

Update on the Ventilator Challenge

Following a review by an expert panel of clinicians, including NHS clinicians and the regulator, the MHRA, the Government will be ending support for four devices in the Ventilator Challenge. Recognising the Government's need to create effective ventilators at pace, the panel concluded that other designs could better meet the clinical needs of the NHS at this time.

Government efforts to increase ventilator capacity have already seen an additional 2,400 mechanical ventilators made available to the NHS since the start of the pandemic, with over 250 coming from the Ventilator Challenge so far. The number of extra ventilators rises to 6,745 in total, when you include both mechanical and non-invasive ventilators

The UK now has 10,900 mechanical invasive ventilators available to the NHS, as well as 4,300 non-invasive devices.

During the coronavirus pandemic, everyone who has required a ventilator has had access to one, but the Government will continue to increase capacity through its three pillar strategy: procuring more ventilators from overseas, scaling up the production of existing or modified designs and working to design and manufacture new devices.

The Government recently announced that 15,000 Penlon Prima ES02 ventilators have been ordered, the first newly-adapted device to receive regulatory approval in the Ventilator Challenge, with production set to ramp up in the coming weeks. Smiths paraPAC ventilators, an existing device, are also being manufactured at speed and at scale as part of the Ventilator Challenge.

Devices that have been selected to continue as part of the Ventilator Challenge have been selected based upon expert clinical and technical advice. This includes feedback from rigorous testing of the ventilators by clinical experts to ensure that they meet the necessary standards for patient safety and effectiveness of treatment, which is of vital importance for any new ventilator design. This selection criteria also takes into account projections for ventilator demand, the availability of other devices which already have regulatory approval, the performance and clinical usefulness of each device and the progress to date on each device's overall development.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Michael Gove said:

The innovation, teamwork and commitment shown by manufacturers involved in the Ventilator Challenge has been inspirational.

While the Government will be ending support for four of the devices in the Ventilator Challenge today, I want to put on record my sincere thanks to everyone involved.

They are heroes of our national effort and their contribution to protecting our NHS and saving lives will not be forgotten.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Since we launched the Ventilator Challenge the ingenuity and innovation shown by so many companies has been truly awe-inspiring and has helped us continue to get ventilators to the frontline and keep capacity ahead of demand.

Technology and innovation, operating hand-in-hand with the care and dedication of our fantastic health and social care staff, will help us overcome this virus.

I want to thank every company, and their staff, for their phenomenal achievements in going forward to the next stage.

Following the recommendations of the expert panel, the Government will continue to provide support to four devices, as well the Penlon and paraPAC. We are scaling up production of existing Breas Medical devices, the Nippy 4+ & Vivo65, with the first units expected next month. In addition, two devices are subject to ongoing review to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the NHS:

- Zephyr Plus, made by Babcock
- Gemini, made by OES Medical

Five other devices will continue to be eligible for support before being reassessed by a further clinical panel next week:

- Piran Vent, made by Swagelok
- Veloci-Vent, made by Cambridge Consultants Ltd and MetLase
- Sagentia Ventilator, made by Sagentia
- CoVent, made by TTP and Dyson
- AirCare, made by BAE Systems

From the start of the challenge we have been clear that not all designs would necessarily be taken forward and so today the Cabinet Office is ceasing support for four ventilator designs. These are:

- EVA, made by TEAM and Cogent Technology
- Helix, made by Diamedica and Plexus
- OxVent, made by KCL, Oxford University and Smith+Nephew
- InVicto, made by JFD