

Janssen to begin Covid-19 vaccine trials in the UK

- Phase three clinical trials for Janssen's Covid-19 vaccine to begin across the UK
- 6,000 volunteers from across the UK will take part in Janssen's trials to test its effectiveness
- Researchers urge the public to keep volunteering for vital studies to ensure people in the UK have access to different types of vaccines that work for them

Global pharmaceutical company Janssen will begin clinical trials of its potential vaccine in the UK from today (Monday 16 November), involving 6,000 volunteers across the country.

The Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies, part of Johnson & Johnson, is the latest study in the UK, jointly funded by the UK government's Vaccine Taskforce, to test the safety and effectiveness of a potential Covid-19 vaccine. It is the third potential vaccine to enter clinical trials in the UK, alongside US biotech company Novavax and University of Oxford / AstraZeneca whose studies are currently ongoing.

6,000 UK volunteers, some from the NHS Vaccines Registry, will take part in the Janssen studies at 17 National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) sites, including in Southampton, Bristol, Cardiff, London, Leicester, Sheffield, Manchester, Dundee and Belfast. Recruitment into the study will complete in March 2021 and the trial will last for 12 months.

To date, over 300,000 people have signed up to the NHS Vaccines Registry to take part in vital coronavirus vaccine studies.

Experts have cautioned that no one vaccine is likely to be suited for everyone, and that a wide range of types are needed to ensure people across the UK have access to one that works for them, so they are urging more people to sign-up to ensure clinical trials that test the safety and effectiveness of potential vaccine candidates continue. The NHS vaccine registry particularly needs volunteers who are most vulnerable to the effects of coronavirus, including frontline health and social care workers and people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds.

Business Secretary, Alok Sharma, said:

The start of further clinical trials in the UK is yet another step forward in the race to discover a safe and effective vaccine, and comes alongside recent news that we could be on the cusp of the first major breakthrough since the pandemic began.

While we are optimistic with the progress being made, there are no guarantees and it is possible there will be no one-size-fits-all

vaccine. That is why it is absolutely vital that while our scientists are cracking on with the job, we continue to follow the guidance to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives.

The UK Government has developed a portfolio of six different vaccine candidates and secured access to 350 million doses to date, putting the UK in the best position for a vaccine. Of this, 30 million doses of the Janssen vaccine could be made available to the UK if it is safe and effective by mid-2021.

Professor Saul Faust, Director of the NIHR Southampton Clinical Research Facility and Chief Investigator for the Janssen Phase 3 trial, said:

Finding an effective vaccine with a good safety profile is a top priority in helping to protect us all more quickly against COVID-19. While the news of a potential vaccine is tremendously exciting, our ambition in the scientific community is to ensure we leave no stone unturned in the search for a solution to help end this pandemic.

All the vaccines that are being trialled work by generating immune responses to the same part of the coronavirus as the RNA vaccine that has announced some interim early results.

Chair of the Government's Vaccine Taskforce, Kate Bingham said:

The recent news about progress on the search for a vaccine is enormously exciting for the whole world, but we must not take our focus off continuing the important research to work out which vaccines work best for different people to provide long lasting, effective protection against Covid-19.

Many vaccines are needed both here in the UK, and globally, to ensure we can provide a safe and effective vaccine for the whole population. That is why the launch of this trial to establish the safety, effectiveness, and very importantly the durability, of the Janssen vaccine is so significant, and I would continue to encourage people to sign up and take part in vaccine trials.

By co-funding this study we are helping generate data for future regulatory submissions internationally as well as for the UK.

Black, Asian and minority ethnic Clinical Champion at NIHR Clinical Research Network North Thames, and consultant in Sexual Health and HIV at Barts Health NHS Trust, Dr Vanessa Apea, said:

COVID-19 still poses a significant threat to our health and our communities and many of us are still vulnerable to it. One of the ways we can reduce the threat and impact of this disease is a vaccine.

The topic of vaccines divides communities. For many, and in particular, Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities, the word vaccine generates a lot of anxiety, rooted in mistrust, which can understandably lead to reluctance in taking part in a trial.

We know that these communities are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and this makes it even more important that any outcomes from research, including new treatments and ways to prevent the disease, work for all communities. Only by doing this can we truly take control of COVID-19, so we really need people from Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities to sign up to learn more and be part of research. Entering a clinical trial or receiving a vaccine is entirely a personal choice and should always be supported by accurate information.

Paul Stoffels, M.D., Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee and Chief Scientific Officer, Johnson & Johnson said:

We are delighted to be initiating our global Phase 3 trial in the UK to study the safety and efficacy of a two-dose regimen of our investigational COVID-19 vaccine candidate. This collaboration with UK researchers and the NIHR demonstrates our continued commitment to working together with partners around the world, and marks another positive step forward as we strive to find solutions to this global health crisis.

The UK public can support the national effort to speed up vaccine research and receive more information about volunteering for clinical studies by [visiting this page](#) to join the NHS Vaccine Research Registry.

The Registry was launched by the UK government in partnership with the NIHR, NHS Digital, the Scottish and Welsh governments and the Northern Ireland Executive in July. It aims to help create a database of people who consent to be contacted by the NHS to take part in clinical studies, to help speed up the development of a safe and effective vaccine.

Notes to editors

Janssen's phase three clinical trials will involve 30,000 people worldwide.

Volunteering for COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials:

People wishing to volunteer to support clinical trials can sign up for information on Covid-19 vaccine trials with the NHS Covid-19 vaccine research registry, developed in partnership with NHS Digital. It is helping large

numbers of people to be recruited into trials rapidly over the coming months – potentially meaning an effective vaccine for coronavirus can be found as soon as possible.

The service was commissioned as part of the UK Government's Vaccine Taskforce in conjunction with the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Northern Ireland, Scottish and Welsh Governments.

Anyone living in the UK can sign up online to take part in the trials through the NHS, giving permission for researchers to contact you if they think you're a good fit. Once you sign up, you can withdraw at any time and request that your details be removed from the COVID-19 vaccine research registry. The process takes about 5 minutes to complete. More information [can be found here](#).

About the Vaccine Taskforce

The Vaccine Taskforce (VTF) was set up under the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in May 2020, to ensure that the UK population has access to clinically effective and safe vaccines as soon as possible, while working with partners to support international access to successful vaccines. This is to place the UK at the forefront of global vaccine research, development, manufacture and distribution.

The Vaccine Taskforce comprises a dedicated team of private sector industry professionals and officials from across government who are working at speed to build a portfolio of promising vaccine candidates that can end the global pandemic. It is chaired by biotech and life sciences expert Kate Bingham, who was appointed by the Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The Vaccine Taskforce's approach to securing access to vaccines is through:

- procuring the rights to a diverse range of promising vaccine candidates to spread risk and optimise chances for success;
- providing funding for clinical studies, diagnostic monitoring and regulatory support to rapidly evaluate vaccines for safety and efficacy; and
- providing funding and support for manufacturing scale-up and fill and finish at risk so that the UK has vaccines produced at scale and ready for administration should any of these prove successful.

The 4 different vaccine classes that the government has secured to date for the UK are:

- adenoviral vaccines (Oxford/AstraZeneca, Janssen)
- mRNA vaccines (BioNTech/Pfizer, Imperial)
- inactivated whole virus vaccines (Valneva)
- protein adjuvant vaccines (GSK/Sanofi, Novavax)

In addition the UK has secured rights to AstraZeneca's antibody treatment to neutralize the virus which can be used both as a short term prophylactic for those people who cannot receive vaccines (e.g. cancer and immunosuppressed patients) and front line workers exposed to the virus, as well as a treatment

for infected patients in hospitals.

New national parks and thousands of green jobs under plans to build back greener

- Thousands of new jobs to be created and retained as part of Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan to drive UK's green ambitions
- New national parks and greater protections for England's iconic landscapes
- Plans come ahead of publication next week of wider blueprint for UK green industrial revolution, creating thousands of jobs and making progress on net zero targets

Even more new jobs will be created and retained under new plans to kickstart a green economic recovery, the government announced today (Sunday 15 November), alongside greater protections for England's iconic landscapes and the creation of new national parks.

Following the initial success of the first round, £40 million additional investment into the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund will go towards creating and retaining thousands of jobs, with funding being awarded to environmental charities and partners across England to restore the natural environment and help make progress on the UK's ongoing work to address the twin challenges of biodiversity loss and climate change, as part of our green recovery from Covid-19.

After a competitive process, a wide range of projects to be announced shortly will receive funding to enhance our natural environment and create and support thousands of jobs. These may include action towards the creation or restoration of priority habitats, preventing or cleaning up pollution, woodland creation, peatland and wetland restoration and actions to help people connect with nature. This will in turn create and retain a range of skilled and unskilled jobs, such as ecologists, project managers, tree planters and teams to carry out nature restoration.

The government has also announced today that more of England's beautiful and iconic landscapes will be turned into National Parks and Areas of Natural Beauty, in order to increase access to nature for communities and better protect the country's rich wildlife and biodiversity.

10 "Landscape Recovery" projects will also be launched across England over the next four years to restore peatlands, woodlands and create wilder landscapes. These projects will help restore the equivalent of over 30,000 football pitches of wildlife rich habitat.

The commitments come ahead of the publication of the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan next week, which will set out his steps for a green industrial revolution to boost green jobs whilst invigorating plans to achieve net zero by 2050.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

As we build back greener we're taking new steps to expand and enhance our landscapes – creating and retaining thousands of green jobs in the process which will be crucial to my Ten Point Plan for delivering a green recovery.

Britain's iconic landscapes are part of the fabric of our national identity – sustaining our communities, driving local economies and inspiring people across the ages. That's why with the natural world under threat, it's more important than ever that we act now to enhance our natural environment and protect our precious wildlife and biodiversity.

These measures mark the next steps in delivering on the government's 25 Year Environment Plan commitments and its [pledge to protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030.](#)

Combined, the new plans to safeguard the natural environment will extend protections of land by 150,000ha in England towards the government's goal of protecting and enhancing an additional area of over 400,000ha.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

As we build back greener from the coronavirus pandemic, we are committed to shaping a cleaner and more resilient society to protect and restore our natural environment and diverse ecosystems.

Today's announcement illustrates how we are leading the world in protecting the natural environment and combating climate change.

By starting the process for designating more of our beautiful and iconic landscapes as National Parks and AONBs, and through the new Landscape Recovery projects, we will help expand and protect precious wildlife habitats and, vitally, increase people's access to our treasured landscapes.

The new Landscape Recovery projects will help expand wildlife habitats in England, restoring wilder landscapes and taking forward our ambition to establish a [Nature Recovery Network](#), which will bring together representatives from across England to drive forward the restoration of protected sites and landscapes. These projects could give a home to species that we have seen flourish in similar initiatives across the country, which include the curlew, nightingale, horseshoe bat, pine marten, red squirrel and

wild orchids.

The projects will be established over the next four years through the Government's Environmental Land Management scheme, which will be centred around support aimed at incentivising sustainable farming practices, creating habitats for nature recovery and supporting the establishment of new woodland and other ecosystem services to help tackle challenges like climate change. This follows the [landmark Agriculture Bill passing into law](#) this week.

The plans will also help protect the country's natural infrastructure by expanding a variety of habitats, such as trees, peat and grassland which are central to capturing and removing CO₂ from the atmosphere, helping to improve air quality for our communities.

UK government commissions space solar power stations research

The UK government has commissioned new research into space-based solar power (SBSP) systems that would use very large solar power satellites to collect solar energy, convert it into high-frequency radio waves, and safely beam it back to ground-based receivers connected to the electrical power grid.

It is an idea first conjured by science-fiction writer Isaac Asimov in 1941, and is now being studied by several nations because the lightweight solar panels and wireless power transmission technology is advancing rapidly. This, together with lower cost commercial space launch, may make the concept of solar power satellites more feasible and economically viable.

Now the UK in 2020 will explore whether this renewable technology could offer a resilient, safe and sustainable energy source.

The study, led by Frazer-Nash Consultancy, will consider the engineering and economics of such a system – whether it could deliver affordable energy for consumers, and the engineering and technology that would be required to build it. One of the biggest issues to overcome is assembling the massive satellites in orbit, which has not been done before at this scale.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

The Sun never sets in space, so a space solar power system could supply renewable energy to anywhere on the planet, day or night, rain or shine. It is an idea that has existed for decades, but has always felt decades away.

The UK is growing its status as a global player in space and we

have bold plans to launch small satellites in the coming years. Space solar could be another string to our bow, and this study will help establish whether it is right for the UK.

Historically, the cost of rocket launches and the weight that would be required for a project of this scale made the idea of space-based solar power unfeasible. But the emergence of privately-led space ventures has brought the cost of launch down dramatically in the last decade.

Martin Soltau, Space Business Manager at Frazer-Nash outlined what the study will involve:

Decarbonising our economy is vital. We need to explore new technologies to provide clean, affordable, secure and dependable energy for the nation. SBSP has the potential to contribute substantially to UK energy generation, and offers many benefits if it can be made practical and affordable.

Frazer-Nash is studying the leading international solar power satellite designs, and we will be drawing up the engineering plan to deploy an operational SBSP system by 2050. We are forming an expert panel, comprised of leading SBSP experts and space and energy organisations, to gain a range of industry views.

We will compare SBSP alongside other forms of renewable energy, to see how it would contribute as part of a future mix of clean energy technologies.

We have also partnered with Oxford Economics, who have significant experience in the space sector and who will provide additional insight to the economic assessment of the system, and the benefit to the UK economy.

As the effects of climate change become more pronounced, prominent research institutions and government agencies are focusing new money and attention on novel approaches to reduce global warming.

In 2019, Britain passed an important milestone, with more electricity generated from sources like wind, solar and nuclear power, that produce almost no carbon dioxide emissions, than from carbon-emitting fuels like natural gas and coal.

According to the World Resources Institute – a Washington-based non-profit that tracks climate change – Britain has reduced carbon dioxide generated in the country by about 40 per cent, which is more than any other major industrialised country.

As the National Space Council sets a new direction for our space policy, the UK Space Agency is committed to understanding the future opportunities space technologies open up.

Pilot for family members to get regular testing for safer care home visits

- Care homes across Hampshire, Cornwall and Devon will pioneer the new system which will see a designated visitor given access to tests
- Around 20 care homes will be included in the trial before a wider roll-out in December

Family members or friends of those living in care homes will be given regular testing to reunite them with their loved ones in care homes as a new pilot launches on Monday (16 November 2020).

The pilot is taking place in around 20 care homes across Hampshire, Cornwall and Devon from Monday and will be rolled out more widely in December in time for Christmas.

Regular testing will be offered to one family member or friend per resident, which – when combined with other infection-control measures such as PPE – will support meaningful visits. These will enable, where possible, indoor visits without a screen to take place while reducing the risk to care home residents, staff and visitors.

Visitors will be offered either PCR tests which they can do at home, or the new 30-minute rapid lateral flow tests (LFTs), which can be administered in person at care homes before a visit.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

I know how heart-breaking restricting visits to care homes has been, not only for residents, many of whom will feel disoriented and confused by the situation, but also their loved ones who aren't able to simply hug each other to support them in this difficult time.

Thanks to the expanding testing capacity we have in place we can now begin to trial a new way to allow safer visits to take place and prevent the spread of COVID-19. I must stress this is only possible if the public takes the right actions now to bring the transmission rate under control while national restrictions are in place.

By respecting social distancing and staying at home as much as possible we will help reunite families and friends with loved ones in care homes as quickly as possible.

We will be encouraging and supporting care homes to facilitate visits to go ahead in a COVID-secure way wherever possible.

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

The pandemic has torn many lives apart but few have been more affected than people living in care homes and their families. I know visits from loved ones are what makes life worth living for many care home residents, yet these have been few and far between over the last few months. Visits with a screen or window are better than nothing for many, but they are too confusing or simply impossible for people with advanced dementia.

That's why on Monday we are starting visitor testing, firstly in around 20 care homes across Hampshire, Cornwall and Devon. Each resident will be able to have one relative or friend who can be their 'key visitor' who will take a COVID test, and then be able to come for an indoor visit without a screen.

COVID is a cruel disease that takes those who are most vulnerable, particularly older people, and it's hard to stop it spreading in people's homes, whether that's a family home or even in a care home. That's why there have had to be restrictions on visiting, but also why we are putting care home visitors front of the queue as we bring more tests on stream.

As Christmas approaches, I want to bring an end to the pain of separation and help care homes bring families and loved ones together. The launch of visitor testing is a crucial step to making that happen.

The pilot, which forms part of plans to roll out mass testing technology across the country, has been made possible thanks to a huge expansion in the country's testing capacity, which currently stands at over 500,000 per day.

Each care home receiving LFTs will receive a box of 675 initially and will be given access to more as required.

It will take place in local authorities with lower transmission rates to ensure it can be done as safely as possible and care staff are being trained to ensure tests are administered safely and accurately.

It will further develop the evidence base for how testing with fast, reliable COVID-19 tests can be delivered at scale.

If successful, care home testing will be rolled out in a phased way across the country.

Any decision on a national roll-out will be taken in light of the latest available data on transmission rates as a result of national COVID-19 restrictions.

Exact details of the national roll-out will be published in due course and will be guided by the pilot. It is anticipated the LFTs will be used across the country to support rapid access. If these faster tests work in this setting we will ring-fence supply to open up more chances for visiting.

Protecting staff and residents has been a priority throughout the pandemic and we ring-fence 120,000 tests every day solely for the care sector.

We have introduced guidance: [Visiting arrangements in care homes for the period of national restrictions](#). This is intended to enable and encourage providers – supported by local professionals, families and the wider community – to provide appropriate visiting opportunities that balance these important benefits against the continued priority of preventing infections to protect staff and residents.

We want care homes to use this guidance and make visiting possible. We want them to follow the example of those who have done this successfully.

Providers can already access free PPE. We announced in [Adult social care: our COVID-19 winter plan 2020 to 2021](#) that care providers would be able to access free PPE until March through our government portal.

UK aid and military support sent to Central America in wake of Hurricane Eta

Press release

The UK is providing vital humanitarian support to countries in Central America following Hurricane Eta.



- UK aid and RFA Argus deployed to Central America in response to Hurricane Eta.

- More than two million people have been affected by the devastating hurricane.
- UK relief effort to focus on urgent humanitarian aid, including shelter kits and food, supported by the military.

The UK is providing vital humanitarian support to countries in Central America following Hurricane Eta, which has caused widespread destruction across the region.

The category 4 hurricane has caused severe damage to some of the most vulnerable communities in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala as well as parts of Belize, El Salvador, Mexico, Costa Rica and Panama. More than 2 million people have been affected with initial reports indicating that over 100 people have lost their lives. People across the region have had to evacuate their homes.

In response, the UK is deploying Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ship Argus to help the US military's relief operations in Honduras. She will offer logistical support so the US can access and deliver supplies to the people most in need.

The UK's wider humanitarian response to Hurricane Eta will be through urgent aid and partnerships with multilateral organisations and NGOs:

- The UK is providing urgent relief supplies, including emergency shelter equipment, kitchen sets, and cleaning kits, which will be distributed by partners in the region.
- The Start Fund, through UK aid funding, will help NGOs in Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala, including Save the Children, Trocaire and Christian Aid to provide food, water and sanitation to those affected.
- The UK-funded NGO MapAction, which specialises in providing mapping for humanitarian emergencies, is providing remote assistance to the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) Regional Office in the Central Americas.

Minister for the Americas, Wendy Morton said:

Hurricane Eta has devastated parts of Central America and my thoughts are with all those who have lost their homes and loved ones.

UK support will help the most vulnerable by making sure they can access the food, water and shelter they need.

RFA Argus is deployed to the Caribbean region as part of a persistent maritime presence that includes providing a contingency to support Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief responses during the hurricane season.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The UK is always ready to assist our friends and allies at times of great need. Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship Argus will support the relief effort, working alongside the US, in the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Eta.

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