

UK and Australia agree to share vaccines to tackle global pandemic

- Next batch of more than 2 million UK doses delivered to vulnerable countries across Africa and Asia through COVAX
- Almost 9 in 10 over 16s in the UK have now received their first COVID-19 jab, and sharing will have no impact on UK rollout or any future booster programme

The UK and Australia will share COVID-19 vaccine doses to benefit each other's life-saving vaccine rollout programmes, the government has announced today.

The UK will send 4 million Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines to Australia to rapidly enhance their vaccination programme, with the first batch of 292,000 doses due to be shipped shortly. Australia will return the same overall volume of doses before the end of the year.

This arrangement is mutually beneficial and will ensure these Pfizer/BioNTech doses – which are not immediately required in the UK – are used to support international vaccination efforts. Sharing doses will mean Australia has access to vaccines they can put to use in their domestic campaign immediately and will enable the UK to better align timings of our own supply of vaccines with our future need – including for any booster programme or expansion of vaccines to teenagers, pending final advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Thanks to the early work of the Vaccine Taskforce, the UK has ensured sufficient vaccine supplies for its domestic rollout and supported the global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by improving access to vaccines.

Nearly 9 in 10 over 16s in the UK have received their first dose and over three-quarters have had both jabs. The government is confident in its vaccine supply and there will be no impact on the UK's ongoing COVID-19 vaccine rollout or any future booster programmes.

This agreement comes as the UK announces the latest batch of its Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines have been delivered through COVAX – the international scheme designed to ensure vaccines are available for poorer countries around the world. In total, over 9 million COVID-19 vaccines from the UK have now been sent to developing nations across Africa and Asia.

The COVAX doses are part of the 100 million vaccines the Prime Minister pledged the UK would share over the following year at June's G7 in Cornwall, with 30 million due to be sent by the end of the year.

More than 592,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine were delivered to Nigeria on 26 August, and COVAX is scheduled to transport more than a million doses to Pakistan, 499,000 doses to Ethiopia and 105,000 doses to Niger.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

Vaccines have built a strong wall of defence in the UK and we want to support nations around the world in recovering from COVID-19 and improving access to vaccines.

Our agreement with Australia will share doses at the optimum time to bolster both our countries' vaccination programmes.

By working with international partners to coordinate the rollout of life-saving vaccines, we will protect more people from this awful virus and save lives.

Last month, the UK delivered 3 million vaccines through COVAX to 11 African countries including Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia – as well as sending 4 million directly to countries in need including Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Cambodia, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab said:

The UK is donating vaccines to help protect more than 2 million of the most vulnerable people across Pakistan, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Niger, as part of the 100 million doses we've pledged to share with the world.

The UK continues to lead the global response to the pandemic because nobody is safe until everyone is safe. At least 80 million of the 100 million doses the UK will share will go to COVAX, with the rest going to countries directly. The donations will help meet the pledge that G7 leaders made to vaccinate the world.

- The doses going to Australia are not part of the commitment to send 100 million vaccines overseas.
- The UK has led the international response to COVID-19, including through kick-starting efforts to establish COVAX in 2020 and providing £548 million to fund vaccines for lower income countries through the scheme. It has so far delivered more than 215 million vaccine doses to over 138 countries and territories, including in 84 lower-middle income countries. COVAX aims to deliver 1.8 billion vaccines to lower-income countries by early 2022.