

UK vaccine swap with South Korea in joint effort against COVID-19

- First shipment of Pfizer vaccine due to leave the UK in the coming weeks
- Follows similar vaccine swap initiative with Australia

The UK and the Republic of Korea will share COVID-19 vaccine doses to mutually support the rollout of the lifesaving vaccine in each nation, the government has announced today (Wednesday 22 September).

The UK is sending over 1 million Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines to the Republic of Korea to enhance their vaccination programme, with the first batch expected to arrive in the coming weeks.

By the end of 2021, the Republic of Korea will return the same volume of doses to the UK, as the government continues with its vaccine rollout and the booster programme over the winter months.

The swapping initiative will also help the Republic of Korea towards hitting its target of administering a second dose to 70% of its population by the end of October.

Similar to the Australia vaccine swap arrangement announced earlier this month, this new collaboration means the Pfizer/BioNTech doses – which are not immediately required in the UK due to robust supply management – are used to support vaccination through the health partnership we have with the Republic of Korea.

Almost 90% of over 16s in the UK have received one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and there will be no impact on the UK's ongoing COVID-19 vaccine rollout or booster programmes as a result of the dose sharing initiative. It will also have no impact on the doses the UK has already pledged to give to COVAX.

Health and Social Care Secretary, Sajid Javid said:

By working closely with our friends in South Korea, this vaccine swap will maximise their rollout speed without having an impact on the UK's vaccine programme.

Separately, we continue to deliver on our commitment to donate 100 million doses to nations around the world by June 2022 to ensure as many people across the world are as safe from COVID-19 as possible.

Today's announcement follows the UK donating 10.3 million COVID-19 vaccines to other nations – including 6.2 million to vulnerable nations through COVAX – exceeding the target of 5 million by September.

The COVAX doses were a share of the 100 million vaccines the Prime Minister pledged the UK would share over the following year at June's G7 in Cornwall, with 30 million due to be sent by the end of the year.

Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss said:

The UK is playing a leading role in the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic – donating 100 million vaccine doses across the world and have committed £548m to COVAX.

The Republic of Korea is a strategic partner for the UK and the sharing of one million vaccines benefits both countries as we help build resistance against COVID-19 and save lives.

In July, the UK delivered 3 million vaccines through COVAX to 11 African countries, which were also part of the 100 million package of doses announced in June – Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia – and four million directly to countries in need including Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Cambodia, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Notes to editors:

- A total of 1,000,350 Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines will be shipped to the Republic of Korea.
- The doses going to the Republic of Korea are not part of the commitment to send 100m vaccines overseas.
- To date the UK has donated 10.3 million COVID-19 vaccines to other nations – 6.2 million doses have been donated through COVAX, with the remaining doses donated bilaterally to countries in need.
- The UK has led the international response to COVID-19, including through kick-starting efforts to establish COVAX in 2020 and providing £548 million to fund vaccines for lower income countries through the scheme. It has so far delivered more than 215 million vaccine doses to over 138 countries and territories, including in 84 lower-middle income countries. COVAX aims to deliver 1.8 billion vaccines to lower-income countries by early 2022.