

# Secretary of State for Health and Social Care provides an update on step 4

Thank you Mr Speaker.

Before I update the House on the pandemic, I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the England football team for making history and for the way they've brought us all together with their skill and spirit over the past few weeks.

Last night's result may have not been the one many of us were hoping for, but they played like heroes, and the nation is proud of each and every one of them.

I also want to condemn the shameful racism experienced by several members of the England team after the match. Racism has no place in football, or in our society, and I know the House will agree that we must show zero tolerance of this appalling behaviour.

Mr Speaker, with permission, I'd like to turn to our path out of this pandemic. All the way through our fight against this virus, we've looked forward to the day when we can roll back legal restrictions and get closer to normal life. Now, thanks to the shared sacrifice of the British people, and the protective wall of our vaccination programme, we've made huge advances.

Today, I'd like to update the House on the next decision in front of us: Whether to proceed to step 4 of our roadmap next Monday?

As I set out to the House last week, this will be a major milestone for this country, taking us another step closer to the life we all used to live. It means carefully removing more of the restrictions that have governed our daily lives. Like how many people you can meet how many people can attend weddings and how many visitors can see loved ones in care homes.

We've all been yearning to get here, and we all want this to be a one-way journey.

So we've acted in a measured way, taking each step at a time, and looking at the latest data, and our four tests, before deciding whether to proceed.

Mr Speaker, the first test is the success of our vaccination programme.

Ever since the 8th of December last year, when the world's first clinically authorised vaccine was given right here in the UK, we've been putting jabs in arms at a phenomenal pace. Giving over 80 million doses in just seven months. We've given more doses per capita than any other large nation. And as a result, around 9 in 10 adults in the UK now have COVID-19 antibodies which are so important in helping our bodies to fight the virus.

To bolster this protective wall even further, we made the tough, yet necessary decision, to take a four-week pause to step 4, so we could protect even more people before easing restrictions. And since making this decision, we've been able to give 7 million extra doses across the UK.

We pledged that by the 19th of July, we'd have offered every adult a first dose of the vaccine, and have given two doses to two thirds of all adults.

I'm pleased to inform the House that we're on track to beat both of these targets. So, as we make this crucial decision, we're in a stronger position than ever before.

Mr Speaker, we're looking not just at how many jabs we've put in arms, but what impact they're having on hospitalisations and the loss of loved ones—and this is our second test.

There is increasing evidence that the vaccine has severely weakened this link – the link that was once a grim inevitability.

Data from Public Health England estimates that two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine offers protection of around 96 per cent against hospitalisation meaning fewer COVID patients in hospital beds, and fewer people mourning the loss of a loved one.

And they also estimate that the vaccination programme in England has prevented between 7.5 million and 8.9 million infections over 46,000 hospitalisations and around 30,000 people losing their lives.

All because of the protection that the vaccines can bring.

Mr Speaker, our third test is around whether infection rates would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS. And I want to be open about what the data is telling us, and why we've reached the decision we have.

Cases are rising, propelled by the new, more transmissible Delta variant. The average number of daily new cases is over 26,000 and this has doubled over the past 11 days. And sadly, the case numbers will get a lot worse before they get better. We could reach 100,000 cases a day later in the summer.

Hospitalisations are also rising, with sustained growth over the past month – and once again, they will rise too. But we should be encouraged that hospitalisations are far lower than they were at this point during the previous wave.

Just as we should be encouraged that people over 65 who are more likely to have had both doses of a vaccine make up 31 per cent of Covid admissions in the last week, compared to 61 per cent in January.

This is further evidence that our vaccination programme is doing its job and protecting our NHS. And as more people get the jab, our protective wall will get stronger still.

We will stay vigilant and keep a close eye on the data, as well as the impact

of long-COVID, where we're investing £50 million into research.

But on the basis of the evidence in front of us, we do not believe that infection rates will put unsustainable pressure on the NHS. It's so important that everyone does their bit in helping the NHS to stand strong.

And the best thing we can all do to protect the NHS, and each other, is to get the jab, and crucially, get both doses.

Our final test is that the risks are not fundamentally changed by new variants of concern.

We've seen from the growth of the Delta variant, which now makes up 99 per cent of new cases, just how quickly a new variant can take hold.

However, although the Delta variant is more transmissible than the Alpha variant, the evidence showing two doses of the vaccine appears to be just as effective against hospitalisation.

But we know that the greatest risk to the progress we've made is the possibility of another new variant – especially one that can escape immunity, and puncture the protective wall of our vaccination programme.

So even as we look to ease restrictions, we'll maintain our tough measures at the borders and we'll expand our capacity for genomic sequencing, already one of the largest in the world, so we can come down hard on new variants.

Mr Speaker, we have looked closely at the data, against these four tests. And we firmly believe that this is the right time to get our nation closer to normal life. So we will move to the next stage on our roadmap on July 19th.

To those who say "Why take this step now?", I say "if not now, then when?".

There will never be a perfect time to take this step, because we simply cannot eradicate this virus. Whether we like it or not, coronavirus is not going away.

But moving forward next week, supported by the arrival of summer and the school holidays, gives us the best possible chance of a return to normal life.

If we wait longer, then we risk pushing the virus towards winter, when the virus will have an advantage, or worse still, we risk not opening up at all.

We delayed step 4 by four weeks so we could build our vaccine wall even higher. We believe this wall means we can withstand a summer wave. And while the wall would be higher still in winter, we know the wave would be much more dangerous.

So while we know there are risks with any decision, this is the most responsible decision we could take.

This step forward is about balancing the harms caused by COVID, with the

undeniable harms that restrictions bring.

These restrictions were vital to protect the NHS. But we must be upfront about the impact of keeping them, just as we are about removing them just as we are about removing them.

The rise in domestic violence, the impact on mental health, undiagnosed cancer to name just a few.

So, we'll ease restrictions next week, while at the same time maintaining the defences we've built against this virus.

Like our vaccination programme – where we still have more young people to protect our work to support the most vulnerable and the contingency plans that can help us stay one step ahead of the virus.

But this is not the end of the road.

It's the start of a new phase of continued caution, where we live with the virus and manage the risks.

And we're publishing a plan today, showing the safe and gradual approach we'll be taking throughout the summer. It includes details of how we'll be encouraging businesses and large events to use certification in high risk settings to limit the risk of infection guidance for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable and details of a review we'll be conducting in September, to assess our preparedness for autumn and winter.

Mr Speaker, as we make these changes, it's so important that people act with caution and personal responsibility. For example, everyone should return to work gradually if working from home meet people outside where possible and it's expected and recommended that people should wear face coverings, unless they're exempt, in crowded, indoor settings like public transport.

Mr Speaker, I also wanted to update the House on our policies for self-isolation. Last week, I announced to the House that, from the 16th of August, double jabbed adults and under 18s will no longer need to self-isolate, if they're a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

Until then, with cases rates expected to rise it's vital that we make sure our systems for self-isolation are proportionate and that they reflect the protection given by our vaccination programme.

As part of this approach, we'll be working with clinicians, and the NHS, to explore what more can be done for colleagues in patient facing roles. This would only be used in exceptional circumstances, where the self-isolation of fully vaccinated close contacts could directly impact the safety of patients. So we can keep our vital services going as we safely and gradually get closer to normal life.

Mr Speaker, the 19th of July will mark another step forward in our road to recovery. Getting here has been hard fought and long awaited. But this battle isn't over yet.

Let's move forward in a confident but measured way, so we can get closer to normal life, and protect the progress we've all made.

I commend this statement to the House.

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## **British Embassy Lima: Civil Society Call for Proposals 2021/2022**

### **Promoting Women's political participation**

The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) work worldwide to advance gender equality by promoting and supporting the political empowerment of women.

Women represent half of the world's population but although the rate of women represented in national parliament has increased globally, they are still underrepresented. Proportional representation matters, as research indicates that women legislate differently compared to men and place greater priority on women's rights and issues, as well as policies that reflect the priorities of ethnic and racial minorities.

In the Peruvian General Elections held in April 2021, a record-high number of women were elected to serve as legislators in Peru's Congress from 2021-2026 as a result of a new law making gender parity on electoral lists compulsory. A law against political harassment was also approved recently, although implementation is pending.

In line with FCDO policy goals, the British Embassy in Lima is seeking to fund projects to promote women's political participation. In particular, we would be interested in funding initiatives to support the implementation of the Gender Parity Law and the Law against Political Harassment, as well as initiatives that build capacity for Peruvian women legislators and their staff members to legislate on matters to promote gender equality.

International and civil-society organisations are invited to submit proposals for projects of up to £12,000 (S/.53,170), which should be implemented between September 2021 and March 2022. We encourage projects that complement or build on existing initiatives. Value for money is an important selection criterion, and implementers should deliver 85% of the project cost by December 2021.

### **How to bid?**

Proposals must be submitted using authorised forms and include an activity-based budget (ABB) in Peruvian Nuevo Soles (documents below). Proposals without an ABB will not be considered. Proposals should be submitted in

English or Spanish to the email address: BEProjectsPeru@fcdo.gov.uk

Deadline to submit proposals is midnight on Sunday 15 August 2021.

Only successful bidders will be contacted via email by 30 August. If you have not heard from us by then, your proposal was unsuccessful. We are not able to provide feedback on unsuccessful proposals.

### **What to Include in the Bid Form?**

- Overview of project or activity
- How it fits with the UK's approach to the relevant priority; and why the UK should fund the project or activity
- How the project or activity will create an impact and lead to change
- Rationale– including why the project or activity should take place now
- Where relevant, evidence of support from Peruvian government actors for the project or activity and that it complements their own strategy
- Information about how the impact will be sustained after the project or activity has been completed

### **Indicative timetable (subject to change)**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activities</b>
12 July 2021	Publication of call of proposals
Midnight Sunday 15 August 2021	Deadline to submit proposals
27 August 2021	British Embassy Lima e-mail notification to successful bidders
30 August 2021	Contract and financial management begin
September 2021 after completion of administrative processes	Projects activities start

### **Documents for Downloading**

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## **Government Science and Engineering (GSE): a profession where STEM talent is nurtured and celebrated**

### **News story**

The Government Science and Engineering profession refreshed the Diversity and Inclusion Action Group (DIAG) in June last year.



The GSE profession refreshed the Diversity and Inclusion Action Group (DIAG) in June last year. DIAG aims to bring together diverse members from various organisations across the profession to work together and support the GSE Profession Strategy to deliver excellence in science and engineering. The group is committed to championing equity and inclusion amongst the thousands of scientists and engineers that make up the profession's diverse workforce. The group recognises the contribution made by scientists and engineers who have been working incredibly hard to provide essential services in response to the pandemic. It is important for us to thank our colleagues and acknowledge their dedication to the benefit of us all in society.

Last year, we listened to feedback from our members to gain insight into the things that are important to them and what improvements we could make to increase diversity representation and their experience in the workplace. We built on these responses by way of action planning and proposing a series of interventions. Realising that we could achieve more in smaller groups we implemented focused sub groups to deliver discrete projects. We are action focused with volunteers from across government working together to share learning and we are determined to improve inclusion and diversity in all areas of GSE.

The collaboration, creativity, dedication and energy by all those assisting is greatly appreciated. The group has been working on a series of priorities focusing on celebrating and advocating for increased diversity and inclusion. Delivery of this has been by way of talks, colleagues sharing their experiences by role modelling, feature blogs, events and recognising individual contributions to GSE via the GSE Inspirational science and engineering awards.

Moving forward we will continue to work on the key interventions members helped identify in the focus groups. This includes reviewing the mentoring pilot scheme and continuing to advocate for diversity and inclusion in all areas of GSE.

We achieve much more working together in multidisciplinary and diverse teams. We are committed to continue to help build the GSE workforce where a vast range of talents are nurtured and celebrated. I am proud of working with you as a scientist and a Civil Servant. It is a privilege to work with so many skilled individuals delivering world class science and engineering.

By Vicki Chalker (Public Health England), Head of Science and Engineering

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## **New life for Platform 1's Pacer as it is lifted into Huddersfield Station**

- Platform 1 mental health charity in Huddersfield takes delivery of 19-tonne restored train carriage, delivered by crane
- charity won a Department for Transport (DfT) competition to 'Transform a Pacer' and will use it for an educational kitchen
- competition marked the end of the line for the unpopular Pacer trains on the Northern network

A retired train carriage was lowered into position at Huddersfield Station for local charity [Platform 1](#) on 10 July 2021, breathing new life into a Pacer train and giving it a new permanent home.

The 19-tonne carriage was lifted into position overnight by a crane positioned on St George's Street, hoisting it over the high wall into the station.

The vehicle is the second of the retired trains to be delivered to community projects as part of DfT's [Transform a Pacer competition](#) in the north of England after another vehicle was recently delivered to a primary school in Bradford to create a new science laboratory.

The competition means that after 3 decades of service to northern communities, retired Pacer trains will now serve them in new and exciting ways that are focused on bringing the community together.

The train delivered to Platform 1 was provided by rolling stock company Porterbrook and has been in service since 1986, travelling over 3 million miles across the network in that time. It was installed with the help of Network Rail teams, who managed the logistics of putting it into place. Network Rail also donated the railway sleepers for the Pacer to sit on.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton Harris said:

It's not every day you get to see a train suspended metres above a station. This has been a fantastic project for everyone involved and I am so pleased that this Pacer will support the exceptional and important work Platform 1 do in the local community.



Now that Pacers are off the network with modern, new trains running in their place, passengers will be pleased to know the Pacer at the platform is retired from service, but still helping the people of Huddersfield.

Gez Walsh, Project Leader at Platform 1, said:

The Pacer trains may not have been popular in their working life, but this one will be cherished in its retirement.

This train will now take people on a journey of development and deliver them to a more happy, secure life.

Mary Grant, CEO of Porterbrook, said:

We were delighted to support DfT's Transform a Pacer competition and particularly pleased that one of the winners is a charity in Huddersfield devoted to supporting mental wellbeing.

Many organisations from across the industry have joined together with Porterbrook and DfT to deliver this Pacer vehicle to the Platform 1 site, including Bam Nuttall, Harry Needle Railroad Company (HNRC), Network Rail and Northern.

I would like to thank all those involved as they have shown, yet again, how the railway works together to deliver for the communities we serve.

Other winners include Airedale NHS Trust, which will use the vehicle to improve local NHS services, transforming their carriage into a mixed-use, non-clinical space to improve the experience of patients using Airedale General Hospital.

This will have a particular focus on helping children and families, as well as those suffering from dementia and it will provide a unique communal environment to support patients during their stay.

Tricia Williams, Chief Operating Officer at Northern, said:

We're delighted to be able to make a positive impact by helping Platform 1 expand the already outstanding support they offer to the wider Huddersfield community.

Our Pacers gave many decades' service to those same communities and now that they've been replaced on our network by brand new trains, it's great to see one of those old carriages being given a new lease of life as a hub for Platform 1.

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# Pharmacists jailed for a combined total of 57 months for illegal supply of prescription medicines

Press release

Pharmacists Dean Dookhan and Narvinder Nandra diverted hundreds of thousands of doses of prescription medicines, controlled as Class C drugs, from the legal supply chain onto the black market.



Two pharmacists were sentenced at Birmingham Crown Court today. Dookhan and Nandra received sentences of 27 months and 30 months respectively for diverting hundreds of thousands of doses of addictive prescription drugs from pharmacies during 2015 and 2016. Their black-market value is estimated at around £600,000.

Following an investigation led by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), investigators visited the pharmacy. Records found on the premises showed that, of the hundreds of thousands of doses of Zolpidem purchased from wholesalers, only a small percentage had been dispensed against prescriptions. This left almost 600,000 pills unaccounted for. Dookhan later admitted diverting the medicines to another pharmacy, while Nandra claimed that they were exported to Trinidad.

Grant Powell, the MHRA Enforcement officer leading the case, said:

It is a serious criminal offence to sell controlled, unlicensed or prescription-only medicines in this way.

Anyone who sells medicines illegally is not only breaking the law but clearly shows a total disregard for the health and welfare of anyone who may purchase them.

Prescription only medicines are potent and should only be taken under medical supervision. Their sale outside the legal supply route could lead to vulnerable people being exploited.

We work closely with regulatory and law enforcement partners to identify and take action against those involved, including bringing a criminal prosecution if necessary.

If you think you have been offered a medicine illegally or have any information about suspected or known illegal trading in medicines, please contact the MHRA.

## **Notes to Editor**

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.

If you think you've been offered a medicine illegally or have any information about suspected or known illegal dealings with medicines, please contact us, the MHRA, on 020 3080 6330 (weekdays 9am to 5pm) or out-of-hours on 07795 825 727. Or email us at [casereferrals@mhra.gov.uk](mailto:casereferrals@mhra.gov.uk)

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