

Rosalind Franklin laboratory processes one millionth PCR test

Press release

One million COVID-19 tests have been processed at the new megalab in Leamington Spa using cutting-edge testing technology including top of the range robotics.



Opened in June 2021 the laboratory is part of the current Test and Trace network and is at the heart of the UK Health Security Agency's (UKHSA) plans for managing coronavirus (COVID-19), including through scaled up genome sequencing capacity.

In the coming weeks the laboratory will begin genotype assay testing to rapidly detect known COVID-19 mutations and genome sequencing to confirm known variants and identify any new mutations.

The megalab is the biggest of its kind in the UK and has created employment for local people, with 600 new staff already. Around 60% of staff hired so far are from within 30 miles of the laboratory site in Leamington Spa.

Chief Executive of the UKHSA Jenny Harries said:

This milestone is a real testament to the hard work, dedication and collaboration between teams across the public sector, academia and industry.

While the phenomenal vaccine rollout has helped to build a wall of defence across the country, testing and isolating when needed remains vital to controlling the spread of the virus and protecting one another.

The laboratory is using a robust programme of training to create and upskill scientists and is working closely with local universities to inspire students to choose a career in science, technology, engineering and mathematics

(STEM).

To date, 11 undergraduates from University of Warwick and Birmingham City University and 4 PhD students from University of Warwick have begun placements at the laboratory, gaining testing experience and developing their skills in a real world setting.

Published 8 October 2021

Last updated 8 October 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 8 October 2021

First published.

[UN Human Rights Council 48: UK statement on the resolution to establish a Climate Change Special Rapporteur](#)

Thank you Madam President.

We thank the core group presenting resolution L.27 for the positive and constructive approach they have taken toward negotiations on this pertinent issue.

The UK recognises the serious and unequivocal threat that climate change poses to our planet, and that it can have implications for the full enjoyment of human rights.

As incoming COP26 President – which our Prime Minister noted recently is a turning point for humanity – the UK remains firm that States should fully respect, protect and promote human rights in all climate change-related actions. The UK is clear that climate change can pose a risk to the lives and wellbeing of individuals and communities across the world. This includes its potential to disproportionately affect those in marginalised and vulnerable situations, including women and girls, those living in poverty, and indigenous peoples.

We recognise the seriousness of this issue. We believe that a new Special Rapporteur will help elevate the work of this Council on addressing the impact of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights. We have a strong record on addressing the linkages between human rights and climate change. We supported the first UN resolution on human rights and climate change in 2008. In 2015 we signed the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action. We

are committed to implementing the Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25. We will continue to make the link between human rights and climate change where appropriate, and we will continue to call on states to fulfil their human rights obligations whilst taking action to combat climate change.

Madam President, Our position during the negotiation of the resolution has been to ensure that the proposed mandate avoids duplicating the work of existing Special Rapporteurs and to ensure that it is focused on human rights. The UK has also emphasised that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, while relevant to climate change commitments, do not apply to human rights obligations.

We thank the Core Group for their constructive approach in incorporating our concerns and working across States to reach a robust text. As co-sponsors of this resolution, we welcome the mandate for a new Special Rapporteur and look forward to success in Glasgow in a few weeks time.

Thank you.

[Clinical trialists to be offered 'top-up' vaccine doses](#)

- Trialists will also be offered booster jabs, if eligible
- Move follows consultation with the independent JCVI and medical experts

Vaccine clinical trial participants are to be offered the option to get additional vaccine doses from next week, to ensure they can travel abroad to countries which currently only accept vaccination records with approved for deployment COVID-19 vaccinations.

The UK recognises those who are in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials as fully vaccinated for the purpose of certification, both domestic and international. The majority of other countries currently do not recognise clinical trial volunteers and require visitors to have been fully vaccinated with a vaccine that has been approved for deployment by the relevant medicines regulator.

The government has therefore taken the decision that those who are in COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials who have not had a vaccine that is approved for deployment will be given the opportunity to receive two additional doses of an approved vaccine. This will allow them to have the necessary certification status to travel abroad to countries which do not currently recognise trial vaccinations.

The additional doses will initially be offered to those taking part in the Novavax trial, which includes the vast majority of those in ongoing trials for vaccines not yet approved for deployment. The offer will then be rolled

out to participants in other relevant trials within the coming weeks. Novavax participants will be offered two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, with an eight-week interval between first and second doses.

In addition, people who have received both doses of a vaccine as part of a clinical trial will also be offered a booster jab, if eligible in line with the wider boosters advice from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). This is to ensure the protection they've received from vaccination as part of the trial is prolonged over the winter months.

This new approach, which will apply to England, has been developed with the independent experts on the JCVI and the chief investigators for the clinical trials.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Professor Jonathan Van-Tam said:

COVID-19 vaccine trials have been absolutely integral to our response to the virus, and as a result we now have our renowned vaccination programme, which continues to save lives. I urge as many people as possible to continue contributing to these trials.

The measures we have taken will allow UK COVID-19 vaccine trial participants to travel freely overseas once they have had the additional vaccinations. Those volunteers now have the flexibility to make a decision for themselves so they can, for example, visit loved ones abroad.

We should be very clear that the results from these trials benefit the whole world, and it has to be said that if more countries around the world had reciprocated by allowing UK volunteers to enjoy fully vaccinated status for overseas travel, these measures would not have been necessary.

As a separate issue, those in trials who are eligible for boosters should receive the booster dose in order to ensure the highest possible protection over winter.

The move follows the Health and Social Care Secretary's appeal to global health leaders last month at the G20 meeting for clinical trial pioneers to have their vaccination status recognised globally.

NHSX and NHS Digital are working at pace to reflect these doses in the COVID Pass for international travel as soon as possible and further details will be set out in due course. Given the value clinical trial participation adds to global public health and science, the UK already recognises trial participants as fully vaccinated and continues to urge other countries to do the same.

The government is working closely with international counterparts to ensure a longer-term solution can be reached for these individuals, and is in active conversations with other countries through groups such as the G7, the EU

Commission and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Letters will be sent out to clinical trial participants shortly, outlining further details and next steps. Participants will be contacted by the trial team, who can respond to any questions they may have, and should not contact their local NHS or GP. Vaccinations will most likely take place at hospital hubs.

Booster jabs for those eligible will be offered no earlier than six months after the individual's second dose.

Principle Investigator of the Novavax clinical trial Professor Paul Heath said:

I very much welcome this development on behalf of the more than 15,000 participants in the Novavax trial and my colleagues in the 35 UK trial sites.

For too long the participants have been disadvantaged in terms of international travel because this vaccine is not yet approved for deployment – but trial participants now have the flexibility to receive booster doses, or additional doses for travel purposes, if they wish to.

All clinical trial participants can already gain access to an NHS COVID Pass for domestic purposes. They should have received a letter confirming their participation in the specific vaccine study and confirming that they have the same protected status as someone who has received the approved vaccines. Participants should contact their clinical trial site if this is not the case.

There are around 52,000 people currently taking part in trials across the UK, with 21,000 given a vaccine not yet approved for deployment by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). Around 15,000 of these are taking part in the Novavax clinical trial.

The Vaccine Taskforce and the MHRA are working with the vaccine companies to help ensure their COVID-19 vaccines are authorised as quickly as possible, if they meet the high standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

The decision to license a vaccine is made by the MHRA, who must carefully, independently and scientifically review the data to ascertain how it protects people from COVID-19 and the level of protection it provides.

UN Human Rights Council 48: Explanation of Vote on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment

Thank you Madam President.

We thank the core group presenting resolution L.23 for the positive and constructive approach they have taken toward negotiations on this important and topical issue.

As part of our commitment to ambitious climate action, the United Kingdom is proud to be hosting COP26 and we are working with all parties, and others, to achieve an ambitious shared outcome.

The UK has a strong record on addressing the linkages between human rights and climate change. We supported the first UN resolution on human rights and climate change in 2008. In 2015 we signed the Geneva Pledge for Human Rights in Climate Action. We are committed to implementing the Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25. We have cosponsored resolution L.27 which creates a mandate for a new Special Rapporteur to focus on the interaction between human rights and climate change. We will continue to call on states to fulfil their human rights obligations whilst taking action to combat climate change.

The UK is concerned that climate change and environmental degradation can have implications for the full enjoyment of human rights. In some circumstances, it can pose a risk to the lives and wellbeing of individuals and communities. It can disproportionately affect those in marginalised and vulnerable situations, including women and girls, those living in poverty, and indigenous people.

Madam President, We share the ambition of the core group to tackle climate change and prevent environmental degradation, which is why we will be voting 'Yes' today.

However, the recognition of the right in the resolution is without due regard to the formation of international human rights law and without prejudice to the UK's legal position. A human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment has not been agreed in any human rights treaty and it is yet to emerge as a customary right. Recognising rights without due consideration and a common understanding at an international level of what they comprise creates ambiguity. Individuals cannot know what they can legitimately claim from the State, and the State has no clear understanding of the protection it is obliged to afford to the individual. With this in mind we would like to emphasise that human rights resolutions are not legally binding instruments, and as such the recognition of the right in this resolution does not bind States to its terms. As mentioned, we will vote in

favour today, but this is without prejudice to the position to be taken by the United Kingdom in future.

The United Kingdom's commitment to tackling climate change is resolute. Our leadership in this area is well known and we are focussing all our efforts behind a successful and inclusive COP26 summit in Glasgow. As our Prime Minister has made clear, this must be a turning point for humanity.

Thank you.

[Prime Minister appoints expert supply chain advisor](#)

- Sir David Lewis appointed in advisory capacity until end of the year as Government's supply chain advisor
- Former CEO of Tesco brings wealth of industry experience and expertise
- Role to assess and resolve acute supply issues facing businesses across the UK

The Prime Minister has appointed Sir David Lewis, former CEO of Tesco, as the UK Government's supply chain adviser.

Dave Lewis brings with him a wealth of industry knowledge and expertise to the new role. He will advise the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on both immediate improvements and any necessary long term changes to UK supply chains for goods, and will work with government officials to quickly resolve acute, short term issues.

This includes both identifying the causes of current blockages and pre-empting potential future ones, and advising on resolutions either through direct government action or through industry with Government support. Building on the current government approach, he will work closely with industry to improve government access to data and build the most effective methods into future responses to blockages.

Dave Lewis will also co-chair the new Supply Chain Advisory Group, consisting of external experts in the field, and the new Industry Taskforce, to ensure those on the ground have the opportunity to voice their concerns and advise on the most efficient resolutions.

Businesses have faced a range of challenges over recent months as they recover from the global pandemic which has impacted supply chains across Europe and around the world. The government has acted quickly to introduce a series of measures to relieve pressure on vital supply chains, including by streamlining the testing process for HGV drivers, creating skills bootcamps to train up HGV drivers, as well as introducing short-term visas for fuel

drivers, food haulage drivers and poultry workers to ease pressures facing these supply chains.

Dave Lewis will work closely with the Prime Minister, No10 and the Treasury, and will be based in the Cabinet Office. He has been appointed until the end of the year, beginning in the role from Monday 11 October.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said:

I'm pleased that Sir David Lewis is joining the team who have been working on future proofing our supply chains across the United Kingdom as we recover from the pandemic.

There are currently global supply issues which we are working with industry to mitigate and Dave brings a wealth of experience which will help us continue to protect our businesses and supply chains.