on the Vaccine Taskforce model which led to one of the most successful vaccine roll outs in the world and ensured millions got a Covid jab, the government will continue to harness world-leading research expertise, remove unnecessary bureaucracy, strengthen partnerships and support the new healthcare challenges.

Since the [Life Sciences Vision](#) was first launched it attracted £1 billion investment to the UK and this further research funding is expected to gain investment from leading global companies.

In addition, tackling these healthcare challenges could save the NHS and the economy billions of pounds – it is estimated obesity costs the NHS £6.1 billion a year and poor mental health costs the economy £118 billion a year.

The Prime Minister, Health and Social Care Secretary and Business Secretary will today meet with key industry figures, including global CEOs, NHS leaders and industry experts at the Life Sciences Council to discuss how their support will deliver life-changing innovations to patients, boost NHS efficiency and ensure the UK remains a global life sciences superpower.

The Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, said:

The NHS faces real pressures, which is why we are investing over £100 million in the technologies and medicines of the future to address some of the biggest public health challenges facing our

country.

This funding will improve outcomes for patients, ease existing pressures on the system and ensure that we are amongst the first to benefit from medical breakthroughs. Importantly it will also help save the NHS millions of pounds that could otherwise be spent on patient care – for example by tackling obesity which costs the health service over £6 billion annually.

It is hugely welcome too that the highly successful Vaccine Taskforce, which procured millions of life-saving vaccines in record time during the pandemic, will now become a blueprint for how we harness the best talent and expertise from around the world and drive investment in research and development.

Health and Social Care Secretary Steve Barclay said:

Conditions such as cancer and obesity prevent people leading long, healthy lives and cost the NHS billions of pounds every year.

We're leading the way in cutting-edge research which can find new ways to speed up diagnosis, enhance treatments and ensure a better quality of life for patients – both now and in the future.

By harnessing the same spirit of innovation that delivered the vaccine rollout and working hand in hand with the NHS, industry and healthcare experts.

We're building a stronger, healthier NHS with record numbers of staff and record funding, to give people the security of knowing it will be there for them when they need it.

The research will focus on the top public health priorities, as identified by the NHS:

- Cancer: £22.5 million will go into cancer research to develop new immune-based cancer therapies, including cancer vaccines, which are targeted to a patient's specific cancer. Funding will also support the development of technologies that enable earlier, more effective cancer diagnosis. This will support progress towards the NHS Long Term Plan ambition to diagnose three-quarters of cancers at Stages 1 or 2 by 2028.
- Mental health: £40.2 million for research into mental health to develop and introduce digital technologies to support patients. This could include technology allowing patients to monitor their mental health at home and instantly report to their doctor if in need of help. Funding will be spent in the Midlands and the North to bolster services and ensure people across the UK can access support, helping level up health

across the country. With one in four adults experiencing mental illness, poor mental health costs the economy £118 billion a year.

- Obesity: £20 million to trial how best to deliver new medicines and technologies for people living with obesity, particularly in deprived communities across the UK. This will help new medicines coming to market – some of which have the potential to reduce a person's weight by more than 20% – to better support people to achieve a healthy weight. The mission will explore how these medicines can be combined with cutting-edge technologies and digital tools to improve long-term health outcomes. Obesity costs the NHS £6.1 billion a year and helping people lose weight and lead healthier lifestyles could lead to significant savings.
- Addiction: £30.5 million, including funds contributed through collaboration with Scottish Government, will be deployed to accelerate the development of new technologies to prevent deaths from overdoses across the UK. This could include wearable devices which can detect the onset of a drug overdose and signal to first responders to prevent deaths, and better support people with substance use disorders to manage and combat their addiction. Funding will also help grow research capacity and capability across the UK to better understand addiction and the most effective ways to treat it as a chronic healthcare condition.

The new funding follows the [launch of the dementia mission](#) in August 2022 in memory of the late Dame Barbara Windsor – backed by £95 million – to develop innovative research tools and boost the number and speed of clinical trials in dementia and neurodegeneration. This contributes to the commitment to double funding for dementia research to £160 million a year by 2024/25.

In line with the Vaccines Taskforce, the four healthcare missions will be led by an independent chair – an expert in that field – to accelerate the development and introduction of the latest treatments and technology into the NHS, as well as drive collaboration across partners. This will not only ensure better care for patients, but also improve the accuracy of diagnosis and free up clinician time, helping tackle the Covid backlog and ease pressure on health services.

The chairs will be appointed by an expert panel dedicated to each mission – this includes Kate Bingham who headed up the Vaccine Taskforce. The process will be completed soon so the research projects can get underway as quickly as possible.

The government is committed to ensuring patients benefit from the latest treatments and NHS England has also announced today that that around 9,000 men with one of the most advanced forms of prostate cancer will be eligible for a new life-extending treatment as the NHS becomes the first in Europe to roll out darolutamide to patients whose prostate cancer has spread to other parts of the body. The deal was approved through Project Orbis, an

international collaboration with top regulators around the world which enables quicker patient access to breakthrough cancer medicines.

Today also sees Innovate UK launch a new £30 million fund to advance life-changing cancer therapeutics delivered through the Biomedical Catalyst (BMC) programme. This new programme directly supports the UK government's cancer mission, combining expertise in immuno-oncology and the vaccine capabilities developed throughout the pandemic.

Minister of State for Health Will Quince said:

We have made immense strides in health research over the past year and it's crucial we continue to harness this enthusiasm and innovation.

These new healthcare missions commit to putting the lessons we've learnt into action to drive the UK forwards as a life sciences superpower.

By bottling up this scientific brilliance our Life Sciences Vision puts this innovation at the heart of our health service, helping to solve major health challenges – such as cancer and obesity – and enabling the NHS to continue delivering world class care.

Business Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The UK is a leading light in life sciences and more generally a science superpower. This funding builds on this reputation to create jobs and growth while serving as a catalyst for an avalanche of additional private investment.

These healthcare missions will drive innovations with the potential to transform the landscape of healthcare and save millions of lives, by tackling some of greatest health issues facing Britain and indeed the world.

NHS England Chief Executive, Amanda Pritchard said:

We have already seen the incredible ways that new technology and innovation can transform NHS care and the lives of patients across the country – from glucose monitors for people living with diabetes, laser therapy for those with epilepsy to genetic life-saving testing for severely ill children and babies.

Just today, we fast tracked a new drug deal for men with prostate cancer that can boost their survival – showing that the NHS is already at the forefront of delivering the latest treatments for patients.

Working with partners, we want to build on this work even further so we can work to tackle the country's biggest healthcare challenges.

Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Health and Social Services Welsh Government said:

Last year, the UK government set out a bold and ambitious vision for life sciences that promises to deliver better healthcare outcomes for all patients across the UK. Wales has a proven track record in many of the key areas identified – dementia, mental health, genomics, cancer research and linked data – all of which play a very significant role in improving clinical outcomes and driving innovation both nationally and around the world. To maximise the potential of the Life Science agenda for the UK it is important that any investment is fully committed to delivering on 'levelling up' and it is incumbent upon all partners to work together so that our common objectives are realised across the four nations.

Professor Dame Anna Dominiczak, Chief Scientist for Health in Scotland said:

The missions launched today cover conditions that have a huge impact on people's lives. Bringing together academia, industry and the NHS offers exciting possibilities for the development of new approaches to their prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Drugs Policy Scottish Minister Angela Constance said:

In Scotland, we are experiencing an ongoing public health crisis of drug-related deaths, and finding solutions in innovation and new technology to inform future strategy is one way in which we can help prevent deaths and improve lives.

I therefore welcome this collaboration between the Scottish Government's Chief Scientist's Office and the UK Government Office for Life Sciences which focusses on rapid detection, response and intervention to potential overdoses. This ensures immediate action, helping people who use drugs and their support networks to work together to save lives.

Background

- As well as launching the Missions, the Health and Business Secretaries announced a suite of additional measures to further cement the UK's global leadership in Life Sciences. This includes:

- Ensuring NHS patients can access new medicines rapidly through Ministerial engagement with the pharmaceutical industry to ensure access safe, ground-breaking new medicines rapidly, whilst guaranteeing value for money for the NHS. This will build on flagship agreements which have already enabled NHS patients to access a new cancer drug before any other European country and enabled children in the UK to be amongst the first in the world to access a new medicine to treat Spinal Muscular Atrophy.
- Dedicated new Life Sciences Investment Envoy: with the Business Secretary appointing Dan Mahony, Chair of the BIA and Entrepreneur in Residence at Evotec, to the role last week. The new Envoy will champion access to finance for the UK Life Sciences sector by bridging the UK's Financial and Life Science industries. Last week's Investor Roadshow kicked this off, convening over 90 world-leading investors.
- Through [Project Orbis](#), the UK's medicines regulator, the MHRA, has teamed up with regulators in the US, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Singapore and Brazil to review and approve applications for promising cancer treatments quickly so patients can benefit earlier.