

# Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 1 February 2021

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for today's coronavirus briefing.

And I'm joined by Professor Steve Powis, the Medical Director of NHS England. And Dr Susan Hopkins, who is the Chief Medical Advisor to Public Health England and to NHS Test and Trace.

I've got quite a lot of news to bring you up to speed on. Right at the start, I wanted to tell you where we are with our vaccine programme.

I'm so proud of the team, who've now vaccinated 9.2 million people across the UK, that includes 931,204 vaccinations just this weekend.

And to put that into context – that's one in every 60 adults in the whole United Kingdom vaccinated in one single weekend. It's a mammoth effort.

I know how much these jabs mean to people. And I'm so grateful for all the messages that we get, and all the pictures that I'm sent of people being vaccinated.

It fills me with pride that so many people are doing so much to help for this roll out to happen so smoothly and I want to say thanks to you all.

## **Care homes**

Getting vaccinated is an emotional moment for so many people and that's because it is about protecting those who are most vulnerable to COVID.

We've now vaccinated almost 9 in 10 of all over 80s in the UK and now, as of today, we've vaccinated over half of all people in their 70s.

And, I'm delighted that I can tell you we've visited every eligible care home with older residents in England, and offered vaccinations to all their residents and staff.

This has been an incredible example of health and social care working together, working side-by-side to protect people most in need.

As Professor Martin Green, the Chief Executive of Care England said today, this is a "wonderful achievement and one that is testament to the hard work of care home staff and our colleagues in the NHS and local authorities."

And, I want to thank every single person who's helped us to get this far.

## **Vaccine supply**

I also want to let you know some good news on vaccine supply. Today we've ordered another 40 million vaccine doses from Valneva.

As we have all along, we've invested early and at risk, before we know for sure if it will come good because from the start, we've taken a no regrets attitude to backing vaccines. We've tried to leave nothing on the table.

If this gets regulatory approval, the Valneva vaccine, like many others, will be made right here in the UK.

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is made in Oxford, and Staffordshire, and Wrexham. The Novovax vaccine is being manufactured on Teesside. And if approved, this Valneva vaccine will be manufactured in Livingston, in Scotland.

We didn't start this pandemic with a large-scale on-shore vaccine manufacturing capability, so we're building one, all across the United Kingdom.

The vaccine programme just goes to show how important it is to have the UK working as one, together.

## **International**

We now have over 400 million doses of vaccines on order. This is obviously more than the UK population needs. And my attitude has always been we protect every UK citizen as fast as we can. And at the same time, we're generous around the world.

I want to say this to our international partners. Of course, I'm delighted about how well this is going at home. But I believe fundamentally that the vaccine roll out is a global effort.

One of the many reasons that I'm so happy with the AstraZeneca contract is that it not just that it gives us a strong supply here but because it is the only vaccine being deployed that's available to the whole world at cost.

And because it's logistically straightforward, it can be practically deployed in the poorest parts of the world too.

So, we will protect UK supply and we'll play our part to ensure the whole world can get the jab.

## **New variants**

Another area where we're helping around the world is in spotting new variants.

Our global leadership in genomic sequencing has helped us to spot new variants here in the UK, and quickly alert the rest of the world. But there

are other countries that don't have the capacity they need.

Last week, we offered our capacity and expertise to other nations through our New Variant Assessment Platform, because a mutation in one part of the world is a threat to people everywhere.

For example, our South African colleagues spotted a new variant through their high quality genomic sequencing and rightly notified the world, as we did with the variant that we discovered here in the UK.

We've now identified 105 cases of this variant here. Eleven of those cases don't appear to have any links to international travel.

There's currently no evidence to suggest this variant is any more severe, but we need to come down on it hard and we will. We've already made sure that all these cases are isolating and that we've done enhanced contact tracing of all of their close contacts.

We are surging [extra testing into the areas where this variant has been found](#) and sequencing every single positive case.

Working with local authorities, we are going door-to-door to test people in the local area. These cases have been identified in the following postcodes:

- W7, N17, CR4, WS2, ME15, EN10, GU21, and PR9

If you live in one of these postcodes where we're sending in enhanced testing, then it's imperative that you stay at home. And that you get a test, even if you don't have symptoms.

This is so important so that we can break the chains of transmission of this new variant. And we've got to bring this virus to heel.

So there's lots of good news, but this is a stark reminder that the fight against this virus isn't over yet.

Every day, we're protecting more people and getting ourselves one step closer to normal life. But this is no time to let things slip. So let's, all of us, do what we must to get this virus under control.