

Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine authorised by UK medicines regulator

The Government has today accepted the recommendation from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to authorise Oxford University/AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine for use. This follows rigorous clinical trials and a thorough analysis of the data by experts at the MHRA, which has concluded that the vaccine has met its strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will also publish its latest advice for the priority groups to receive this vaccine.

The NHS has a clear vaccine delivery plan and decades of experience in delivering large scale vaccination programmes. It has already vaccinated hundreds of thousands of patients with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and its roll out will continue. Now the NHS will begin putting their extensive preparations into action to roll out the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine.

Throughout this global pandemic we have always been guided by the latest scientific advice. Having studied evidence on both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccines, the JCVI has advised the priority should be to give as many people in at-risk groups their first dose, rather than providing the required two doses in as short a time as possible.

Everyone will still receive their second dose and this will be within 12 weeks of their first. The second dose completes the course and is important for longer term protection.

From today the NHS across the UK will prioritise giving the first dose of the vaccine to those in the most high-risk groups. With two vaccines now approved, we will be able to vaccinate a greater number of people who are at highest risk, protecting them from the disease and reducing mortality and hospitalisation.

The JCVI's independent advice is that this approach will maximise the benefits of both vaccines. It will ensure that more at-risk people are able to get meaningful protection from a vaccine in the coming weeks and months, reducing deaths and starting to ease pressure on our NHS.

To aid the success of the vaccination programme, it is vital everyone continues to play their part, abides by the restrictions in their area and remembers hands, face, space so we can suppress this virus and allow the NHS to do its work without being overwhelmed.

Further details will be set out shortly.