

Extra £47.6 million for Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre

Press release

The Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC) has been granted an additional £47.6 million to support the expansion and acceleration of the programme.



The VMIC will be the UK's first national vaccines manufacturing and innovation facility and will be able to respond to pandemics by producing millions of doses quickly.

The funding will support work already underway to:

- expand the capacity twenty-fold so that the UK has a highly specialist manufacturing centre that, in a pandemic situation, can make up to 70 million doses within a 6 month period
- accelerate the timeline for VMIC to be operationally ready so it can support the national response to (coronavirus) COVID-19

VMIC has been granted almost £215 million of government funding in total to date.

In May 2020, the government confirmed additional funding of £93 million to the VMIC – which was first announced in 2018 – to expand and fast track the project. The new £47.6 million is in addition to this funding and will support the delivery of this highly specialist facility during these unprecedented, challenging times.

Through the VMIC, the government also invested £8.75 million in the set-up of a rapid deployment facility at Oxford Biomedica in Oxfordshire, which was a major milestone in increasing UK manufacturing capability of viral vector vaccines. By October 2020, these 2 additional manufacturing sites were

approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, and are currently producing the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine.

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Half of all adults in UK receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine

- Health Secretary hails strength of the Union as UK passes major vaccine milestone
- Matt Hancock calls on everyone to accept the jab when it's offered

Half of all adults in the UK have received their first dose of the (coronavirus) COVID-19 vaccine, the latest figures show.

The UK health services vaccinated a total of 26.8 million people between 8 December and 19 March with first doses, while 2.1 million people have had their second dose so far.

The rollout is continuing at pace and the UK is on track to achieve the Prime Minister's target of offering the vaccine to all over-50s by 15 April, as well as all adults by the end of July.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Vaccinating over half of all adults is a phenomenal achievement and is testament to the mammoth efforts of the NHS, GPs, volunteers, local authorities and civil servants in every corner of the UK.

It shows the strength of the Union and what can be achieved when we work together as one United Kingdom to protect those most at risk. But the job is not done yet.

During April, we will continue to vaccinate those most at risk and around 12 million people will receive their second doses as well. It is absolutely crucial people come forward as soon as they are eligible. When you get the call, get the jab, because the more people who are vaccinated the safer we will all be.

The pace of the rollout means even more people will soon develop strong protection from serious illness from COVID-19 infection, saving lives and significantly reducing pressure on the NHS, which supports the Prime Minister's roadmap to ease lockdown restrictions.

Around 4% of the adult population have had their second doses so far and there will be a strong drive over the coming weeks to vaccinate people with the second jabs within 12 weeks, as well as continuing to vaccinate those in the priority groups with first doses.

The UK government's Vaccine Taskforce secured early access to 457 million doses of the most promising vaccines on behalf of the whole of the UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. This allowed a co-ordinated and rapid deployment of vaccines to those most at risk.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

I would like to thank everybody involved in this incredible vaccination programme across the whole of the UK for their tireless dedication to protecting the most vulnerable and saving lives.

This is a momentous occasion and while the vaccines are the best way out of this terrible pandemic, the battle is not yet over.

We continue to do everything we can to expand the vaccination programme even further and encourage people of all backgrounds and religions to get their jabs when eligible.

All vaccines being used in the UK have undergone robust clinical trials and have met the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's (MHRA) strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

The Moderna vaccine has also been approved by the MHRA and will be deployed from the spring. Rolling reviews are also underway by the MHRA to assess the Janssen and Novavax vaccines.

Data from Public Health England's real-world study shows that both the Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines are highly effective in reducing COVID-19 among older people aged 70 years and over. We are already seeing a significant impact of the vaccination programme on reducing hospitalisations and deaths, and it is vital people come forward for their vaccine when invited.

The vaccines are available for free from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England, which includes mosques, Westminster Abbey and football stadiums.

Dr Nikki Kanani, NHS England's primary care director and a GP, said:

Thanks to careful planning and the huge efforts of NHS vaccinators, volunteers and everyone working behind the scenes, the roll-out of the NHS vaccination programme – the biggest in health service history – continues to be a huge success.

Their efforts meant the NHS had vaccinated half of all adults in England by Thursday, and as a GP and a vaccinator, it is source of great pride that we have now reached that major milestone across the whole of the UK.

I would encourage anyone who is invited to come forward and book their vaccine. It is safe, quick and effective, and by having your vaccine you will join nearly 23 million people across England who've now been protected.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society President Sandra Gidley said:

Vaccinating half of the UK population in such a short period of time is a huge achievement and I'm immensely proud of the role pharmacy teams have played.

Pharmacists have been at the forefront of COVID-19 vaccinations, developing new treatments, ensuring a safe supply chain, and supporting vaccination clinics across the health service.

I want to thank pharmacists working up and down the country in every setting, from large hospitals to those providing vaccinations in village halls, for their amazing efforts and for rising to the challenge during a time of national crisis.

As we look to build on this success, pharmacists will continue to play a vital role in encouraging uptake of vaccines, particularly in communities where there are significant health challenges.

Professor Martin Marshall, Chair of the Royal College of GPs, said:

The hard work of GPs and our teams, along with colleagues across the NHS, to deliver the COVID-19 vaccination programme has been outstanding and ensured that vulnerable patients across the UK are protected from this terrible virus.

It is excellent news that half the UK adult population – 26.8m people – have now received the first dose of the vaccine, with around 75% of these vaccinations taking place in primary care. This is an incredible milestone and the efforts of GPs and our teams have been pivotal to achieving it in such a short space of time, and despite the complexities and challenges of delivering a new vaccination programme on such a large scale.

However, the hard work is far from over, and as long as there is supply, GPs and our teams will continue to vaccinate. Getting vaccinated is the best protection we have against this virus, and our best hope of getting back to a more normal life. We encourage patients to come forward for a vaccination when invited to do so.

Background information

1. There are a total of 52.7 million adults in the UK based on ONS data.
2. PHE's [real-world data](#) shows the efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines.
3. Through the government's Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 457 million doses of 8 of the most promising vaccine candidates, including:
 - BioNTech/Pfizer for 40 million doses
 - Oxford/AstraZeneca for 100 million doses
 - Moderna for 17 million doses
 - GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi Pasteur for 60 million doses
 - Novavax for 60 million doses
 - Janssen for 30 million doses
 - Valneva for 100 million doses
 - CureVac for 50 million doses
4. To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine to enable a rapid roll out.

The UK government is committed to supporting equitable access to vaccines worldwide. The UK is the largest donor to the COVAX facility, the global mechanism to help developing countries access a coronavirus vaccine, and has committed £548 million in UK aid to help distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to 92 developing countries this year.

[Trials to find preventative COVID-19 treatments for most vulnerable to launch in UK](#)

- The most vulnerable will receive treatments to stop the spread of the virus in care homes or health settings
- Innovative studies backed by up to £3.2 million of government funding

Hundreds of thousands of the UK's most vulnerable people could be set to benefit from innovative treatments that stop them catching COVID-19, as 2 new government-funded clinical trials launch in the UK.

The trials will test the effectiveness of treatments – which have already shown promising early results for treating COVID-19, in preventing the virus and therefore its transmission among care home residents and those with weakened immune systems, such as transplant patients or those on dialysis.

Any treatment proven to be safe and effective will be rapidly made more widely available on the NHS, and will mean people for whom COVID-19 vaccines may be less effective due to their lowered immune systems – such as cancer patients – will have additional protection to prevent infection and serious

illness.

Matt Hancock, Health and Social Care Secretary, said:

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have worked to find the best treatments the world has to offer for COVID-19.

It's down to this dedication and the renowned expertise of British scientists, supported by taxpayers, that the UK was able to identify and rollout 2 lifesaving treatments for COVID-19 to NHS patients – dexamethasone and tocilizumab.

The government is backing 2 more innovative UK-based clinical trials into effective therapeutics, this time specifically for the most vulnerable groups who need them most.

We have been clear from the outset that it will be a combination of safe and effective vaccines, testing and therapeutics that will bring an end to this pandemic, and we will not rest until every individual in the country is protected against this awful disease.

Professor Chris Whitty, Chief Medical Officer for England and co-lead for the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), said:

These 2 important NIHR-funded studies will evaluate prophylactic treatments for COVID-19 in care homes and for those with compromised immune systems.

The more proven clinical tools we can use to protect these very vulnerable groups the better, so I encourage as many eligible individuals, care home operators and residents to take part in these studies.

The PROTECT-V trial, run by the University of Cambridge, will look at potential COVID-19 treatments' effectiveness in reducing the spread of the virus amongst immunocompromised groups. It launched this month and will last at least 12 months.

There are at least 500,000 people who could benefit from these treatments in England alone, and 2,250 are expected to take part in the clinical trial.

The PROTECT-CH trial, run by the University of Nottingham, will also look at treatments for reducing transmission and serious illness from the virus, for care homes, their residents and staff. The trial will begin in May 2021 and last around 2 years.

It aims to recruit more than 400 care homes to take part, covering approximately 12,000 elderly residents, with any approved treatments having the potential to be rolled out to the 420,000 care home residents across the

UK.

Lord Bethell, Minister for Innovation, said:

The UK has shown time and time again its tenacity in identifying safe and effective treatments for COVID-19, and we are working tirelessly to support these innovations so they can help protect people in all corners of the UK.

Vulnerable groups have been disproportionately impacted by the virus and these government-funded trials will provide us with invaluable data so we can ensure they get every possible form of defence against the virus.

I urge as many care homes and eligible people to sign up for these trials as possible, and to play a part in securing future treatments for the most at-risk in our society.

The clinical trials have now received Urgent Public Health badging status from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). PROTECT-CH has been awarded £1.7 million of government funding. PROTECT-V has been awarded an additional up to £1.5 million to expand its trial platform.

Throughout the pandemic, the government has supported British research with millions of pounds of funding for clinical trials into the most promising and innovative medicines in our fight against the virus, including for the RECOVERY and REMAP-CAP trials that have brought lifesaving treatments dexamethasone and tocilizumab to NHS patients.

Dr Rona Smith, Senior Research Associate for PROTECT-V at the University of Cambridge, said:

The PROTECT-V trial is a platform designed to test drugs that may prevent COVID-19 infection in vulnerable patients with kidney disease, either on dialysis, who have a kidney transplant or are receiving immunosuppression.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the lives of these patients. The rapid roll out of vaccination has been very welcome news, but it is unclear if these patients will mount as strong responses to the vaccine as healthy individuals.

This trial will test if drugs may offer additional protection over and above the vaccine in vulnerable individuals and prevent them becoming unwell with COVID-19 infection.

Professor Philip Bath, lead researcher for PROTECT-CH at the University of Nottingham, said:

Care homes have seen high rates of illness and death due to COVID-19 throughout the pandemic.

Apart from vaccines, there are no drugs for preventing serious COVID-19 and the PROTECT-CH trial is designed to test drugs that might reduce infection, hospital admission and death.

[UK and India ramp up joint efforts on climate action](#)

- Lord Ahmad, UK Minister for South Asia, completes week-long visit to India ahead of visit by Prime Minister Boris Johnson
- Opportunities for closer UK-India collaboration on offshore wind energy and electric vehicles
- Visit comes as UK sets out ambitious new vision for integrated defence, security, foreign and development policy to combat emerging and changing global threats, and which calls for a stronger UK focus on Indo-Pacific partnerships.

The UK and India are working to expand research and collaboration links to tackle climate change, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth, announced at the end of his visit to India this week.

Science and technology partnerships between the UK and India are already playing a vital role to tackle the most pressing global challenges, including ending the Covid-19 pandemic through joint work to provide doses of the Oxford vaccine, manufactured in India, to developing countries. There is huge scope for expanding existing work to tackle climate change ahead of COP26.

Lord Ahmad concluded a five-day visit to India today (20 March) to reaffirm the UK's commitment to a closer UK-India relationship as part of a wider focus on partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, ahead of the UK Prime Minister's visit to India and the UK's G7 Summit in June which Prime Minister Modi has been invited to join.

During the visit, Lord Ahmad met with leaders from Tamil Nadu to discuss how the UK could share expertise with India on offshore wind energy at the headquarters of India's National Institute of Wind Energy in Chennai. The UK has the largest offshore wind capacity in the world, and looks forward to India attending the Global Offshore Wind Summit 2021 in London in September.

Tamil Nadu has set an ambitious target for all taxis, two and three wheelers (auto-rickshaws) in the state's six major cities to be electric by 2030. The Minister also attended a roundtable at the IIT (Indian Institute of

Technology) Madras Research Park to build on links between the state and Dundee Council, which is a world-leading city in adoption of electric vehicles.

Both the UK and India are proud signatories to the Paris Agreement, and the UK is keen to work with India ahead of COP26 in November to lead the global shift to a low carbon economy and expand access to sustainable energy.

Lord Ahmad said:

The UK and India have an invaluable partnership, including tackling Covid-19, with the Serum Institute of India manufacturing doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine – drawing our brightest minds together to save lives as a global force for good.

India has quadrupled wind and solar capacity in the last decade and committed to net zero emissions in the Indian Railways by 2030. I saw first-hand how we can work even more closely together on tackling climate action by sharing our solutions and expertise. Deepening UK-India collaboration will be crucial to building up to a successful outcome at COP26.

This followed a visit to Delhi where Lord Ahmad met with senior Indian government ministers and visited the Lotus Temple for a roundtable on freedom of religion and belief. He also visited Chandigarh where he met with agri-tech businesses, before heading to Chennai.

The visit built on the meeting between Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and Prime Minister Modi in December, which set out further cooperation on medicines and vaccines to address global healthcare. The partnership between the Serum Institute of India and Oxford University demonstrates the UK-India relationship at its best, ensuring developing countries receive vaccines, and is an ongoing example of the two countries working together to save lives as a global force for good in the world.

During the visit, the UK published its Integrated Review, which sets out the new vision for its foreign, defence and development policy. It makes clear the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world and the long-term strategic aims for national security, development and foreign policy, including through enhancing partnerships with nations including India. This will strengthen our security, build resilience to global challenges like climate change and Covid-19 and boost our strategic advantages through science and technology.

Notes to editors:

1. Lord Ahmad's visit follows visits to India by the Foreign Secretary in December, the International Trade Secretary in February, the COP26 President also in February and comes ahead of the Prime Minister's visit later this year.
2. During the visit, the Minister visited Delhi, Chandigarh, Chennai and

Hyderabad.

3. In November the UK will host the UN climate change conference COP26 in Glasgow, with our partners, Italy. This will provide an opportunity for the world to come together and commit to urgent action.
4. As host of COP26, the UK is setting a strong example on climate action, with a legally binding target to cut emissions to net zero by 2050. Between 1990 and 2018, the UK nearly halved emissions whilst growing the economy by 75%, and will cut coal use in the power sector entirely by 2025.

Alarming rise of abuse within modern slavery system

Child rapists, people who pose a threat to our national security, serious criminals and failed asylum seekers will find it harder to take advantage of modern slavery safeguards under changes to be announced this week.

This follows an alarming rise in people abusing our modern slavery system by posing as victims in order to prevent their removal and enable them stay in the country.

National Referral Mechanism referrals, the government's system for identifying victims of modern slavery, more than doubled between 2017 and 2020 from 5,141 to 10,613.

In 2019, of those referred into the National Referral Mechanism after being detained within the UK (totalling 1,949), 89% received a positive initial decision which means their referral is considered further with more rigorous assessment.

Upcoming reforms to the asylum system are expected to lead to more serious criminals seeking to falsely take advantage of the National Referral Mechanism in order to frustrate their removal, making it harder for genuine victims to receive timely support.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Our generous safeguards for victims are being rampantly abused by child rapists, people who pose a threat to national security and failed asylum seekers with no right to be here.

They are diverting resources away from genuine victims of trafficking, persecution and serious harm – which is completely unacceptable.

The UK has led the world in protecting the victims of modern

slavery and we will continue to support those who have suffered intolerable abuse at the hands of criminals and traffickers so they can rebuild their lives.

Under the changes proposed, frontline workers including police, local authorities and charities will be trained to better help them assess genuine accounts of modern slavery before they refer it to the authorities for an assessment.

The government will consult on whether to strengthen the threshold for deciding whether someone is a potential victim of modern slavery during the initial assessment.

The consultation will also look at the definition of “public order grounds” to enable protections to be withheld from dangerous criminals who have received prison sentences of over a year, as well as individuals who pose a threat to national security.

In 2015 the UK government introduced ground-breaking measures that equipped law enforcement with the tools to fight modern slavery through the Modern Slavery Act.

Today’s announcement introduces our intention to provide greater support for genuine victims including private counselling and setting out in legislation for the first time that confirmed victims of modern slavery with long-term recovery needs may be eligible for a grant of temporary leave to remain in the UK to assist their recovery.

The package also includes:

- a review of the government’s 2014 Modern Slavery Strategy to develop a revised strategic approach that adapts to the evolving nature of these crimes
- a new Modern Slavery Prevention Fund to bolster the efforts of external organisations to stop people being drawn into this terrible crime and eradicate slavery
- funding to support prosecutions and build policing capability to investigate and respond to organised immigration crime, ensuring modern slavery victims receive the support they need to help prosecute the perpetrators

Further details will be set out this week in the most radical overhaul of the asylum and borders system in decades.