

# Vaccine Taskforce to merge with UK Health Security Agency and OLS

- Core functions of the Vaccine Taskforce will move to the UK Health Security Agency, with the onshoring programme joining the Office for Life Sciences, in the autumn
- The move will ensure the innovative approaches, skills and operating model that have been such a key part of the UK's pandemic response are retained

The core functions of the Vaccine Taskforce (VTF) will merge with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Office for Life Sciences (OLS) in the autumn, the government has announced.

The VTF was set up in 2020 to meet the unprecedented challenge posed by Covid with the objective of securing effective vaccines for the UK as quickly as possible. The VTF was successful in securing the earliest access to the Oxford/Astra Zeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, allowing the UK to be the first country in the world to deploy an approved Covid vaccine.

The VTF has also played a critical role in supporting efforts to distribute vaccines globally. The UK was one of COVAX's earliest and largest donors, helping the organisation to deliver of 1.5 billion doses worldwide to date.

The vaccine programme is well established, and contracts are in place with manufacturers to continue to support the UK's vaccination programmes for this year and next, including access to reformulated vaccines. People should continue to come forward for their Covid vaccines and booster doses when eligible.

From October, the vaccine supply responsibilities of the VTF will move to the UKHSA to establish a permanent function. Staff from the VTF will become part of a new directorate within UKHSA to ensure a smooth transition and embed learnings from the VTF.

Responsibility for the VTF onshoring programme will move to the Office for Life Sciences, a joint unit of the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The VTF has performed exceptionally during the pandemic, securing early access to the most promising Covid vaccines which allowed the UK to be the first country in the world to begin its life-saving vaccination programme. The wall of defence built by vaccines is

allowing us to live with Covid without restrictions and get back to doing the things we love.

From autumn, the VTF and UKHSA will work as one unit to ensure we are prepared for all future health threats and they will build on the success of the Covid vaccination programme to improve our other life-saving immunisation programmes.

Director General of the Vaccine Taskforce Madelaine McTernan CB said:

The VTF has demonstrated how working in partnership across Government, industry and academia can deliver incredible results. I am very proud of what the VTF has delivered over the last two years, both here in the UK and internationally, thanks to the hard work and will to win of a great many people.

Chief Executive of the UKHSA, Dame Jenny Harries said:

This is a real investment by Government in UKHSA and a strong recognition of the excellent science and new thinking encapsulated in our organisation – a very exciting opportunity for us all and one which helps us realise new ambitions as a global scientific leader. With its innovative way of working and close links with academia and industry, the Vaccine Taskforce functions joining us will be a tremendous asset – complementing our excellent vaccines and immunisation work.

We look forward to welcoming our colleagues and the invaluable expertise they will bring. Embedding their unique approach will help us realise our future ambitions around science and innovation, and crucially strengthen our pandemic preparedness and build resilience to future health threats.