



## DR DAN POULTER MP

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**Content from Dr Dan Poulter MP**

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Some of us will be glad to see the back of 2020. This time a year ago, we were looking forward to the start of a new year and a new decade. But, no one could have imagined quite how significant a Coronavirus outbreak, that seemed such a long way away in China, would become, and how much it would impact on all of our lives.

Whilst 2020 has certainly been one of the most challenging years in living memory, there is finally some light at the end of the tunnel with Covid vaccines being rolled out across the country. So, as we enter another New Year, I am optimistic that 2021 will be better for all of us.

We have known since the onset of this pandemic that a safe and reliable vaccine would be key to overcoming the virus and facilitating a return to normal life. So, it is an outstanding achievement that the United Kingdom has been in the vanguard, leading a world-class research programme to help deliver a number of Covid vaccines that are to be rolled out across the country.

There have been a number of media scare stories about the safety of the vaccines, but I am confident that whilst the vaccines have been developed in record time, they have still undergone rigorous safety testing. Huge investment in the vaccine programme has meant that tests that have usually been carried out in series have been carried out in parallel which has allowed the development time of the vaccines to be dramatically reduced.

The vaccines will protect people from Covid so that we can get our lives back to normal. For our doctors, nurses and frontline NHS and care workers, who will be amongst the very first to receive the vaccine, this marks a huge step forward and will allow a return to seeing more patients face to face as we move away from lockdowns and the restrictions of working constantly behind masks and PPE.

The vaccines offer around 95% protection against Covid-19. So, it is essential that those who are at greatest risk, the elderly and those with underlying health conditions should be the first to receive it alongside our health and care workers.

However, the rollout of a vaccination programme will be a vast and challenging logistical effort, not least of all owing to the complexities of the cold temperatures and storage requirements of the Pfizer version of the vaccine. But I am confident that our frontline healthcare workers, public health teams, the military, our supply chain workers and volunteers will pull together and rise to the challenge.

By Summer 2021, I would hope that we can all look forward to a gradual return to some level of normality but in the meantime, it is essential that we do not drop our guard and that we all continue to play our part in preventing the spread of Covid. Suffolk has been at the forefront of following Government guidance, so please – stick with it, there is light at the end of the tunnel. We shall get through this and look forward to a happier and healthier 2021.