

Statement from the UK Chief Medical Officers on the prioritisation of first doses of COVID-19 vaccines

Press release

Joint clinical advice from the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers on the prioritisation of first doses of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccines.



It is excellent news that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has today authorised the AstraZeneca (Oxford) vaccine for deployment across the UK.

The MHRA authorisation includes conditions that the AstraZeneca (Oxford) vaccine should be administered in 2 doses, with the second dose given between 4 and 12 weeks after the first. The MHRA has also clarified that for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, the interval between doses must be at least 3 weeks. For both vaccines, data provided to MHRA demonstrate that while efficacy is optimised when a second dose is administered, both offer considerable protection after a single dose, at least in the short term. For both vaccines the second dose completes the course and is likely to be important for longer term protection.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has subsequently recommended that as many people on the JCVI priority list as possible should sequentially be offered a first vaccine dose as the initial priority. They have advised that the second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine may be given between 3 to 12 weeks following the first dose, and that the second dose of the AstraZeneca (Oxford) vaccine may be given between 4 to 12 weeks following the first dose. The clinical risk priority order for deployment of the vaccines remains unchanged and applies to both vaccines. Both are very effective vaccines.

The 4 UK Chief Medical Officers agree with the JCVI that at this stage of the pandemic prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible on the priority list will protect the greatest number of at risk

people overall in the shortest possible time and will have the greatest impact on reducing mortality, severe disease and hospitalisations and in protecting the NHS and equivalent health services. Operationally this will mean that second doses of both vaccines will be administered towards the end of the recommended vaccine dosing schedule of 12 weeks. This will maximise the number of people getting vaccine and therefore receiving protection in the next 12 weeks.

Based on JCVI's expert advice, it is our joint clinical advice that delivery plans should prioritise delivering first vaccine doses to as many people on the JCVI Phase 1 priority list in the shortest possible timeframe. This will allow the administration of second doses to be completed over the longer timeframes in line with conditions set out by the independent regulator, the MHRA and advice from the JCVI. This will maximise the impact of the vaccine programme in its primary aims of reducing mortality and hospitalisations and protecting the NHS and equivalent health services.

The JCVI has also amended its previous highly precautionary advice on COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy or breastfeeding. Vaccination with either vaccine in pregnancy should be considered where the risk of exposure SARS-CoV2 infection is high and cannot be avoided, or where the woman has underlying conditions that place her at very high risk of serious complications of COVID-19, and the risks and benefits of vaccination should be discussed. Those who are trying to become pregnant do not need to avoid pregnancy after vaccination, and breastfeeding women may be offered vaccination with either vaccine following consideration of the woman's clinical need for immunisation against COVID-19. The UK Chief Medical Officers agree with this advice.

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United Kingdom and Cameroon secure Economic Partnership Agreement

Press release

The deal allows businesses to trade freely as they do now, without any additional barriers or tariffs



The United Kingdom and Cameroon have today secured an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) that ensures mutual continuity of trade.

An agreement has been reached to roll over current EU-Cameroon trading arrangements from 1 January 2021.

The deal allows businesses to trade freely as they do now, without any additional barriers or tariffs, and provides a foundation to extend our trading relationship in future.

Total UK trade with Cameroon amounted to £200 million in 2019.

Top goods imports to the UK from Cameroon in 2019 were in fruit and nuts, mostly bananas (£27 million) and wood and wood products (£25 million). The UK market accounts for 12% of total exports of bananas from Cameroon and this agreement will maintain tariff-free market access to the UK. It also guarantees continued market access for UK exporters, who sold £51m in goods to Cameroon in 2019.

Minister for International Trade Ranil Jayawardena said:

The United Kingdom is committed to supporting developing countries by encouraging growth through trade. The preferential terms for their key exports, such as bananas, will support jobs and economic development in Cameroon, and make sure British consumers get the products they want.

Notes to Editors

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Letter to the health and care sector about the UK–EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement

This letter is written by Health Minister Edward Argar MP, on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care.

It tells industry and the health and social care sector what the UK–EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement means for health and social care. It reinforces that this does not remove any of the requirements to act now to prepare for new customs and border arrangements when the UK leaves the single market and customs union.

Clothing manufacturer banned for unpaid tax bill

Surinder Singh (62), from Leicester, was the director of Lady Fashion (UK) Ltd. Trading from premises in Leicester, the company was incorporated in September 2017 and manufactured women's clothing.

The company, however, was placed into compulsory liquidation in July 2019 after ceasing trading and failing to pay a £98,000 tax bill which had accumulated from April 2018.

The Official Receiver was appointed Liquidator of Lady Fashion (UK) and investigated Surinder Singh's conduct as director of the company.

It was found that Surinder Singh had failed to ensure Lady Fashion kept accounting records. The director had also withdrawn £180,000 in cash from the company accounts between November 2017 and March 2019 and could not explain the reasons for the withdrawals to the Official Receiver.

Following the investigation, Surinder Singh has been banned from acting as a company director for a period of six years. He did not dispute that he failed to ensure Lady Fashion maintained and/or preserved adequate accounting records and that the company traded to the detriment of the tax authorities.

Surinder Singh signed the undertaking on 1 December before it came into effect on 22 December.

Robert Clarke, Chief Investigator at the Insolvency Service, said:

Surinder Singh tried to cloak his actions through a lack of records and attempted to gain an unfair competitive advantage by not paying the tax due.

Directors have a clear obligation to make sure they maintain full and accurate records for their business, and we will take robust action against those who fail to maintain these required standards, as this case shows.

Surinder Singh is from Leicester and his date of birth is June 1958.

Lady Fashion (UK) Ltd (Company number 10975693)

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 restrictions](#).

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

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine authorised by UK medicines regulator

The Government has today accepted the recommendation from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) to authorise Oxford University/AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine for use. This follows rigorous clinical trials and a thorough analysis of the data by experts at the MHRA, which has concluded that the vaccine has met its strict standards of safety, quality and effectiveness.

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) will also publish its latest advice for the priority groups to receive this vaccine.

The NHS has a clear vaccine delivery plan and decades of experience in delivering large scale vaccination programmes. It has already vaccinated hundreds of thousands of patients with the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and its roll out will continue. Now the NHS will begin putting their extensive preparations into action to roll out the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine.

Throughout this global pandemic we have always been guided by the latest scientific advice. Having studied evidence on both the Pfizer/BioNTech and Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccines, the JCVI has advised the priority should be to give as many people in at-risk groups their first dose, rather

than providing the required two doses in as short a time as possible.

Everyone will still receive their second dose and this will be within 12 weeks of their first. The second dose completes the course and is important for longer term protection.

From today the NHS across the UK will prioritise giving the first dose of the vaccine to those in the most high-risk groups. With two vaccines now approved, we will be able to vaccinate a greater number of people who are at highest risk, protecting them from the disease and reducing mortality and hospitalisation.

The JCVI's independent advice is that this approach will maximise the benefits of both vaccines. It will ensure that more at-risk people are able to get meaningful protection from a vaccine in the coming weeks and months, reducing deaths and starting to ease pressure on our NHS.

To aid the success of the vaccination programme, it is vital everyone continues to play their part, abides by the restrictions in their area and remembers hands, face, space so we can suppress this virus and allow the NHS to do its work without being overwhelmed.

Further details will be set out shortly.