

Presidential visit strengthens healthcare partnership with Kenya

- Health and Social Care Secretary signs Memorandum of Understanding with Kenya
- Qualified healthcare staff to join NHS in coming years to increase workforce numbers
- Builds on pandemic support to Kenya, including test genome sequencing and vaccine sharing, and 30-year research partnership

The MoU, signed at the Royal College of Physicians by the Health and Social Care Secretary and Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Labour Cooperation, Simon Chelugi, and attended by President Uhuru Kenyatta today [Thursday 29 July], builds on UK healthcare support provided to Kenya during the pandemic through the genomic sequencing of positive COVID-19 tests and 817,000 COVID-19 vaccine doses donated this week.

The MoU commits to a process for qualified but unemployed Kenyan nurses to be actively recruited to work in the NHS in the coming years, helping to deliver the government's manifesto commitment for 50,000 more nurses by 2024 and support the training of Kenya's healthcare professionals.

The UK has been working with Kenya for over 30 years to improve healthcare outcomes in both countries, with the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) and Wellcome Trust partnering together to establish a health research programme. This partnership has strengthened over the years and has proven to be pivotal throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with KEMRI and Oxford University working together in trialling the AstraZeneca vaccine, with support from the UK government.

The President's visit to the UK delivers on the Strategic Partnership between the two countries, agreed by President Kenyatta and Prime Minister Boris Johnson in January 2020.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

We have a historic and mutually respectful relationship with Kenya. This has been strengthened by working closely with Kenya during the pandemic and sharing UK vaccine doses to support Kenya's fight against COVID-19.

Our healthcare agreement will make the most of UK and Kenyan health expertise which will be beneficial to both countries, with the exchange of knowledge and training which will provide first class healthcare.

The UK is sharing expertise with Kenya to work together in identifying, tracking and responding to new COVID-19 variants, saving lives at home and

around the world. KEMRI is working with Public Health England as part of the UK's New Variant Assessment Platform (NVAP). The support includes reagents and equipment to increase in-country genome sequencing, technical advice, support with understanding biological data and training.

As the Prime Minister announced yesterday, the UK will offer 817,000 vaccine doses to Kenya to support efforts to combat the pandemic, with the first doses going this week. This is part of a delivery of 9 million Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines to COVAX.

Jane Marriott, the British High Commissioner to Kenya, said:

Our health partnership with Kenya is over 30 years old and growing stronger by the month. This new agreement on health workers allows us to share skills and expertise even further, and is a fantastic opportunity for Kenyans to work in the UK.

From COVID-19 vaccines and genomic sequencing, to exchanges on cancer research and treatment to help Kenya treatment more cancer patients at home, the UK has a long and proud history of support for Kenya's health sector. The signing of the Kenya-UK Health Alliance is the latest chapter in our flourishing partnership.

Backed by over £500m in UK government funding, COVAX, a global scheme to get COVID-19 vaccines to developing countries, has delivered 138 million doses to over 136 countries and territories. COVAX aims to deliver a staggering 1.8 billion COVID-19 vaccines around the world by early 2022.

Following the MoU, an Implementing Committee will develop an Action Plan to identify eligible nurses who may want to apply to work in Health and Care roles in the UK.

With around only 900 Kenyan staff currently in the NHS, the country has an ambition to be the 'Philippines of Africa' – with Filipino staff one of the highest represented overseas countries in the health service – due to the positive economic impact that well-managed migration can have on low to middle income countries.

The MoU also commits the two governments to explore working together to build capacity in Kenya's health workforce through managed exchange and training, depending on funding availability following the Spending Review.

Additionally, the prevention and management of cancer in Kenya will be improved through a partnership between Kenyatta University Teaching Research and Referral Hospital and the University of Manchester/Christie NHS Foundation Trust. In part, this will see the promotion of Kenya as an East African regional hub for cancer treatment.

- Kenya took part in vaccine trials of the AstraZeneca vaccine through KEMRI Kilifi, on Kenya's coast, to test the vaccine in different environments.

- In the NHS in England there are 894 Kenyans working across all roles. This makes Kenyans the 30th largest nationality group in the NHS.