

Millions could be vaccinated against Covid-19 as UK secures strong portfolio of promising vaccines

- The UK Government has secured early access to 90 million vaccine doses from the BioNTech/Pfizer alliance and Valneva with more in the pipeline as part of its strategy to build a portfolio of promising new vaccines to protect the UK from Covid-19
- In addition, treatments containing Covid-19-neutralising antibodies have been secured from AstraZeneca to protect those who cannot receive vaccines
- UK public encouraged to sign up to a new NHS website to make it quicker and easier for potential volunteers to join vital studies that could help save lives – the aim is to get 500,000 people signed up by October

Millions of people could be vaccinated against coronavirus as the UK secures early access to 90 million doses of promising Covid-19 vaccine candidates.

Announced by Business Secretary Alok Sharma today (Monday 20 July), the Government has agreed significant partnerships with leading pharmaceutical and vaccine companies BioNTech/Pfizer and Valneva that are developing innovative new vaccines to protect people against Covid-19. The Government has also secured access to treatments containing Covid-19-neutralising antibodies from AstraZeneca to protect those who cannot receive vaccines such as cancer and immunocompromised patients.

As a result of these partnerships, England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland could have access to enough doses to vaccinate and protect priority groups identified, such as frontline health and social care workers and those at increased health risk.

With today's announcement, the Government has now secured access to three different types of Covid-19 vaccines that are being developed here and around the world, giving the UK the most likely chance of getting access to a safe and effective vaccine at the quickest speed.

The Government has also today launched the NHS Covid-19 vaccine research registry. This new website will enable people in the UK to play their part by volunteering for future vaccine studies.

The new online service will allow members of the public to register their interest and be contacted to participate in clinical studies. To enable large-scale vaccine studies to take place across the UK, the aim is to get 500,000 people signed up by October, which is considered vital in the fight against coronavirus.

Clinical studies with hundreds of thousands of volunteers will help scientists and researchers better understand the effectiveness of each

vaccine candidate and will considerably speed up efforts to discover a safe and workable vaccine.

The Government is also working with ZOE, the health science company using data driven research and behind the popular symptom study app and site, to look at collaborating around vaccine studies and to help their volunteers hear about how to sign up to the NHS registry.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The hunt to find a vaccine is a truly global endeavour and we are doing everything we can to ensure the British public get access to a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine as soon as possible.

This new partnership with some of the world's foremost pharmaceutical and vaccine companies will ensure the UK has the best chance possible of securing a vaccine that protects those most at risk.

The public can also play their part in vaccine research through the new NHS vaccine research register. By signing up and participating in important clinical studies, together we can speed up the search for a vaccine and end the pandemic sooner.

Through its partnership with Valneva, which has a factory in Livingston, Scotland, the UK Government is expected to contribute to UK clinical studies costs and is negotiating funding to expand Valneva's Scottish facility. This increased manufacturing capacity could potentially supply up to 100 million vaccine doses to the UK and internationally. This will create high-skilled jobs in the local area and contribute significantly to the local economy.

The Livingston facility is in addition to the new Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC) which is currently under construction in Oxfordshire thanks to a £93 million investment from the Government. When completed in summer 2021, the facility will have flexible capacity to manufacture vaccine doses at scale.

Chair of the Vaccine Taskforce Kate Bingham said:

The Vaccine Taskforce is investing in a diverse portfolio of vaccine candidates to maximise the chances of finding a vaccine quickly that meets the UK's rigorous regulatory and safety standards. The fact that we have so many promising candidates already shows the unprecedented pace at which we are moving. But I urge against being 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.

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer and National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) head said:

Thanks to COVID-19 patients' willingness to take part in treatment studies, we've been able to identify treatments that work and ones that don't, which has improved patient care world-wide. Now that there are several promising vaccines on the horizon, we need to call again on the generosity of the public to help find out which potential vaccines are the most effective. Using a new NHS website developed in partnership between the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and NHS Digital, people across the UK can register their interest to be approached to join a vaccine study. Please go to the website and consider volunteering.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

A safe and effective vaccine is our best hope of defeating coronavirus and returning to life as normal.

We have some of our best scientists and researchers working on this, but members of the public have a vital role to play too. So I urge everyone who can to back the national effort and sign up to the NHS COVID-19 vaccine research registry to help find a vaccine as soon as possible.

Every volunteer will be doing their bit towards finding a vaccine for COVID-19 that will have the potential to save millions of lives around the world and bring this pandemic to an end.

Today's announcement follows 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.

As part of a wider £131 million investment by the Government, support has also been given to Imperial College London to develop their vaccine candidate, which started human studies in June.

In addition, the UK Government has committed £250m to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) – the biggest investment of any country – to support equitable and affordable access to new coronavirus vaccines and treatments around the world.

Notes to editors

The Government has today agreed the following deals:

1. BioNTech/Pfizer – this is their first binding agreement signed with any government, and the UK has secured 30 million doses.

2. Valneva – in principle agreement for 60 million doses. If the vaccine is proven to be safe, effective and suitable, the UK has secured an option to acquire a further 40 million doses.
3. AstraZeneca – in principle agreement for one million doses of a treatment containing Covid-19 neutralising antibodies to protect those who cannot receive vaccines such as cancer and immunocompromised patients.

The three different vaccine classes that the Government has secured to date for the UK are adenoviral vaccines (Oxford/AstraZeneca), mRNA vaccines (BioNTech/Pfizer, Imperial) and inactivated whole virus vaccines (Valneva). The Government has also secured a treatment containing Covid-19 neutralising antibodies (AstraZeneca).

About the Vaccine Taskforce

The Vaccine Taskforce (VTF) was set up under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in May 2020, to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines as soon as possible, while working with partners to support international access to successful vaccines. This is to place the UK at the forefront of global vaccine research, development, manufacture and distribution.

The Vaccine Taskforce comprises a dedicated team of private sector industry professionals and officials from across government who are working at speed to build a portfolio of promising vaccine candidates that can end the global pandemic. It is chaired by biotech and life sciences expert Kate Bingham, who was appointed by the Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The Vaccine Taskforce's approach to securing access to vaccines is through:

1. procuring the rights to a diverse range of promising vaccine candidates to spread risk and optimise chances for success;
2. providing funding for clinical studies, diagnostic monitoring and regulatory support to rapidly evaluate vaccines for safety and efficacy; and
3. providing funding and support for manufacturing scale-up and fill and finish at risk so that the UK has vaccines produced at scale and ready for administration should any of these prove successful.

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.

For more information see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/priority-groups-for-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccination-advice-from-the-jcvi>