

Press release

UK adopts historic Pandemic Agreement

Better protections for British public and NHS thanks to deal adopted at the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

From: **Department of Health and Social Care**

(/government/organisations/department-of-health-and-social-care), **Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office** **(/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-development-office)**, **UK Health Security Agency**

(/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency), **The Rt Hon Baroness**

Chapman of Darlington **(/government/people/baroness-chapman-of-darlington)**

and **Ashley Dalton MP** **(/government/people/ashley-dalton)**

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- New agreement will protect British public and NHS from future global health threats while preserving UK sovereignty
- Pandemic Agreement will safeguard lives and UK economy by improving world's collective ability to prevent, prepare for, detect and respond to global disease threats
- This follows long negotiation process to ensure agreement is firmly in UK's national interest

The British people, our NHS and the economy will be better protected against future global health threats thanks to a new World Health Organization Pandemic Agreement adopted by the UK today (20 May 2025).

The deal marks a significant step forward in stronger domestic and global prevention by improving the way countries around the world work together to detect and combat pandemic threats.

The UK government has been actively engaged in negotiations to ensure a strong final agreement. The agreement adopted at the World Health Assembly in Geneva respects national sovereignty while encouraging nations to work together more effectively to address shared global health threats, in turn helping strengthen our national security which is a key part of this government's [Plan for Change \(https://www.gov.uk/missions\)](https://www.gov.uk/missions). There are no provisions that would give the World Health Organization powers to impose domestic public health decisions on the UK.

Minister of State for International Development, Baroness Chapman, said:

“The Pandemic Agreement is a great example of the UK working with our partners to support countries to combat disease and strengthen their health systems. Acting together will help us to prevent pandemics, and prepare for and respond to any future pandemic threats.

“Diseases cross borders, and our diplomacy must too, if we are to prevent a repeat of the devastation caused by COVID-19. That’s why this agreement will make the world a healthier and safer place.”

Health Minister Ashley Dalton said:

“COVID-19 showed us the vital importance of international co-operation to save lives. This landmark agreement will help protect British people from future pandemic threats and safeguard our health system, supporting our mission to build an NHS fit for the future.

“Our national interest and the safety and wellbeing of the British public will always be our first priority. This agreement maintains our sovereignty while ensuring the NHS and the UK as a whole will be better prepared for possible future global health emergencies, through stronger early warning systems and faster response capabilities.

“Our world-class life sciences sector will also benefit from increased innovation in vaccines and treatments, boosting growth and improving care for patients across the UK.”

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Chief Executive, Dame Jenny Harries, said:

“It is gratifying to see the Pandemic Agreement adopted. It is clear that international co-operation and collaboration must be at the very heart of our pandemic preparedness strategy if it is to be effective, and this agreement is a welcome step towards making the world a safer place from pandemic threats.

“UKHSA has consistently been committed to sharing data and analysis on pathogens with pandemic potential with our international partners, and we will continue to do so as we work to develop the global capacity to respond to emerging threats to public health.

“This is also good news for scientific innovation and the UK’s world-leading life sciences industry, opening the door to enabling high-quality vaccines to be delivered faster in the next pandemic.”

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enduring impact on lives and livelihoods around the world. Thousands of families in the UK lost loved ones, children missed out on pivotal learning and development opportunities, and businesses were forced to close their doors. The estimated cost of the UK government’s COVID-19 measures was over £300 billion.

The new Pandemic Agreement will help avoid a repeat of this devastation by creating a framework for countries to take action together to better prevent pandemics - by improving disease surveillance so we can detect and respond to new health threats sooner, and by speeding up innovation of life-saving vaccines and treatments.

The aim is to prevent pandemic threats from emerging in the first place and stopping them in their tracks when they do.

It will facilitate swifter pathogen and pathogen data sharing so we can act quickly to prevent further spread. It will also enable the UK to develop vaccines, treatments and tests faster, which will help save lives and drive economic growth in our world-leading life sciences sector.

One hundred and twenty-four member states agreed to adopt the Pandemic Agreement today, demonstrating strong international commitment to multilateralism and collective action to strengthen global health security.

The final text represents a strong outcome for the UK. Key wins include:

- commitments on pandemic prevention, including for health, animal and environmental sectors to collaborate through a ‘One Health’ approach - a major step toward preventing disease spillover from animals to humans
- provisions that will foster innovation, enhance global research and development, and strengthen supply chains

The Pandemic Agreement paves the way for a new and voluntary Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing (PABS) system which should see pharmaceutical companies get faster access to the pathogens and genetic sequences that they need to create new vaccines, treatments and tests to respond to a pandemic. In return, manufacturers who voluntarily sign up to the system - not the government - will share a portion of their production with the World Health Organization to allocate where it is most needed.

The PABS system is entirely voluntary for pharmaceutical companies, who may choose to join to gain faster access to pathogen data for innovation. There are no requirements placed on governments to share vaccines or treatments they have purchased.

The Pandemic Agreement does not include any provisions that would give the World Health Organization powers to impose domestic public health decisions on the UK. The sovereignty of states is one of the guiding principles of the agreement.

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