

Defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine

The following is a joint statement by Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Re-public, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States

Russia held an informal meeting at the UN today to promote a false narrative about its occupation of Crimea, which it seized in violation of international law in 2014. We condemn Russia's human rights abuses and military build-up on the peninsula. We strongly reject Russia's attempted annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Russia's actions are of global concern and inconsistent with international law, including the UN Charter, and contrary to the Helsinki Final Act.

Today's event distorted the realities on the ground in Crimea and only served the interests of Russia's occupation. If Russia is truly interested in increasing understanding on the situation in Crimea, it would allow UN, OSCE, and Council of Europe envoys, as well as humanitarian workers, international human rights monitoring missions, and human rights non-governmental organizations, immediate and unimpeded access to Crimea.

As we saw during the March 12 High-Level Arria-formula meeting on Crimea hosted by Estonia and with 23 co-sponsors, as well as during the February 23 General Assembly Debate, Ukraine has the support of the international community in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. We call on Russia to immediately end its occupation, stop human rights abuses, release all Ukrainian prisoners it unjustly holds, cease its aggressive actions in Ukraine, respect its international obligations, and implement its commitments under the Minsk agreements. We reiterate our support for the efforts of the Normandy format and our firm commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, in line with the Minsk agreements and with full respect of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

More than 25 million people in the UK have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

- 95% of people aged 65 and over have been vaccinated with first dose
- 9 in 10 of those clinically extremely vulnerable have received first jab

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Figures out today show the UK health services vaccinated a total of 25,273,226 people between 8 December and 16 March with first doses of the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines, while 1,759,445 people have had their second dose.

This means almost half of the adult population (26.5 million) have already been vaccinated and will soon develop strong protection from serious illness, saving countless lives and significantly reducing pressure on the NHS.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

This latest milestone is an incredible achievement – representing 25 million reasons to be confident for the future as we cautiously reopen society.

Thank you once again to the brilliant NHS, scientists, armed forces, volunteers and all those who've helped our rollout.

Speaking at the Downing Street press conference, Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Today, exactly 100 days after Margaret Keenan got the first authorised jab in the whole world, we've now vaccinated over 25 million people across the United Kingdom.

It's been such a national mission. One of the biggest logistical exercises since the war.

We're moving in the right direction. Thanks to everybody following the rules that are keeping us safe now and coming forward to get a jab that will keep us safe for the future.

So let's stick with it, follow the rules, and when you get the call, get the jab.

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

BT are marking the milestone with a message on the iconic BT Tower in London.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

Vaccines are the best way to protect ourselves and our loved ones from this terrible virus and the UK vaccination programme is going from strength to strength.

This is an incredible milestone and moves us one step closer to safely seeing our friends and family again.

The vaccination programme will continue to expand over the coming weeks and more people will receive their second doses.

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

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 infections among older people aged 70 years and over.

The vaccines are available free of charge from thousands of vaccine centres, and through GPs and pharmacies. Ninety-eight per cent of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England, which includes mosques, Westminster Abbey and football stadiums.

There are a total of 53 million adults in the UK and we expect to have vaccinated 26.5 million people – half of all UK adults – later this week.

PHE's real-world data on the efficacy of COVID vaccines is available [here](#).

Through the government's Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 457 million doses of 7 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

To date, the government has invested over £300 million into manufacturing a successful vaccine to enable a rapid rollout.

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.

Health and Social Care Secretary's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 17 March 2021

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

I'm joined by Professor Jonathan Van Tam, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, and Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at Public Health England.

I've got some fantastic news to bring you today on the success of the vaccination rollout and the protection that it's bringing right across the United Kingdom right now.

Yesterday, we delivered 529,119 vaccinations. More than half a million.

And that means that today, exactly 100 days since Margaret Keenan got the first authorised jab in the whole world, we have now vaccinated over 25 million people across the United Kingdom.

It's been such a national mission. One of the biggest logistical exercises since the war. And I've had the honour of playing my part, we've had the honour of playing our parts – it's been a huge team effort.

And I've got absolutely no doubt it's the best project I've ever been involved in. And I want to say a huge thank you to everybody who leant in and has done so much to put this country in the position we are in where we've been able to vaccinate almost half of the adult population, 25 million people.

It's nothing any of us who've been involved in it from the start will ever forget. But what really matters is why this is making a difference.

And we have some very exciting information for you today about the real-world impact the vaccination programme is having.

I've just got one slide today.

This slide shows over time the increase in the proportion of people who actually have COVID-19 antibodies – those are the antibodies that are so crucial to the bodies' ability to fight the disease.

This chart isn't measuring how many vaccines have been done. It's actually measuring the proportion of people who actually have COVID-fighting antibodies swimming around in their bloodstream.

This chart represents the fact the vaccine is giving the country protection. As you can see it runs up to the start of March and it shows around 90 per cent of people aged around 70 and above had these antibodies and it has

continued to expand further in the 2 weeks or so since then.

The chart explains why deaths from COVID in this country are now thankfully falling so fast, down by more than a third last week again.

The vaccine is saving thousands of lives right now here in the UK, and can give us all hope. And professor Van Tam is going to say a little more about this and the safety details in a second. And it underlines why it's so important that when you get the call, get the jab.

I find this data really compelling. And to anybody who still has concerns, or any doubt about getting the jab, we know that the vaccine is safe and helps make you safe. It gives you this protection. And Dr Mary Ramsay is with us because she's going to set out details on a publication that Public Health England have just released with more evidence of the impact of this vaccine – to show what this protection looks like.

It shows that after a single dose of the vaccine – either vaccine – protection against getting COVID-19 is around 60 per cent. That's protection against getting it.

It shows protection against hospitalisation is around 80 per cent and protection against death is around 85 per cent.

One of the other interesting facts that is really important is that the vaccine offers protection to you, but also offers protection to those around you.

The data shows that if you live with someone who's been vaccinated, you have a 30 per cent lower risk of catching COVID-19 yourself.

This is the first data that directly measures the impact of the vaccine on reducing transmission. And it shows that the vaccines are saving lives.

Both vaccines being rolled out in the UK are not just safe but they make you safe. They're saving lives and protecting people.

And because we're rolling out this vaccine so fast, and because we've protected so many people so quickly, we're now able to extend the offer of a vaccination to yet more people.

All people aged 50 and above are, from today, invited to come forward and get a jab.

The NHS will contact you, and today, we're sending over 2 million texts and letters and invitations to get vaccinated.

Anyone aged 50 and over can now sign up on the [NHS UK website](#) or call 119.

We're on track to offer a first dose to everyone in priority groups 1 to 9 by 15 April. While we deliver on that commitment we also want to ensure this offer reaches everyone in groups 1 to 9.

So at the same time as opening up vaccinations to all those that are 50 and above we are going to do whatever it takes to reach all those in the most vulnerable groups who haven't come forward yet before we move onto the next cohort of people in their 40s.

My message to our huge team of vaccinators is: let's keep getting the numbers through the doors.

But it's absolutely critical that we reach out and loop back and we invite in yet again all those who are in vulnerable groups who haven't yet been vaccinated. I want to get those percentages of people in vulnerable groups right up, reaching every last vulnerable person – and it is worth the extra effort. We'll do that before we move on to people in their 40s.

I'm 42, and I'm as eager as anyone to get the jab. But before we forge ahead I want us to be confident that we've done everything we can to protect those most in need of protection.

And we will do all we can, and do everything necessary, to secure the supplies that are contractually committed to protecting people in this country.

We're moving in the right direction thanks to everybody following the rules that are keeping us safe now and coming forward to get a jab that will keep us safe for the future.

But now is not the time to waver. We're on the road to recovery. The vaccine is our way out. We are on track.

So let's stick with it, follow the rules, and when you get the call, get the jab.

Unlimited fines for those who breach fire safety regulations

Building owners could face unlimited fines following new measures being brought in to strengthen fire safety, the Home Office has announced today.

As part of the government's work to ensure people are safe in their homes, these limitless fines will be handed out to anyone caught obstructing or impersonating a fire inspector as well as to those who breach fire safety regulations under the Fire Safety Order.

These new measures, announced as part of the government's response to the Fire Safety Consultation, will come into force as part of the legislation in the Building Safety Bill.

The measures will amend the Fire Safety Order and will include a requirement for fire risk assessments to be recorded for each building and improve how fire safety information is handed over throughout the lifetime of a building.

The Home Office have also announced a further cash boost of £10 million for Fire and Rescue Authorities across England, on top of the £6 million already announced in the Fire Covid-19 Contingency Fund. This will help with additional tasks related to managing the pandemic – such as driving ambulances and assisting at testing and vaccination centres.

Fire Minister Lord Greenhalgh said:

Everyone should be safe in the buildings where they live, stay or work.

Our new measures will improve fire safety and help save lives, but will also take firm action against those who fail in their duty to keep people safe.

Our incredible Fire and Rescue Services have played a crucial role in our response to the pandemic, from assisting at vaccination centres to driving ambulances. That is why we are giving them this cash boost, so they can continue their life-saving efforts.

Roy Wilsher, National Fire Chiefs Council Chair, said:

The NFCC welcomes the extra funding to support Covid activities carried out by fire and rescue services across England. Firefighters are responsible for administering around 1 in 240 vaccinations to the public.

We also welcome the government's response to its own fire safety consultation and the continued investment in fire and rescue services protection work.

Ultimately, we want to see safer buildings for residents and are committed to working constructively with the Home Office and other partners on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations and other key fire safety policy areas.

The new measures announced today will:

- improve the quality of fire risk assessments and competence of those who complete them
- ensure vital fire safety information is preserved over the lifespan of all regulated buildings
- improve cooperation and coordination amongst people responsible for fire safety and making it easier to identify who they are
- strengthen enforcement action, with anyone impersonating or obstructing

- a fire inspector facing unlimited fines
- strengthen guidance issued under the Fire Safety Order so that failure to follow it may be considered in court proceedings as evidence of a breach or of compliance
- improve the engagement between Building Control Bodies and Fire Authorities in reviewing plans for building work
- require all new flats above 11 metres tall to install premises information boxes

The Fire Safety Consultation took place last year to inform government work on improving fire safety. The government received feedback from over 250 stakeholders with an interest in building and fire safety, including residents, Responsible Persons and enforcing authorities, which we have used to inform our response.

The government intends to launch a further consultation on personal emergency evacuation plans this spring to seek additional views on implementing the relevant Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations.

The Home Office intends, subject to the Fire Safety Bill receiving Royal Assent, to lay regulations before the second anniversary of the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 Report which will deliver on the Inquiry's recommendations.

The Fire Safety Bill clarifies that the scope of the Fire Safety Order (FSO) and changes to the FSO outline above will be delivered through it. The Building Safety Bill will create the first national Building Safety Regulator and overhaul the way buildings in scope of the new regime are designed, built and managed when occupied.

[Aberdeenshire to drive forward green industrial revolution](#)

- £31 million UK Government funding for world-class, safe carbon storage in rock deep below the North Sea
- Project could cut emissions and support a greener economy across North East Scotland, creating tens of thousands of new jobs
- Funding part of a wider package of UK Government measures to put the UK at the forefront of the global green industrial revolution.

An ambitious new project to provide world-class, safe carbon storage capacity in the North Sea, off Aberdeenshire, will benefit from £31 million of UK Government funding and could create tens of thousands of new, green jobs, the UK Business and Energy Secretary announced today (Wednesday 17 March).

The scheme is one of nine green tech projects across the UK benefiting from a pot of £171 million UK Government funding to cut emissions from industry and

part of a wider package of measures including an ambitious blueprint to deliver the world's first low-carbon industrial sector.

More than £31 million will support the development of Scotland's Net Zero Infrastructure project, based in Peterhead, to deliver important offshore and onshore engineering studies connecting industrial sites across Aberdeenshire and down to Falkirk, with access to world-class, safe carbon storage resources in rock deep below the North Sea.

This programme of new work and reusing infrastructure will provide a significant boost to the Aberdeenshire's fast-growing low carbon credentials, paving the way for onshore and offshore developments totalling in excess of £3 billion, helping Scotland transition away from oil and gas and creating and securing tens of thousands of jobs by 2050.

UK Business and Energy Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

Scotland is moving towards a future with renewable energy at its heart. This important project that will mean the North Sea has a world-class facility capable of making a real reduction in carbon emissions.

Our £31 million investment will not only help in the creation of a greener economy in Scotland, but it will also lead to the creation of potentially tens of thousands of sustainable jobs and new opportunities for people in Aberdeenshire.

UK Government Minister for Scotland David Duguid said:

This crucial funding for onshore and offshore developments in Scotland will boost our NetZero Infrastructure and help build a better, brighter and more environmentally sound future.

A green recovery plan is vital as we navigate our way out of the pandemic. This plan, part of the North Sea Transition Deal, will not only make Scotland greener and cleaner, it will support the energy transition, creating and securing tens of thousands of jobs by 2050.

Building on the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, published last year, the new Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy sets out the UK Government's vision for building a competitive, greener future for the manufacturing and construction sector. Part of the UK Government's path to net zero by 2050, today's measures will create and support 80,000 UK jobs over the next 30 years whilst cutting emissions by two-thirds in just 15 years.

The new strategy will be underpinned by supporting existing industry to decarbonise and encouraging the growth of new, low carbon industries in the

UK to protect and create skilled jobs and businesses in the UK as well as give businesses long-term certainty to invest in home-grown decarbonisation technology, such as that which can capture and store carbon emissions from industrial plants – rather than outsourcing industrial activity to high-emission countries around the world.

The blueprint also includes measures to build on the UK's leading efforts in moving towards greener energy sources, with an expectation of 20 Terawatt hours of the UK industry's energy supply switching from fossil fuel sources to low carbon alternatives by 2030 – helping industry to increase its use of low carbon energy sources to around 40% of industry's total energy consumption.