

Business Secretary calls on businesses to continue supporting vaccine rollout

- Kwasi Kwarteng today called on businesses to continue supporting the national vaccine rollout effort as companies pledged their own initiatives
- Companies including IKEA, Timpson and the John Lewis Partnership are already stepping up, including offering paid time off for employees to receive their jab and volunteer, as well as offering workspace for vaccination centres
- Support from business comes as the number of people vaccinated in the UK reaches 15 million

He paid tribute to leading business in the UK such as Marks and Spencer, Heineken and Boots who have made offers to repurpose vital workspaces, including warehouses, pubs and shops, to be used as vaccination hubs to support NHS staff in delivering the biggest vaccination programme in British history.

Business leaders are also allowing thousands of UK workers to take paid time off work to receive their jab, while also encouraging their staff, supporting crucial tasks such as checking patients in and guiding people at vaccinations sites across the UK.

The Business Secretary will make the call for even more businesses to get on board as part of a visit to Pall Biotech in Portsmouth. Pall specialises in the provision of critical equipment for biological manufacturing, supporting multiple vaccine developers including AstraZeneca, Novavax and Valneva with single-use consumables, which are essential for the vaccine development process.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

It has been awe inspiring to see businesses lending their hand over the past few months to our heroic healthcare workers and clinicians – all playing their part to support the biggest vaccination programme in our nation's history.

Businesses and their workers have shown an indomitable spirit and leadership that will help us to defeat this virus, and I urge all businesses, no matter how big or small, to join us and do what they can as we reach the next stage of the rollout.

I want to thank British businesses for their ingenuity and collaboration which will help guide us towards the light at the end of the tunnel, which is getting brighter by the day.

Among the businesses supporting the vaccine rollout is UK retail group the

John Lewis Partnership which has donated space at their Waitrose Head Office to be used as a local vaccination hub and are encouraging their 78,000 Partners to sign up as volunteers for vaccination centre and are offering full pay to those who take time off work to receive the vaccine.

Andrew Murphy, Executive Director at the John Lewis Partnership said:

Having worked with the Department of Health & Social Care to pilot and carry out over 60,000 workplace rapid tests since November, we are really proud to be supporting the rollout of the vaccination programme.

Timpson, the UK's leading shoe repair, locksmith and key cutting company, recently confirmed that its 5,400 employees across 2,150 sites nationwide would be eligible for time off from work at full pay in order to receive the vaccine.

Deliveroo has teamed up with BP and restaurant chains such as Wagamama, Pizza Hut and Nando's to deliver free meals to volunteers at vaccination centres. Hundreds of thousands of meals have been donated and delivered to hubs in Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford and Sheffield.

Clive Glover, Director, Cell & Gene Therapy, Pall Corporation:

We are an industry well-known for innovation and scientific endeavour, but what we've achieved over the past twelve months has been extraordinary. Everyone involved—from the life sciences businesses like Pall Corporation that support production, to the biopharmaceutical companies, to the UK Government—we all have elevated our collective efforts to meet the COVID-19 vaccine challenge.

Pall is proud to be a part of this massive undertaking and will continue to support the effort any way we can to help ensure a successful vaccine rollout across the UK and around the globe.

Vaccine Minister, Nadhim Zahawi said:

The rollout of our vaccine programme is our route out of this pandemic and I am incredibly grateful to UK businesses for rallying to support this monumental effort. "Businesses have once again proven themselves to be up to the challenge of fighting COVID-19, both in supporting their own employees to receive the vaccine and in offering up practical resources to get vaccine centres operating up and down the country.

The ingenuity and collaboration we have seen from businesses is

nothing short of remarkable and I thank them sincerely for all that they are doing to help in the UK's roadmap out of this pandemic.

Major retailer Marks and Spencer, which employs 70,000 people in the UK, have said it wants to do 'all it can to help' with the vaccine rollout and has offered the use of its empty properties as vaccination centres, as well as guiding colleagues on how to volunteer.

Sacha Berendji, Retail Director at Marks and Spencer said:

Our colleagues have been helping to deliver essentials to the nation throughout the pandemic, as well as doing a huge amount in their own time to support the NHS and local communities.

On top of this, we know they want to help roll out the much-needed vaccine so we're pleased to do our bit in supporting involvement in the NHS Volunteer Responders campaign.

To further support the vaccine effort we have also offered the use of our vacant property and queuing tunnels which can be used to protect people queuing in winter weather.

It follows the Prime Minister's announcement on Monday that the UK has surpassed its mid-February target of vaccinating over 15 million of the country's most vulnerable people with their first coronavirus vaccine dose.

Notes to editors

- Still images of today's visit available on request by contacting the BEIS Press Office on 020 7215 1000
- For broadcast footage please contact BBC South Today at 023 8037 4540.

Full list of companies supporting and their pledges:

John Lewis

John Lewis has donated space at their Waitrose Head Office to be used as a local vaccination hub. The company is also actively encouraging their 78,000 Partners to sign up as volunteers to support the vaccination programme rollout, and offering full pay to those who take time off work to receive the vaccine. The Partnership was also one of the first UK businesses to rollout rapid lateral flow testing and now has 63 sites across England regularly testing its John Lewis and Waitrose Partners.

Timpson

Timpson, the UK's leading shoe repair, locksmith and key cutting company, recently confirmed that its 5,400 employees across 2,150 sites nationwide would be eligible for time off from work at full pay in order to receive the vaccine.

Marks and Spencer

Major retailer Marks and Spencer, which employs 70,000 people in the UK, has kept its food halls open since the start of the pandemic. As the next stage of tackling the virus gets underway, the company says it wants to do 'all it can to help' with the vaccine rollout and has offered the use of its empty properties as vaccination centres, as well as guiding colleagues on how to volunteer.

HEINEKEN UK

HEINEKEN UK, which owns around 2,500 pubs nationwide, is offering the use of empty pubs as potential vaccination centres, as well as its head office in Edinburgh.

James Crampton, Corporate Affairs Director, HEINEKEN said:

The NHS vaccination programme has provided us with a light at the end of the tunnel.

As well as encouraging and allowing our 2,300 colleagues to take time off to receive their vaccination in the coming months, HEINEKEN colleagues want to continue to support their communities and many have already been volunteering to help the NHS and other local charities.

Boots

Pharmaceutical company, Boots, which has been supporting coronavirus testing since the start of the pandemic, with over 700 staff at around 50 testing sites across the UK, has also opened 3 vaccination hubs to help with the vaccine roll out.

Seb James, Managing Director, Boots said:

We've opened three vaccination hubs so far and are extremely well placed to support the roll out of the vaccine quickly and safely. We stand ready to do more to support the NHS and the government.

IKEA

IKEA, which employs more than 11,000 people across its 21 UK stores, has continued to support staff throughout the pandemic, putting an extensive set of safe working procedures in place and ensuring that all workers are paid 100 per cent of their contracted hours, regardless of the restrictions in place. The company is now stepping up plans to support the vaccine rollout.

Peter Jelkeby, Country Retail Manager and Chief Sustainability Officer, IKEA UK & Ireland said:

The vaccine roll-out is an exciting milestone, enabling an eventual return to the togetherness we need and crave. In supporting our co-workers to get vaccinated, our return to normality, to our customers, and most importantly to our loved ones, is a step closer. And for that opportunity we're incredibly grateful.

Barratt Developments

Meanwhile, Britain's biggest housebuilder, Barratt Developments, has had 6,500 construction workers on the frontline since the pandemic began to deliver its 15,000 new homes target. The company has ensured that employees are equipped with the right information about the safety of vaccines and are actively encouraging volunteering at local vaccine centres.

David Thomas, Chief Executive, Barratt Developments said:

We want to play our part in the national effort to vaccinate against COVID-19.

As well as ensuring our people have the information and the time they need to receive the vaccine themselves, we are encouraging our employees to volunteer and to help the NHS roll out the vaccines where they live.

Deliveroo

Deliveroo has teamed up with BP and restaurant chains such as Wagamama, Pizza Hut and Nando's to deliver free meals to volunteers at vaccination centres. Hundreds of thousands of meals have been donated and delivered to hubs in Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Oxford and Sheffield.

Uber

Taxi service Uber have been providing free rides for those who need it to receive their vaccination. They're offering trips to 42 of the mass vaccination centres around the country.

Asda

An Asda store in the West Midlands became the first supermarket to administer the Covid-19 jab in January. It has now transformed part of a shop in Watford to help deliver over 1,000 vaccines a week.

Brewdog

Scottish craft brewer Brewdog have offered the use of their bars as vaccination centres, with staff helping out as volunteers.

Portsmouth Football Club have pledged to offer staff time off work to receive the vaccine when they're offered it, as well as encouraging fans to take up

the offer.

Mark Catlin, Chief Executive, Portsmouth Football Club said:

Like the rest of the country, Portsmouth Football Club are in awe of the incredible work being undertaken by the NHS to vaccinate the most vulnerable members of our community.

We are always proud to partner with our National Health Service – whether that’s promoting their request for blood plasma donations via our social media channels or providing a location for blood donor sessions.

Thanks to their incredible work, the light at the end of this long tunnel grows ever closer.

We urge fans of all clubs to step forward when they are offered the vaccination. We also pledge to commit to our staff having the time they need when it’s their turn to receive the vaccine.

[The Secretary of State has reappointed Professor Dame Elan Closs Stephens DBE as Member for Wales on the BBC Board](#)

News story

Professor Dame Elan has been reappointed as the Member for Wales on the BBC Board from 20 January 2021 to 20 July 2023.



Professor Dame Elan is the Pro Chancellor of Aberystwyth University. She serves currently as the Electoral Commissioner for Wales. She is the Chair of the Welsh Government’s Public Leaders Forum for Government sponsored arms

length bodies. Dame Elan has a particular interest in cultural and communications policy and in governance. She has served on many cultural bodies including the BFI and the British Council. She served for two terms as Chair of S4C and became the Wales member of the BBC Trust. She has been a member of the Wales Permanent Secretary's Board where she was Chair of Corporate Governance. Dame Elan is a native Welsh speaker and is a strong advocate for the language having served as Vice Chairman of the Welsh Language Board. She is also keen to further career opportunities and training for young people within the creative industries.

The base fee for this role is £33,000 per annum. A committee chair fee of £5,000 is paid on top of the base fee for chairing one of the permanent committees of the Board, reflecting the additional time and responsibility required. Dame Elan also Chairs the BBC Wales Committee.

This reappointment has been made in accordance with the [Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments](#), the process is regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. The Government's Governance Code requires that any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years is declared. This is defined as holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation or candidature for election. Dame Elan has not declared any activity.

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Three housing associations' gradings under review

Press release

The GUR lists registered providers whose compliance with RSH's economic standards is being investigated.



The Regulator of Social Housing reports that the following three housing associations have been placed on its gradings under review list today (17 February 2021):

- 3CHA Limited
- Ash-Shahada Housing Association Limited
- Concept Housing Association CIC

At the time of the last published [Statistical Data Return](#), the providers had fewer than 1,000 homes and therefore do not have a current published regulatory judgement in accordance with our established procedures.

The regulator is currently investigating matters which may impact on the providers' compliance with the Governance and Financial Viability Standard. The regulator's [gradings under review list](#) is available on the website.

Further information

For press office contact details, see the [Media enquiries page](#).

For general queries, please email enquiries@rsh.gov.uk or call 0300 124 5225.

Notes to editors:

1. The GUR lists providers where we are investigating a matter that might result in them being assessed as non-compliant in relation to the regulator's Governance and Financial Viability Standard.
2. The [regulatory standards](#) can be found on the RSH website.
3. The Regulator of Social Housing promotes a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer. It also sets consumer standards and may take action if these standards are breached and there is a significant risk of serious detriment to tenants or potential tenants.

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Administration services firm boss banned for VAT fraud

Laura Theophilus (42), from Cambridge, was the sole director of CIS UK PAY Limited. Incorporated in February 2012, the company provided combined office administrative services.

The company was VAT registered shortly after its incorporation and Laura Theophilus submitted VAT returns for five consecutive quarters from January 2017 to January 2018, paying just over £273,000.

In April 2017, however, CIS UK PAY received notification from the tax authorities that some of its recent purchases from a supplier had been connected to tax losses. Laura Theophilus was also warned that she should apply due diligence when choosing suppliers.

But Laura Theophilus failed to conduct due diligence checks and this resulted in CIS UK PAY submitting inaccurate VAT returns and payments. The director was then told she owed a further £373,000 in VAT payments and this caused the administration services provider to enter into voluntary liquidation.

On 11 January 2021, the Secretary of State accepted a disqualification undertaking from Laura Theophilus after she did not dispute that she caused CIS PAY UK to participate in transactions which were connected with the fraudulent evasion of VAT and that she knew or ought to have known this.

Laura Theophilus's ban was effective from 1 February and lasts for 10 years, during which time she is banned from directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

Dave Elliott, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said:

As a company director, Laura Theophilus had a duty to ensure CIS PAY UK paid the correct amount of tax. Despite this, she involved her company with suppliers who she knew, or ought to have known, weren't following their obligations.

Laura Theophilus has been banned from the business environment for 10 years and a ban of this length sends a clear message that tax abuse of any kind will not be tolerated.

Laura Theophilus is of Cambridge and her date of birth is May 1978

Company CIS UK PAY Limited (Company Reg no. 07935316).

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject

to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct is available.](#)

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

Joint statement: Rocket attacks in Erbil on 15 February 2021

News story

The following statement was released by the US, France, Germany, Italy and the UK following the February 15 attack in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region.



The following statement was released by United States Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio, and UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab following the February 15 attack in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region:

We the foreign ministers of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America condemn in the strongest terms the February 15 rocket attack in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. We offer our condolences to the victims, their families, and the Iraqi people.

Together, our governments will support the Government of Iraq's investigation into the attack with a view to holding accountable those responsible. We are united in our view that attacks on U.S. and Coalition personnel and facilities will not be tolerated.

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