



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Nadhim Zahawi MP
Minister for Business and Industry
Minister for COVID Vaccine
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Department of Health & Social Care

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Dear Dr Najim,

Thank you for your correspondence of 26 January, regarding vaccination against COVID-19. I also note that your letter was copied to Professor Chris Whitty and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in replying to you due to the unprecedented volumes of correspondence that the Department of Health and Social Care has received.

Our fantastic health and social care staff are our greatest asset. In these most difficult of times, and with ever-increasing pressures on the NHS and social care, they work tirelessly, always putting patients and service users first and keeping them safe. We are also incredibly grateful for the thousands of staff who are returning to the frontline. They will help to support our hardworking staff, save lives and help patients to recover.

Having studied the evidence on all vaccines, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has advised that we should prioritise giving as many people in at-risk groups their first dose, rather than providing two doses in as short a time as possible.

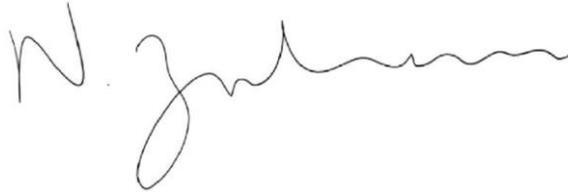
The four UK Chief Medical Officers agree with the JCVI that, at this stage of the pandemic, prioritising the first doses of vaccines for as many people as possible on the priority list will protect the greatest number of at-risk people overall in the shortest possible time. This will have the greatest impact on reducing mortality, severe disease, and hospitalisations, and on protecting the NHS.

I can assure you that one dose of either the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine or the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine provides a high level of protection from COVID-19. Evidence continues to emerge demonstrating that vaccinations are reducing hospitalisations and deaths. You may have seen the recently published results from Public Health England, showing that in those aged over 80 years old, a single dose of either vaccine is more than 80 per cent effective at preventing hospitalisation. There is also evidence which suggests that the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine leads to an 83 per cent reduction in deaths from COVID-19. Further information on this can be found at gov.uk by searching for 'vaccines reduce severe COVID-19 in older adults'. A separate recent study in healthcare workers has shown that one dose of the vaccine is preventing people from catching asymptomatic COVID-19 by at least 70 per cent.

In the Government's view, continuing to vaccinate as many people as possible – and so affording them the protection that one dose has proven to give – is the best way to proceed. The second dose completes the course and is likely to be important for longer-term protection.

Thank you again for taking the time to write and I hope that this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Zahawi', with a long, flowing horizontal stroke extending to the right.

NADHIM ZAHAWI MP
Minister for COVID Vaccine Deployment
Minister for Business and Industry