

Over 5,000 Armed Forces deployed in support of the Covid response in the biggest homeland operation in peacetime

This is more than at any previous point in the pandemic and the biggest homeland operation the UK has ever seen in peacetime. Thousands more are supporting efforts through their day jobs in military planning, Defence Medical Services, Defence Science and Technology Laboratories and elsewhere.

More military personnel are being deployed to support community testing in:

- Manchester – 800 personnel providing community testing support to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority
 - Kent – 390 personnel will support community testing
 - Swadlincote, Derbyshire – 130 personnel to establish and operate four lateral flow testing sites
 - Kirklees, Yorkshire – 75 personnel to establish and operate four lateral flow testing sites
 - Lancashire – 420 personnel to support asymptomatic testing

In Manchester today (4 January) another large scale task starts, with 800 personnel deploying from nine regiments across the British Army at the request of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), through the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). These personnel will prepare to work across all ten local authority areas of Greater Manchester to carry out targeted asymptomatic testing of specific populations that may be at a higher risk of infection including social care staff, key workers, public facing occupations such as bus drivers, and those in high risk environments such care homes and shared accommodation for the homeless. The task builds on lessons from previous asymptomatic community testing in Liverpool, Lancashire, Merthyr Tydfil, Medway, and Kirklees.

In addition to community testing, military personnel remain on-task testing hauliers in Dover and helping to establish ten new testing sites to improve the flow of traffic across the Channel. As of today, 515 personnel are on task in Kent and elsewhere providing testing to hauliers.

1,500 Armed Forces personnel have also been provided to support schools testing, with local response teams providing virtual support and phone advice to institutions. Personnel also on standby to deploy at short notice to provide in-person support. Testing will continue as planned with two rapid Lateral Flow Tests available to all secondary school and college students and staff at the start of term to identify asymptomatic cases, break chains of transmission and beat the virus.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The new year will see new levels of Armed Forces support to overcoming this pandemic. Thousands of service personnel are working throughout the United Kingdom, wherever they are needed to assist the civil authorities.

Manchester is the latest of those tasks and will be an important contribution to protecting the highest risk groups as the city seeks to recover. As a North West MP I am acutely aware of the considerable time many of us have been labouring under some form of lockdown and I hope our soldiers will help us get to the day when these restrictions will start to lift.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We are enormously grateful to the Armed Forces for lending their support to these important community testing programmes. Around one in three people with coronavirus showing no symptoms, asymptomatic testing is crucial to identifying those who might be unknowingly infected, and protecting our most vulnerable.

These community testing schemes are part of a national testing programme with millions of lateral flow tests arriving in schools tomorrow, for the testing of students and staff, to add to the hundreds of thousands of asymptomatic tests currently being conducted in care homes, across the NHS and in critical infrastructure workplaces and food manufacturers.

While the Army, alongside thousands of medical professionals and volunteers, help roll out the vaccination programme, we must remember that the first line of defence against the virus remains to wash our hands, cover our faces and keep space.

Lt Gen Sir Tyrone Urch KBE, Commander Standing Joint Commander UK said:

I am incredibly proud of all the servicemen and women who have worked tirelessly for most of this year on Operation RESCRIPT, the military effort in support of the government's campaign to tackle COVID-19.

In recent weeks, our amazing staff have deployed at short notice to set up and staff community testing centres across the country in support of the NHS, DHSC, Devolved Nations and local communities. They have conducted a successful testing pilot in schools and contributed to vaccine rollout planning. Both Regular and Reservist

personnel stepped up on Christmas Eve to help clear the backlog of trucks in Kent, setting up testing facilities overnight when they would otherwise have been spending the festive period with their families.

I am humbled by the sacrifice and dedication of all our people from the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force as we continue to contribute to our nation's fight against the coronavirus.

The MOD has deployed 10 military planners to assist the Vaccine Task Force, with over 150 personnel deployed across the UK to support organisational and logistical components of the Deployment Programme. Two separate military planners are seconded to support the Vaccine Task Force Director. Additionally, 20 personnel are assisting with regional vaccine planning, end-to-end logistics and delivery.

From 11th January a Vaccine Quick Reaction Force is being established, with their training for the role beginning today. This will initially be 21 teams of six personnel assigned to the seven NHS England regions, able to provide surge support to the vaccine roll-out if required by local health authorities.

In Wales, 90 service personnel are deployed to support Health Boards in rapidly establishing and operating vaccination centres. For the first-time trained defence medics will also support the administering of the vaccine. Ninety-four military personnel, including medics and drivers, have embedded with the Welsh Ambulance NHS Trust to support them by driving Ambulances.

In Scotland, military planners are supporting the testing and vaccine programmes. Earlier during the pandemic Armed Forces personnel supported healthcare professionals to deliver testing at Glasgow Airport, and RAF Puma helicopters were deployed to Kinloss Barracks in Moray to provide emergency assistance to NHS boards and trusts across Scotland. In Northern Ireland the Defence Estate is being loaned to the PSNI for their use and the Armed Forces have placed medevac capabilities on standby for Covid-19 patients when needed.

[Metallurgy buyout raises competition concerns](#)

Press release

The CMA has found that Tronox's anticipated purchase of TTI raises competition concerns in the supply of chloride slag and titanium dioxide

pigment.



Both companies are involved in the supply of materials used in the production of titanium dioxide, a white powder found in every-day items such as paint, sunscreen, paper and plastics. TiZir Titanium & Iron (TTI) is one of the 2 main global suppliers of chloride slag, one of the most important minerals used to make titanium dioxide pigment and Tronox is one of the main producers of titanium dioxide pigment.

The Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) initial, Phase 1, investigation found that Tronox intends to use all of TTI's chloride slag in its own production of titanium dioxide and halt future sales of chloride slag to third parties. This would leave Rio Tinto, TTI's main chloride slag competitor, with what is effectively a monopoly position.

The CMA has found that the removal of TTI as a main competitor from the market could significantly limit customer supply and lead to higher prices for chloride slag globally, as well as for titanium dioxide in the UK and Europe. Although other minerals are available to make titanium dioxide, the CMA found that customers have limited substitutes for chloride slag.

Andrea Gomes da Silva, the CMA's Executive Director for mergers and markets said:

Our investigation showed that Tronox's purchase of TTI removes a key player in the global supply of chloride slag which, in turn, could have a knock-on effect on the creation of titanium dioxide pigment.

Any deal that leaves one company as the only significant supplier in a market deserves closer scrutiny and, in this case, the acquisition could leave buyers and their customers facing higher prices.

Tronox now has the opportunity to address the CMA's concerns within 5 working days. If they are unable to do so, the deal will be referred for an in-depth, Phase 2, investigation.

For more information, visit the [Tronox Holdings plc](#) / [TiZir Titanium and Iron](#)

merger inquiry [case page](#).

Notes to editors:

1. Tronox is headquartered in Connecticut, USA, and listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Tronox's activities in the UK include the operation of a titanium dioxide pigment facility in Lincolnshire.
2. TiZir Titanium & Iron is part of the wider TiZir business owned by Eramet, a global mining and metallurgical group, listed on the Euronext Paris Stock Exchange. TTI owns and operates a titanium feedstock smelter in Norway which upgrades titanium and iron ilmenite into feedstock.
3. With media queries, contact the CMA press office via press@cma.gov.uk or on 020 3738 6460.

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[First people to receive Oxford University/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine today \(4 January 2021\)](#)

The NHS is the first health service in the world to deploy the life-saving jab, which has been authorised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) after meeting strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness. It is the only approved vaccine which can be stored at fridge temperatures.

The Government has secured access to 100 million doses of the vaccine on behalf of the whole of the UK, crown dependencies and Overseas Territories.

More than half a million doses are available today, with tens of millions more to be delivered in the coming weeks and months once batches have been quality checked by the MHRA. More than 730 vaccination sites have already been established across the UK and hundreds more are opening this week to take the total to over 1,000, helping those who are most at risk from Covid-19 to access vaccines for free, regardless of where they live.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I am delighted that today we are rolling out the Oxford vaccine – a testament to British science. This is a pivotal moment in our fight against this awful virus and I hope it provides renewed hope to everybody that the end of this pandemic is in sight.

Through its vaccine delivery plan the NHS is doing everything it can to vaccinate those most at risk as quickly as possible and we will rapidly accelerate our vaccination programme.

While the most vulnerable are immunised, I urge everybody to continue following the restrictions so we can keep cases down and protect our loved ones.

The first Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccinations will be delivered at hospitals for the first few days, as is standard practice, before the bulk of supplies are sent to hundreds of GP-led services and care homes later in the week. More than a million people in the UK have already been vaccinated with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and its roll out will continue at pace.

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine can be stored at fridge temperatures, between two to eight degrees, making it easier to distribute to care homes and other locations across the UK. The vaccines will be deployed through:

- hospital hubs for NHS and care staff and older patients to get vaccinated
- local community services with local teams and GPs already signing up to take part in the programme
- vaccination centres across the country, ensuring people can access a vaccine regardless of where they live

An army of current and former NHS staff have applied to become vaccinators, with tens of thousands having already completed their online training. These are being processed as quickly as possible and volunteer vaccinators will be deployed as more vaccine supplies become available. GPs and local vaccination services have been asked to ensure every care home resident in their local area is vaccinated by the end of January.

The MHRA, Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) and the four UK Chief Medical Officers agreed to delay the gap between the first and second dose of vaccines to protect the greatest number of people in the shortest amount of time.

In line with the recommendations of the JCVI, the vaccine will be rolled out to the priority groups including care home residents and staff, people over 80 and health and care workers, then to the rest of the population in order of age and risk, including those who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

Background

There are more than 730 vaccination sites across the UK.

Up to 100 more hospital sites are due to come online in England this week,

subject to final assurance checks. There are also another 180 GP-led services which are due to come online this week.

The following hospitals in England will start delivering the vaccine today ahead of the rollout to hundreds of GP-led services later in the week:

- Royal Free Hospital London NHS Foundation Trust
- Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust
- George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust

Government opens further COVID-19 testing locations for hauliers heading to France

- 10 new testing centres for HGV drivers open across country, with more to open over course of week, as Army is deployed to offer support
- additional support for haulage firms to establish their own testing centres at depots, with kits provided free of charge
- HGVs using Dover and Eurotunnel will get fast-tracked past queues if they get tested before arriving in Kent
- hauliers urged to ensure all correct documentation, including Kent Access Permits, in order before arriving in Kent to ensure they can cross the channel

The government is taking further steps to help hauliers get tested before they travel to Kent or any port heading to France, in an effort to reduce disruption for drivers as they carry goods across the Channel.

The Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, today (2 January 2020) announced the creation of 10 new testing locations across the country, with a further 10 opening tomorrow (3 January 2020), and more being added this week.

In addition, to help hauliers cross the Channel as quickly as possible, the government is offering to help any business to set up a testing centre at its own premises to ensure trucks heading for France depart 'COVID ready'.

The Department of Health and Social Care will support this, including the provision of testing kits entirely free of charge, and any business able to take advantage of this offer is urged to so to avoid the risk of delays waiting for tests either in Kent or at the public sites.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

As a result of the heroic efforts of hundreds of military and civilian personnel who have worked hard over the past 10 days, we have made incredible progress in clearing the queues of drivers left stranded as a result of the French government's actions.

If we are to keep traffic flowing in Kent, it is essential drivers are tested before they travel down to the area and that they have a [Kent Access Permit](#) before heading to the border, and these new testing centres both at service stations and inside businesses, will help reduce delays.

Tests will be available at the [information advice sites](#) the government has set up for hauliers around the country, originally to provide advice about the requirements for travelling to the continent after leaving the EU. Now military personnel will be at 10 of these sites to provide COVID testing for haulage drivers, providing a negative result in the required 72-hour window before arriving in Kent, fast-tracking their access to the ports.

Lateral flow devices are being used to test hauliers that provide results within the hour and provide the necessary negative test result to allow them to continue on their journey into France. The Armed Forces are experienced in using these devices having used them for mass testing in Liverpool, Merthyr Tydfil and Medway.

As well as delivering testing, staff at the sites can also provide guidance on new border processes after EU transition and check whether drivers have all the right paperwork.

Significant progress has been made in ensuring over 25,500 lorries have crossed the Channel since the French government introduced unprecedented restrictions due to the new coronavirus variant.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey said:

The Armed Forces are once again demonstrating their flexibility, redeploying to new testing sites to ensure quicker access and minimal disruption on the approaches to Dover and the Eurotunnel.

As we saw throughout the festive period the Armed Forces are dedicated to help keeping the country moving, healthy and secure in 2021.

New Institute of Teaching set to be established

A new Institute of Teaching is set to be established in England to provide teachers and school leaders with prestigious training and development throughout their career.

Training will be delivered through at least four regional campuses, launching in September 2022, with the Institute being the first of its kind in the world.

The national initiative will deliver evidence-based approaches to teacher training, and also include mentoring and early career support, alongside leadership courses and continued professional development, building on existing high-quality provision.

It will be funded as part of £22 million for teacher quality agreed at the Spending Review, which also includes funding for mentor time for early career teachers as part of the Early Career Framework reforms.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

When I visit schools around the country, it is clear that the very best combine high standards of pupil behaviour and discipline with a broad knowledge-based and ambitious curriculum, so that every child can learn and flourish.

Our new Institute of Teaching will help equip all teachers to deliver an education like this, by training them in the best, evidence-based practices. The Institute's cutting-edge approach to teacher training will ensure a new generation of teachers have the expertise they need to level up school standards across the country.

Through adding diversity and innovation to the existing teacher development market, the Institute will revolutionise teacher training and make England the best place in the world to train and become a great teacher.

The Institute will become England's flagship teacher training and development provider, showcasing exemplary delivery of the Government's ambitious reforms through the new ITT Core Content Framework and Early Career Framework, and its changes to National Professional Qualifications (NPQs).

The training is likely to be delivered through a blend of online, face-to-face and school-based means. When the Institute is at full capacity, it is expected to deliver training for:

- Around 1,000 ITT trainees annually
- Around 2,000 Early Career Teachers and 2,000 mentors annually
- 1,000 NPQ participants annually

It will continue to build evidence around the most effective approaches to training and developing teachers, and will use this to support other teacher development organisations, including new Teaching School Hubs, to understand and implement best practice.

The Department for Education is also set to resume its review of the ITT market, following a pause due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The review will focus on how the ITT sector can provide consistently high-quality training in line with the Core Content Framework in a more efficient and effective market. It will be led by Ian Bauckham, CEO of Tenax Schools Trust, acting Chair of Ofqual and Chair of Oak National Academy, with the support of officials and a small expert group.

The group will work with the sector during the review. The Department has committed to improving support and professional development for teachers at all stages of their career, particularly for those in their vital first few years of teaching, through the Early Career Framework reforms.

A reformed suite of NPQs, previously announced in 2019 as part of the Teacher Recruitment & Retention Strategy, will also be launched from September 2021. They will offer valuable professional development for teachers and school leaders at all levels, from those who want to improve teaching practice to those leading multiple schools across trusts.