

From the Permanent Secretary
Sir Chris Wormald



Department of Health & Social Care

Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU
permanent.secretary@dhsc.gov.uk

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Dear Chair

Following the Public Accounts Committee Hearing on 11 January 2021 on Covid-19 vaccine planning, we committed to write to you on a couple of points raised during the hearing.

- 1. In response to a question from Dame Cheryl, I agreed that I would work with my devolved administration colleagues to provide the PAC with statistics relating to vaccine deployment in the devolved jurisdictions. The specifically requested information was:**
 - a. how many doses of vaccine have been received;**
 - b. how many of those doses have been delivered to the population**
 - c. how this compares to their targets.**

Number of doses received

Vaccines are a precious resource in very high demand across the world and therefore for security reasons it is not possible to provide detail about the size of our supplies.

However, our vaccine supply and scheduled deliveries fully supported vaccination of JCVI priority cohorts 1-4 by 15 February. We have also signed deals for substantial future supply of both vaccines to replenish our stocks and enable swift vaccination of first and second doses across the UK in the weeks and months ahead.

Number of doses delivered to the population

As you are aware, statistics on vaccinations performed are collected by the respective National Health bodies of each Devolved Administration. The table below (see Annex 1) shows the number of doses administered per Devolved Administration, up to 14 February 2021.



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We would like to note that the data displayed in the annex is publicly available in an accessible format on the government dashboard published by Public Health England (<https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations>).

Comparison to targets

Although we have been working very closely with devolved administrations throughout the pandemic, we recognise health is a devolved matter. Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have published their deployment strategies separately.

We met our target to offer a first vaccine dose to everyone in the top four priority groups identified by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) by 15 February.

- 2. I discussed the provision/availability of research data on the efficacy and public health value of varying the timeframe for receiving the second dose of the vaccine. I agreed that I would come back to the committee if there is anything specific I can say on the future publication/provision of this research data.**

We want to reassure you that our position on this issue has not changed since the hearing. The Department recognises the importance of clear and accurate dissemination of data, and we are making more information available to the public as it becomes available.

We would also like to note that regarding the decision to move the scheduled second dose to a 12-week schedule, the Joint Committee for Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) had released statements on this matter that have been available online. Notably, the publication titled '*Optimising the covid-19 vaccination programme for maximum short-term impact*' accessible through the following link, offers a more thorough explanation of the decision, as well as further scientific evidence that underpins our strategy:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/prioritising-the-first-covid-19-vaccine-dose-jcvi-statement/optimising-the-covid-19-vaccination-programme-for-maximum-short-term-impact

In addition, I would like to note the publication of the Public Health England's (PHE's) '*Covid-19: vaccine surveillance strategy*' on 11 January 2020. Included within this document is a section on vaccine effectiveness and the importance of evaluating effectiveness as the vaccine is used in the 'real world' as opposed to clinical trials. The outcomes of PHE's surveillance will be reported to the JCVI, to support vaccine policy recommendations, and to SPI-M to support dynamic modelling to understand



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the impact of the vaccination programme on the need for non-pharmaceutical interventions. The strategy document is available at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-vaccine-surveillance-strategy>

More recently, on 2 February, researchers at the University of Oxford published an analysis of further data from the ongoing trials of the vaccine. This data supports the 4-12 week prime-boost dosing interval recommended by many global regulators. The article reports that a single standard dose of the vaccine is 76% effective at protecting from primary symptomatic COVID-19 for the first 90 days post vaccination, once the immune system has built this protection 22 days after the vaccination. In addition, they report that the effect of dosing interval on efficacy is pronounced, with vaccine efficacy rising from 54.9% with an interval of less than six weeks to 82.4% when spaced 12 or more weeks apart.

On 11 February, the World Health Organization's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunisation issued interim recommendations on the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. The panel endorsed the UK's approach, noting the efficacy of the vaccine is higher when the second dose is administered later. The recommendations note the vaccine should be given in two doses, with an interval of about eight to 12 weeks between the first and second doses. Further information is available at the following link: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-vaccines-SAGE_recommendation-AZD1222-2021.1/

Further research on the dosing interval for Pfizer is commencing this month.

To conclude, I hope you will be encouraged further by the fact that since the hearing, the total number of people vaccinated has more than tripled, and over 15 million first doses have now been administered across the UK. I would like to thank the Chair and the Committee once more for their congratulations on the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Yours sincerely,

SIR CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY

Annex 1: Total of doses administered, per Devolved Administration (14/02/2021)

Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/details/vaccinations>

	1st Dose Total	2nd Dose Total	Total doses administered
Wales	784,809	5,402	790,211
Scotland	1,255,190	14,501	1,269,691
Northern Ireland	397,243	29,005	426,248
England	12,862,909	490,722	13,353,631