

New UKHSA laboratory will 'define future pandemic response' with pioneering COVID-19 vaccines and variants research

News story

The world-class facility at UKHSA's Porton Down site is dedicated to the development and testing of new coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines.



A new world-class UKHSA research facility dedicated to the development and testing of new COVID-19 vaccines has opened at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Porton Down site, in Salisbury.

The £27 million Robinson Building was officially opened by Health Secretary Sajid Javid and UKHSA CEO, Professor Dame Jenny Harries, on 17 February.

The 2-storey, 22,000sqft building is one of two facilities that make up a new £65 million Vaccine Evaluation Centre, built to help develop and license new vaccines and be a global leader in testing against future variants of the virus.

The project is fully funded by the Vaccine Taskforce, a joint unit between the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department of Health and Social Care.

Research undertaken at the facility will include:

- clinical testing to support regulatory licensing of new COVID-19 vaccines
- research and data gathering to inform government decisions on future vaccination policies
- performing risk assessments on variants of concern, including those with potential vaccine escape

Professor Dame Jenny Harries, CEO of UKHSA, said:

These new world-class facilities will help further establish UKHSA and its Porton Down site as a global leader of vaccine testing and variant research in the fight against COVID-19.

The work undertaken at the Vaccine Evaluation Centre will define the UK's future pandemic response as we help develop the next generation of vaccines to protect against this ever-mutating virus.

Vaccines are one of the most important weapons we have against COVID-19 and they have prevented countless deaths and hospitalisations through this pandemic. Our teams will use these new facilities to ensure we stay on the front foot in protecting against future threats.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Over the course of the pandemic, our country has earned a global reputation as a pioneer in world-class vaccine development and variant research.

This state-of-the-art facility is one of two that together make up a new £65 million Vaccine Evaluation Centre that will be critical in bolstering the UK's future pandemic response, helping to keep us safe for years to come.

It's thanks to the research carried out at Porton Down and other vital sites across the UK that tens of millions of British people are protected from the virus as we learn to live with COVID-19.

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