

Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 June 2021

Good afternoon and welcome to Downing Street for today's coronavirus briefing.

I'm joined to my left by Dr Nikki Kanani, Medical Director for Primary Care at NHS England, and Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England (PHE).

Today I'd like to bring you the latest on our vaccination programme, and our work to get even more people protected from this deadly disease.

We've come a long way since we gave the world's first clinically authorised vaccine just over 6 months ago.

Since that very special day, we've now given a first dose to 82 per cent of all adults in the UK, and today I can confirm we've reached the milestone of 3 in 5 of all adults getting the protection of a second dose.

Because we've been able to move at such pace, any adult in the UK is now able to book their first dose.

In the 2 days after we opened up our booking system to anyone over the age of 18, there were 6 appointments being booked every second and I've been absolutely thrilled to see videos of young people coming forward at some of our major vaccination events last weekend, and I'm sure they will be doing the same this coming weekend.

The enthusiasm is making a huge difference.

We've already given first doses to almost half of all 25 to 29 year olds in England, and only a week after the programme opened up to all adults on Friday a third of people aged between 18 and 24 have had their first dose.

To all the young people who've stepped up, I want to say a huge thank you. You've protected yourself, you've protected your families and you've protected your communities.

Because the one thing we know is the vaccines are making a real difference, the vaccines are our way out of this pandemic.

The latest data show that the vaccination programme has already saved over 14,000 lives, and I can share with you that now it has prevented over 44,500 hospitalisations in England alone – that's 2,500 hospitalisations prevented in the past 2 weeks.

And when you look into the make-up of hospital admissions you can clearly see

our vaccination programme is working.

Can I have the slide on screen, please.

In January, people over 65 made up the vast majority of hospital admissions, that is why we vaccinated them early in the programme. If you look at the most recent data they show that now they make up less than a third.

So when we look at the protection that the vaccines deliver it is clear from that slide that it is extremely effective, especially with 2 doses, against the Delta variant.

Recently published data from PHE looked at around 500 hospital admissions with the Delta variant.

Of these admissions, 324 patients, so over 60%, were unvaccinated; 87 had received only one dose of a vaccine and 40 had received 2 doses.

So fewer than one in 10 people in hospital with the Delta variant had received 2 doses.

This really does show the importance of getting the jab, and critically, getting both doses.

So our mission is now to get as many people protected as we can.

And protect them as quickly as we can.

Last week we took the difficult but I think essential decision to pause step 4 in our roadmap for 4 weeks, with a review of the data after 2 weeks. And we will absolutely have that review and share that with the nation.

We're going to use these 4 weeks to give our NHS a bit more time so we can get those remaining jabs into the arms of those who need them.

Let me give you an example of why it is so important.

Two weeks ago there were over 2 million over 50s in England who'd had a first dose but not their second dose.

Now 2 weeks' later it's under 900,000.

This pause has saved thousands of lives, and will continue to do so, by allowing us to get more of the second doses into arms of those most vulnerable to COVID before restrictions are eased further.

We've also reduced the interval from first to second jab for over 40s to 8 weeks and I'd urge everyone watching, if you are over 40, come forward and have your second jab early. You can do that by going online through the National Booking Service, or by calling 119.

We've seen phenomenal uptake and enthusiasm for our vaccination programme so far.

The UK has one of the highest rates of vaccine confidence in the world.

9 in 10 people say they've taken the vaccine, or that they want to take the vaccine

It's something we can all be proud of, but it's no accident.

We got here because we've actively, and Nikki will very much explain how we've done it, gone out to really address people's genuine concerns, and have open two-way conversations about these vaccines – about how safe they are and how important they are in saving lives. And because we've worked with local communities on the design of the vaccination programme, so we can deliver it in a way that works for people in a place they trust by people they trust.

Our vaccination programme has been delivered in the community, by the community, for the community and it's been brilliant to see vaccinations being given in churches, synagogues, mosques, gurdwaras, and many other pillars of the community all across the whole UK. And to see the determined effort of the brilliant people, real partners on the ground, to reach communities where uptake is lower.

This concerted community-led effort has truly paid off, and we're seeing positive results.

If you look at the latest ONS data, vaccine hesitancy has halved in the past few months among black and black British people since February and it's halved among Asian and Asian British people too in the same period.

This is real progress. But we know there's more to do.

As we look to tackle and take on those final steps, those hard yards on the road to recovery, we need to make sure as many people are protected as possible.

So we're intensifying, doubling down our efforts to get more people to come forward and we are seeing real results in places like Bolton and of course in the North West and elsewhere.

We're honing in on areas where uptake is lower, for example in London, where the percentage of first doses is slightly behind other areas of the UK.

The London team is doing an incredible job and I can confirm today we are supporting them with a London Summit, that will take place on Friday, bringing together senior officials, the NHS in London, the Mayor of London, clinical experts and community leaders from across the capital so we can see what has worked and how we can learn from it and scale it, and focus on how we can boost uptake over these crucial few weeks ahead of the 19 July.

Thanks to our vaccination programme, our incredible NHS, this country is getting a little bit safer every day.

Whatever your age, whatever your background, the vaccine will protect you, it will protect your family and all the people you care about.

So, please, come forward, and get both doses so we can take the final steps on our road to recovery. Thank you.

Now I'd like to hand over to Dr Ramsay to talk us through the latest data and then we'll hear from Nikki Kanani.

3 in 5 UK adults receive both doses of COVID-19 vaccine

- Public urged to come forward for second doses to help protect against the threat of new variants
- More than 82.5% of people in the UK also now vaccinated with a single dose

More than three in five adults in the UK have received a second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, securing the fullest possible protection, as the vaccination programme continues at unprecedented pace and scale.

With 75,188,795 million doses administered in total, 43,448,680 million people across the UK have now been vaccinated with a first dose (82.5%), while 31,740,115 million people have had both doses (60.3%).

Recent analysis by Public Health England (PHE) shows that COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective against hospitalisation from the Delta (B.1.61.2) variant. The analysis suggests the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is 96% effective and the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is 92% effective against hospitalisation after both doses.

The government met its target of offering a vaccine to the most vulnerable by 15 April and is on track to offer a first dose to all adults by 19 July, two weeks earlier than planned. NHS England has extended the offer of a vaccine to everyone aged 18 and over.

By 19 July, all those aged 40 and over and the clinically extremely vulnerable, who received their first dose by mid-May, will have been offered their second dose.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The vaccination team have been working incredibly hard to provide people with much-needed protection from this life-threatening disease.

With more and more evidence emerging on just how effective two

doses of our vaccines are in protecting against the Delta variant, it's a great to see three in five adults have been double jabbed, so we're well on our way to the whole country getting the fullest possible protection.

We're so close now to ensuring the entire adult population is protected – now everyone aged 18 and above can make an appointment, so make sure you book in for your first and second doses as soon as possible.

The successful vaccination programme is weakening the link between cases and hospitalisations. The latest evidence shows that two doses are needed to provide effective protection against the Delta variant.

To ensure people have the fullest possible protection against COVID-19, second doses for all over 40s will be accelerated by reducing the dosing interval from 12 weeks to eight weeks.

The move follows advice from the independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), which has considered the latest available evidence and has recommended reducing the dosing interval to counter the threat of new variants of concern.

The government and its scientific experts are monitoring the evolving situation and rates of variants closely, and will not hesitate to take additional action as necessary.

Vaccines Minister, Nadhim Zahawi said:

Two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine are absolutely vital in ensuring the fullest possible protection the jabs have to offer – it's extraordinary that three in five people have now been vaccinated with both jabs.

No matter where you live, where you come from, your background or your beliefs – provided you are over 18, there is a vaccine available to you. I urge everyone eligible to get their jab and help us get back to normality.

Vaccinated people are far less likely to get COVID-19 with symptoms. Vaccinated people are even more unlikely to get serious COVID-19, to be admitted to hospital, or to die from it and there is growing evidence that they are less likely to pass the virus to others.

Data from PHE's real-world study shows the vaccines are already having a significant impact in the UK, reducing hospitalisations and deaths, saving over 14,000 lives and preventing over 42,000 hospitalisations in England.

Data published by YouGov shows the UK continues to top the list of nations where people are willing to have a COVID-19 vaccine or have already been vaccinated.

ONS data published on 9 June, shows that more than 9 in 10 (94%) adults reported positive sentiment towards the vaccine.

Approved vaccines are available from thousands of NHS vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

[UN Human Rights Council 47: Accelerating Change on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation](#)

World news story

This statement was delivered by the delegations of Egypt and Burkina Faso on behalf of over 100 countries including the UK, UNFPA and UNICEF.



The Human Rights Council takes place in Geneva.

FGM is a violation of human rights adversely affecting women and girls psychologically and physically, and governments and civil society must work together to accelerate the elimination of this practice. We strongly agree that FGM is a harmful practice and cannot be justified on religious or cultural grounds.

The harmful and dangerous impact of FGM on the health of young girls is well proven. Eliminating FGM will have a positive impact not only on the health, education and gender equality but also on the empowerment and full

development of women and girls and of society as a whole.

Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned that the progress in reducing the prevalence of FGM hasn't been up to the expectations.

Raising awareness of the adverse health consequences of FGM alone won't end the practice, and if this information is not communicated sensitively it can promote medicalization of FGM, on both the demand and supply sides. Moreover, there is no evidence that medicalizing FGM reduces immediate or long-term complications associated with the practice.

We call on all stake holders to stop medicalization of FGM with actions aligned with the Global Strategy to stop health-care providers from performing FGM, including through the following:

- Establishing health policies and protocols advocating for the elimination of FGM.
- Incorporating, more systematically, content on FGM prevention and management of health complications.
- Empowering and enabling health-care workers to be agents of change.
- Creating networks between professional associations and unions of health-care service providers and religious leaders to clarify that FGM is not a religious practice.
- Improving person-centered communication skills of health-care professionals.
- Reinforcing the unethical nature of the medicalization of FGM by issuing public statements and protocols, establishing codes of conduct and instituting accountability mechanisms.
- Empowering and enabling other forms of accountability mechanisms, such as parliamentary groups, National Human Rights Institutions and social accountability mechanisms.

Thank you.

Published 23 June 2021

[Minister for the Armed Forces IISS climate change speech](#)

May I begin by thanking Dr Giegrich and Anja Richter for inviting me to speak today. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) has an excellent reputation worldwide for innovative thinking and excellent research, so I hope I can do it justice.

Although I should caution that towards the end of my speech, I'll get into

some of the territory that is steering me towards my brief is less about the procurement and more 'so what' and what are the operational impacts of climate change. So, I hope you'll forgive me if I spend the first half of my speech actually more focused on what climate change means for what we ask Armed Forces to do, rather than how we equip them and decarbonise them.

We are all well acquainted with Dr Giegrich and the IISS's work, particularly on this agenda. I know Dr Giegrich will recollect running a forum for us with internal and external experts to help develop our own strategy on these issues.

I think the recent publication of our Integrated Review marked a significant milestone in our approach to climate change. In it, we recognised that it is not simply an aggravator of existing threats but a geo-strategic threat in itself. A view that is echoed by the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report which ranks 'climate action failure' as humanity's biggest danger.

So, it goes without saying, that defence departments the world over can better protect their citizens by being both more resilient and more sustainable.

Today I want to reflect more deeply on the nature of this complex, multi-faceted subject and provide greater insight into our thinking. Like so many other areas of Government policy, there are no easy answers here, but I know we can all agree that a shared understanding of the danger is the first step towards finding a solution.

It seems to me that geographically, the dangers of climate change can be subdivided into three distinct areas. First, I'm going to talk about some of the ways that climate change will, or is already, impacting on the environment we operate in and where threats will emerge.

Secondly, I'm going to talk about how this change may lead to increased competition for some scarce resources – with the risks of conflict that entails.

And thirdly, I'm going to talk about how the MoD is adapting our approach – reducing the contribution we make to climate change, making our forces more resilient and helping out our allies and partners.

So, let me begin with those areas where climate change is already having a marked impact, starting with the High North and the opening up of a northern sea route between the Pacific and the Atlantic.

According to a report by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, current trends show that when the Arctic is fully open, there will be a potential reduction in travel times and fossil fuel costs of more than 40 per cent to maritime shipping. Elsewhere, Oxford University's Future of Arctic Enterprise report states that the Arctic seabed contains about 13 per cent of the world's remaining undiscovered oil, 30 per cent of the undiscovered natural gas and 20 per cent of the undiscovered natural gas liquids.

Now, I'm an enthusiastic 'green', and I wouldn't want anybody to think that I am somehow celebrating the opening up of a Northern Sea Route with the opportunities that brings for fossil fuel extraction. In fact, quite the reverse – I wish that this was not a threat that we had to face.

But my job to work out what we need to do to keep the UK safe and it is a sad reality that the High North could become a potential flashpoint as a result of climate change.

That poses many questions for us. How do we ensure the High North remains a free passage to be enjoyed by all nations, not just those that happen to have a coastline along that route? And how do we work with NATO and our European allies to maintain peace, security and the international laws of the sea in that part of the world?

Moving away from the Arctic, another key geo-strategic challenge caused by climate change is desertification. In May I had the opportunity to visit countries along the Sahel, including Mali and further along in the lake-Chad Basin, both Nigeria and Cameroon. I saw first-hand the desert's increasing encroachment upon the land, where already scarce natural resources are gradually being swallowed up.

In such places climate change is an aggravator, an exacerbator, of instability. Weak governments have only a tenuous hold on the reins of power, life is hard for many, and a lack of hope can lead some to turn to extremism. And, as desertification gathers pace, more and more people are displaced, creating new mass migration challenges.

Desertification is moving along the lines of longitude, often amplifying regional disputes in areas like eastern Africa where there is an increasingly desperate struggle to access clean water and food. For example, talks are continuing to break down between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam due to concerns over the equitable allocation of the Nile's precious waters. As water scarcity worsens these tensions could well increase, underlining the importance of climate-aware stabilisation efforts.

Now, given how many conflicts over the last century have been motivated by competition over access to oil and gas, there may be some who believe that the move away from fossil fuels and towards the electrification of heat and transport in our economies, more generally, is good news because there is nothing left to fight over. Fingers crossed that will be the case, but the Defence Minister in me refuses to be so optimistic and I suspect that we will find something else that is just as scarce and strategic that we will have reason to compete over instead.

Moving on, I want to just consider food security. According to a research paper commissioned by the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre think tank, just eight crops provide 74.2 per cent of the calories eaten by people. Most of the crops are produced in just five main parts of the world. One can only imagine the impact on global stability were one of those key "bread baskets" to fail – from higher food prices to protests, riots and quite

probably conflict.

Then there is the worldwide competition for mineral resources. Perhaps the thing that we will find to scrap over as we stop prioritising access to oil and gas.

Our 2018 Global Strategic Trends report found demand has been rising sharply over the last century. Between 1900 and 2010 global resource consumption grew from nine to 71 gigatons. Over the same period the amount of material used to sustain one individual showed a corresponding increase from 4.6 to 10.3 tons per person per year.

As the world's population grows and becomes more prosperous, the demand for products made from mineral resources is also likely to rise.

Increasingly, modern society is dependent on new materials. According to Julieanna Powell-Turner, Professor of Environment Sustainability at Cranfield University, by 2017 scientists had identified approximately 300,000 materials compared with just 12 widely used a century ago.

I'm not about to sing the periodic table song, I am not even sure that I could, but there is indium for LCDs, hafnium for computer chips and power stations, rhodium for X-rays and so on and so forth.

We are already seeing hints of emerging 'resource nationalism' as governments of mineral-rich countries toughen legislation and tax reform to maximise profit and limit export of these rare earth minerals.

China, for example, controls the bulk of rare earth metals across the globe and is likely to increase its dominant position in the new energy industries as a consequence.

While more than half the world's cobalt supply comes from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Cobalt is essential for rechargeable batteries, circuits and microchips. The chances are that the smartphone in your pocket or the tablet on your shelf relies on this "blue gold". It can't be healthy to have such an enormous reliance on one country to produce such a precious but indispensable resource.

Exponential demand for rare earths calls for greater cooperation between partners and competitors across the globe. In the coming century, we cannot afford to repeat the mistakes that occurred over the struggle for oil in the last 100 years.

From a UK perspective, we must have a clear sense of exactly what our sovereign requirements for these sorts of precious metals are going to be and how we can ensure access to them.

Which brings me on to the broader point of how UK Defence can operate successfully within this changing landscape.

We know that as the department responsible for 50 per cent of UK central government emissions, we need to get our own house in order before anything

else. Our new Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy, published in March in response to Lt Gen Richard Nugee's excellent review, will help us fight and win in ever more hostile environments. It will help us slash our emissions and it will help the UK meet its net zero emissions target by 2050.

I won't go into the fine details of that document although I can commend it keenly to you, but I will if you will indulge, share some highlights.

We're adapting our technology. One of the questions which has been raised in defence circles is whether or not we will need to sacrifice capabilities in the cause of green defence. We're clear we must protect our capabilities. But, we're also conscious that more unforgiving and hostile environments demand smarter approaches. They require innovation in design, different skills and a new set of expectations.

So, we've been working with the RAND organisation to look into the challenges Defence might face in future. It's found a number of issues that we needed to think more about – from the erosion of infrastructure to the risk to critical supplies like water on deployment. Separately, consultants KBR noted that Defence would need to get much better at using low emissions technologies, additive manufacturing and component recycling. But the shift towards greener tech also presents opportunities to sharpen our cutting edge.

That's why we're fitting Army vehicles with electric power systems that not only make them more sustainable but reduce noise and therefore increase stealth capability. That's why our fifth and final Offshore Patrol Vessel will be one of the most environmentally friendly ships to join the fleet thanks to a urea filter which reduces nitrogen oxide emissions from the diesel generators by around ninety per cent. And that's why we're updating our aviation fuel standards to allow sustainable fuels in the military with the potential to use algae, alcohol and household waste to power military aircraft. Indeed, the RAF has become an enthusiastic contributor to the department for transports jet zero programme.

But we're not just changing our technology. We're ensuring our forces are able to adjust to the shifting environments in which they are likely to find themselves. It means training our people to work effectively in disaster zones. Not least handling the challenge of crossing floodplains or, as we sometimes put it, 'wide wet gaps'. Above all, it means influencing the mindset of all the ranks of our military and all the members of our Whole Force to regard protection of the environment and protection of the UK as one and the same thing.

We're also using modelling and expertise from elsewhere to build up our understanding of how climate change, security and other threats coalesce.

Significantly, the MOD now has a Climate Change Directorate in Head Office ensuring sustained senior leadership, while my Ministerial colleague Jeremy Quin has that as an important part of his portfolio.

So, we're putting our house in order but we are also acutely aware that some nations need help, not just to reduce their emissions but to deal with the

fallout of climate disasters. We have already seen the devastating impact of more frequent extreme weather events around the world – whether it is intense drought, extended heat waves, catastrophic wildfires or devastating flooding.

There is a clear understanding that not only will climate impacts disregard borders but their effects will be unequal. As organisations like the IMCCS (International Military Council on Climate and Security) have pointed out in detail, regions such as the Sahel, Middle East or South Asia will be most severely affected.

According to the International Committee of the Red Cross's landmark report, 'When Rain turns to Dust', it is those countries enduring armed conflict that are disproportionately vulnerable to climate variability. And, as our very own Gen Richard Nugee pointed out, these communities are the ones least able to respond. The result is a vicious cycle in which war leads to environmental destruction which, in turn, leads to greater instability and further devastation of our natural resources.

That's why the UK is maintaining our commitment to disaster relief. We've already shown what we can do. Look at our response to Hurricane Dorian in the Caribbean back in 2019. After the category-9 cyclone tore through the Bahamas, we rapidly dispatched our specialist team of military medics to deliver food, water and clothing to thousands of displaced people.

But we know we're going to have to do more to train our forces to protect UK interests overseas whatever the situation. That means being prepared for more frequent, concurrent, extreme environmental emergencies. And it means having a greater awareness of the potential impact of climate change so that we can take pre-emptive measures.

Ultimately, dealing with the climate crisis is going to require global cooperation.

I'm sure we are all in agreement that none of us can address this threat alone. That's why we are actively supporting multinational and alliance-based approaches whether through the UN or through NATO.

Those alliances are key to our collaborative approach in addressing the implications of a heating planet. Climate change was a central theme of our recent NATO summit with allies agreeing on an action plan to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from military activities while maintaining personnel safety and operational effectiveness. During the summit, it was also agreed that we would have regular high-level climate and security dialogues.

The UK is a thought leader in this area. And we are proud to be so. But don't just take my word for it. At President Biden's Earth Day Climate Conference, US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that UK Defence is "raising the bar" with our approach. Just last week our Secretary of State set up a climate change and sustainability working with our like-minded allies in the Northern Group of nations.

One thing we are clear about is the need for nations to achieve net zero by the middle of the century. Later this year we will host COP26, during which we will urge all countries to come forward with their long-term strategies for reaching ambitious zero emissions targets. By taking action together to reduce emissions and prevent the worst impacts of climate change, by pursuing options to build resilience and adaptability, we can mitigate risks to our national security at home and abroad. Over the next 30 years, extreme weather events are likely to have far-reaching consequences for nations across the world. Food and water demands will increase while competition for scarce resources will grow. Desertification and flooding will exacerbate migration and increase the likelihood of conflict.

These problems are multi-faceted and have no ready-made solutions. But this is not the first time that the global community has faced seemingly insurmountable problems. Just think back to the emergence of Covid-19 at the beginning of last year. That scale of collective global purpose is clearly what is needed to tackle climate change. Just as the UK has been at the forefront of the fight against a deadly disease, we are more committed than ever to addressing the clear and present danger of climate change. One of our primary aims, as set down in our Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper that followed it, is to be a force for good in the world. It is impossible for me, or any of my Ministerial colleagues in the MOD, to see how we can be that force for good in the world, how we can tackle the threats that emerge as a consequence of climate change, and threats that are aggravated and accelerated by climate change if we don't first make a point of being on the right side of the argument, and leading in the decarbonisation of our Armed Forces with all the operational advantages that that brings.

[UN Human Rights Council 47: High-Level Panel on Prevention of and Response to Female Genital Mutilation](#)

World news story

The statement was delivered during the high level panel on prevention and response to female genital mutilation.



The Human Rights Council takes place in Geneva.

The United Kingdom is a staunch defender of sexual and reproductive health and rights and we are proud of our support to end Female Genital Mutilation globally. Ending FGM is a key part of the UK government's commitment to gender equality, girls' education, and ending the preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children. Since 2013, we have supported a comprehensive approach with long-term community and grass-roots efforts at its heart, supported by advocacy, services, legislation and policies. The UK government stands by the Africa-led movement to end FGM, and we are pleased to have partnered with the UN Joint Programme and the WHO.

FGM is one of the most extreme manifestations of gender inequality. It is a deeply embedded practice held in place by social norms. Change is being led from within affected communities and countries and our role is to support and help accelerate the pace of change. Women and girls are speaking out and thousands of communities have decided to abandon FGM. Tireless campaigning by courageous activists has helped to put these issues on the agenda and we are seeing more and more legislation and policy supporting an end to the practice.

Despite this progress, millions of girls continue to be at risk of FGM and COVID-19 has exacerbated these risks. It is a truly sobering picture. We would like to ask the panellists, what more can States do to ensure the prevention and permanent abandonment of FGM as we seek to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Thank you.

Published 23 June 2021