

New Commissioner appointed to oversee education catch-up

- Sir Kevan will lead work to ensure children and young people can recover learning lost due to the pandemic.
- Education remains the top priority, with government committing £300 million to help with catch-up this year, on top of the £1 billion announced in June last year.

The government has today announced the appointment of Sir Kevan Collins as the government's Education Recovery Commissioner, to oversee a comprehensive programme of catch-up aimed at young people who have lost out on learning due to the pandemic.

The reopening of schools is a national priority. The Prime Minister recognises that school closures have had a huge impact on children's learning and has pledged to work with parents, teachers and schools to develop a long-term plan to make sure pupils have the chance to make up their learning over the course of this Parliament.

Sir Kevan will lead this work. He is a prominent figure in education, having worked in the sector for over 30 years as a teacher, a Director of Children's Services and most recently as Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation.

In his new role, he will work with government to deliver measures that will support children who have missed out on face-to-face education due to extended school closures.

This will include addressing factors such as curriculum content and quantity of teaching time in the coming months, to ensure the impact the pandemic has had on learning is addressed as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

Earlier this month the Prime Minister committed to providing a huge programme of catch up, recognising that the disruption of this year has had a huge impact which will take more than a year to make up.

This will involve a further £300 million on tutoring programmes, building on last year's £1 billion Covid Catch Up fund, as well as potential plans for summer schools developed in partnership with the education sector.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I am absolutely determined that no child will be left behind as a result of the pandemic.

Our top priority is to get schools open again and once they are, we will make sure that teachers and students are equipped with the

resources and the time they need to make up for lost learning.

I am delighted that Sir Kevan has been appointed to lead this vital work – his experience and expertise will help ensure every young person is supported to catch up on their education and gain the skills and knowledge they need to be able to seize opportunities in future.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Sir Kevan brings a wealth of experience in education policy that I know will be invaluable in supporting all the young people who have been impacted by the pandemic.

He will be a tremendous asset to those young people, their families, and everyone working in education who have my lasting gratitude for their efforts to support young people throughout the pandemic.

I look forward to working with Sir Kevan as we deliver our existing National Tutoring Programme that is already reaching tens of thousands of young people who need it most, expand our catch up provision for this year and work on the longer term recovery to make sure every young person has the opportunity to progress and fulfil their potential.

Sir Kevan will report directly to the Education Secretary and the Prime Minister, and will consult closely with parents, teachers and schools as part of his role.

While schools have been closed to the majority of pupils, the government has been doing everything possible to support children to learn from home. The Department for Education has purchased more than one million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged young people, supporting them to access remote education.

Oak National Academy was also set up last year and is backed by government – with 10,000 online lessons created by teachers available.

The government is due to set out further details on its approach to re-opening schools as part of its plan for leaving lockdown, which will be published in mid-February.

[Education Recovery Commissioner: role specification and terms of reference](#)
(PDF, 145KB, 2 pages)

More than 10 million people receive first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in UK

- 9 in 10 of those aged 75 and over in England have received their first dose
- vaccines offered to all elderly care home residents and staff in England and Wales

More than 10 million people in the UK have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, marking a significant milestone for the largest vaccination programme in British history.

Figures out today show the NHS vaccinated a total of 10,021,471 million people between 8 December 2020 and 2 February 2021, including 9 in 10 people aged 75 and over in England.

This is equivalent to vaccinating the total capacity of 111 Wembley stadiums in just 8 weeks and is an important step towards hitting the Prime Minister's target of offering vaccines to the top 4 priority groups by the middle of February.

These top 4 groups account for 88% of COVID deaths, which is why the vaccines will play such a crucial role in saving lives and reducing the demand on the NHS.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This terrific achievement is testament to the monumental effort of NHS workers, volunteers and the armed forces who have been working tirelessly in every corner of the UK to deliver the largest vaccination programme in our history. Every jab makes us all a bit safer – I want to thank everyone for playing their part.

Vaccines are the way out of this pandemic. The unprecedented national effort we have seen right across the United Kingdom means the majority of our most vulnerable people are now inoculated against this awful disease.

The UK government has worked rapidly to secure and deliver doses to all of the UK, demonstrating the strength of our union and what we can achieve together.

Vaccines have been offered to all elderly care home residents and staff in England and Wales, with staff returning to homes where residents may have been unable to get a vaccine due to medical conditions, or because of a local outbreak.

A study published in the Lancet today shows [the Oxford University/AstraZeneca](#)

[vaccine provides a sustained protection of 76% during the 12-week interval between the first and second dose](#). It is also the first study to show the vaccine may substantially reduce transmission, suggesting those who have already been immunised with this vaccine cannot infect others.

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.

The vaccination programme continues to expand, with thousands of vaccination centres open – ranging from GP and pharmacy-led services to hospitals and large-scale vaccination centres – to provide easy access to those eligible, regardless of where they live.

Vaccines Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

The UK's vaccination programme is in full swing and almost 1 in 6 people across the UK are already protected from serious illness.

The NHS is doing everything it can to protect the most vulnerable and will continue to expand the vaccination programme ever further in the coming weeks to save as many lives as possible.

The public has a vital part to play in the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines and the government has called on people to:

- help out: help those eligible for the vaccine by supporting friends, family and loved ones with their appointments, as well as volunteering to help those in the community
- join up: sign up to clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines, as well as treatments
- stay informed: keep up to date with accurate and trusted NHS advice and make sure to share the facts with friends and family

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

There are many people and groups responsible for the UK's vaccination programme, and we owe our thanks to our brilliant scientists, to Kate Bingham and the Vaccine Task Force which has procured over 400 million doses of seven different types of vaccine, to the manufacturers and the delivery drivers, the pharmacists, the military medics, countless volunteers.

But to get this life-saving medicine into the arms of the nation at the kind of speed that we're seeing, we are relying on the doctors,

nurses and all the staff of our NHS.

It is thanks to their effort – the most colossal in the history of our National Health Service – that we have today passed the milestone of 10 million vaccinations in the United Kingdom, including almost 90% of those aged 75 and over in England and every eligible person in a care home.

A total number of 10,021,471 have [received the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine](#) in the UK. 498,962 people have received their second jab.

Through the government's Vaccines Taskforce, the UK has secured early access to 407 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

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

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.

UK funds to help communities in Peten to tackle COVID-19 impact

World news story

The British Ambassador in Guatemala, Nick Whittingham, visited Peten and met with communities and authorities who are receiving assistance to improve governance, reduce poverty and continue preventing COVID-19 infections.



The UK government is providing extra support of more than 500,000 quetzals to a [3-year project aimed at tackling illegal wildlife trade in Guatemala and bordering areas with Mexico](#). The funds will address COVID-19 specific impacts in the area.

The projects will help local authorities financially debilitated by COVID-19 to continue tackling illegal wildlife trade in the area. It will also expand livelihoods investments through support for subsistence agriculture, apiculture, and habitat restoration within five Guatemalan communities, benefitting over 120 households.

Ambassador Whittingham held a meeting with project implementers working in the area and led by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The Executive Secretary of the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP), Abraham Estrada; Environmental Prosecutor, Aura Marina Lopez; and Environmental Judge of Peten, Karla Hernandez, also joined the meeting. They revised implementation to date and next steps.

Later, the Ambassador visited the premises of the Guatemalan Ministry of Health in Santa Elena, Peten. The funds will also allow collaboration with Guatemala's Government to provide personal protective equipment (PPE), COVID-19 medical kits and rapid testing for rural communities/project partners, and undertake outreach to raise awareness about COVID-19 within rural communities.

Finally, the Ambassador travelled to the Community of San Miguel, in the Municipality of San Andres, to see how some of these projects are becoming a reality and to participate as a witness of honour in the signature of a conservation agreement. This compact will allow villagers to benefit from the fruits of their labour -with aid of capital seed from the fund-, whilst they also commit to continue preserving the environment and tackling illegal wildlife trade.

Published 3 February 2021

Recruitment of Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Press release

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland invites applications for the appointment of Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.



The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland invites applications for the appointment of Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

The new Chief Commissioner will take up the appointment in late summer 2021 for a period of up to five years. Further details about the role, including the terms of appointment, and the application pack are available for download at <http://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>

Alternatively, an application pack can be requested by email to NIHRC2021@nio.gov.uk or by telephoning 028 9076 5497. Unfortunately, we are unable to send or receive application packs by post at the current time. Please contact us if you require other formats.

The closing date for applications is Sunday 28 February 2021. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments regulates appointments to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Secretary of State in accordance with the provisions set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 makes appointments.

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Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 3 February 2021

Good afternoon,

When Captain Sir Tom Moore decided to launch a national campaign in his own back garden

raising more money and achieving more in his one hundredth year than perhaps any Centenarian in our history

he knew instinctively which organisation he wanted to thank and support it was – and is – the NHS. And he was right.

Because there are many people and groups responsible for the UK's vaccination programme

and we owe our thanks to our brilliant scientists,

to Kate Bingham and the Vaccine Task Force which has procured over 400 million doses of seven different types of vaccine,

to the manufacturers and the delivery drivers,

the pharmacists, the military medics, countless volunteers,

but to get this life-saving medicine into the arms of the nation at the kind of speed that we're seeing

we are relying on the doctors, nurses and all the staff of our NHS.

And it is thanks to their effort – the most colossal in the history of our National Health Service –

that we have today passed the milestone of 10 million vaccinations in the United Kingdom,

including almost 90 per cent of those aged 75 and over in England and every eligible person in a care home.

And with every jab and every day, we have more evidence about the effectiveness of these vaccines.

New research from Oxford University suggests the protection provided by the

first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine kicks in after three weeks and lasts right the way through to the booster at three months.

And research also shows that the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine seems likely to reduce transmission to others.

And even if these vaccines cannot make us invulnerable,

and no vaccine has ever given 100 per cent protection to everybody

the evidence increasingly shows that our vaccines achieve this crucial objective:

to reduce death and serious illness from those major strains of Covid that have been subject to research.

And in the days leading up to our review point in the week of the 15th of February we will be accumulating even more data

helped by NHS Test and Trace –

so that we can begin to chart a way ahead

starting, if the data allow, with the re-opening of schools on March 8th.

And I will be setting out as much as we can about that roadmap forward on February 22nd

And though today there are some signs of hope

the numbers of Covid patients in hospital are beginning to fall for the first time since the onset of this new wave –

the level of infection is still alarmingly high.

And I am sorry to say that we have lost another 1,322 lives in the last 24 hours alone

and our hearts again go out to every family that grieves.

And the wards of our NHS are under huge pressure with more than 32,000 Covid patients still in hospital.

And so tonight let's clap together for Captain Tom at 6pm and let's clap for the spirit of optimism that he stood for

but let's also clap for all those he campaigned for

our brilliant NHS staff and care workers

and let's do everything we can to carry on supporting them.

Because if we stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives,

then in the words of Captain Tom –

tomorrow will be a good day.