

Sir Richard Sykes appointed chair of Vaccine Taskforce

Sir Richard will use his extensive experience in biotechnology and pharmaceuticals to lead the significant programme of work to find, procure and deliver vaccines to support the largest vaccination programme in British history.

He has previously held senior positions in a number of internationally recognised scientific, pharmaceutical and medical organisations, within both public and private sectors – including as chairman of organisations including the Royal Institution of Great Britain, King Edward VII's Hospital, UK Stem Cell Foundation and Singapore Biomedical Sciences International Advisory Council.

Sir Richard also conducted an independent review of the strategy and goals of the Vaccine Taskforce in December 2020.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The Vaccine Taskforce has done a tremendous job of securing the world's first clinically-proven vaccines for COVID-19 and it's fantastic that Sir Richard will be joining our renowned team with his extensive expertise.

I look forward to working closely with him going forward to ensure the COVID-19 vaccination programme continues to save lives and the country is well prepared for any health threats for years to come.

Sir Richard Sykes said:

I'm delighted to be joining a brilliant team to continue its incredibly important work on the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

I am determined to make sure the UK remains in the best possible position to beat this virus and has the tools it needs to respond to future public health threats.

Sir Richard will be overseeing the Vaccine Taskforce's work as the UK's vaccination programme continues at unprecedented pace. This includes helping with preparations for any potential booster programmes and working to make the UK a global centre of excellence for the next generation of vaccines.

The government established the taskforce in March 2020, and it reports directly to the Health and Social Care Secretary.

Over 41 million people in total across the UK have now been vaccinated with a first dose (79.2%), while more than 29 million people have had both doses (56.9%).

Sir Richard is a non-executive director of PDS Biotechnology. He is the president of the Research and Development Society and the Chancellor of Brunel University.

He was the chairman of NHS London, chairman of Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, chairman and CEO of GlaxoSmithKline, vice-chairman of Lonza Group, NetScientific plc, senior non-executive director of Eurasian National Resources Corp, director of Economic Development Board International (EDBI) Pte Ltd and a senior independent director of Rio Tinto plc.

He was the rector of Imperial College London. He is also a mentor at the Chairman Mentors international (CMi), who are global leaders in mentoring.