

PM statement at coronavirus press conference: 18 March 2021

Our roadmap to freedom depends on the continued success of our vaccination programme,

and so it is reasonable for people to want to be continually reassured not only that our vaccines are safe and effective but also that we have the supply that we need.

So I want to address both points today

especially in the light of concerns you may have heard in some other countries about the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine.

First, the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has reviewed the evidence, as it does every week.

They have confirmed that the benefits of the vaccine in preventing COVID far outweigh any risks

and people should continue to get their vaccine when asked to do so

and June will say a little bit more about that in a moment.

It's also very important for our European friends that today the European Medicines Agency has come to a clear scientific conclusion

and I quote –

“this is a safe and effective vaccine.”

We also saw yesterday the evidence from Public Health England

that a single dose of either vaccine provides 60 per cent protection against getting COVID.

and reduces the chances of hospitalisation by 80 per cent

and the risk of death by 85 per cent.

So the Oxford jab is safe; and the Pfizer jab is safe – the thing that isn't safe is catching Covid – which is why it's so important that we all get our jabs as soon as our turn comes.

And as it happens, I'm getting mine tomorrow.

And the centre where I'm getting jabbed is currently using the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine for those receiving their first dose, and that is the one

I'll be having.

And let me also assure you –

if you come forwards after receiving your letter, we have the jabs for you.

We've always said that in a vaccination programme of this pace and this scale, some interruptions in supply are inevitable

and it is true that in the short term we are receiving fewer vaccines than we had planned for a week ago.

That is because of a delay in a shipment from the Serum Institute who are doing a herculean job in producing vaccines in such large quantities –

and because of a batch that we currently have in the UK that needs to be retested – as part of our rigorous safety programmes.

So as a result we will receive slightly fewer vaccines in April than in March.

But that is still more than we received in February

and the supply we do have will still enable us to hit the targets we have set.

That means that by 15 April we will be able to offer a first dose to all of you who are over 50, as well as those under 50 who are clinically vulnerable.

We will have the second doses that people need within the 12 week window – which means around 12 million people in April.

And we will still offer a first dose to every adult by the end of July.

So there is no change to the next steps of the roadmap.

We've now vaccinated over 25 million across our entire United Kingdom – more than the entire population of many countries

and our progress along the road to freedom continues unchecked.

We remain on track to reclaim the things we love,

to see our families and friends again,

to return to our local pubs, our gyms and sports facilities, and of course our shops,

all as long as the data continue to go in the right direction and we meet our four tests.

And the way to ensure this happens is to get that jab when your turn comes.

So let's get the job done!

Thank you very much.