



**Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy**

Darren Jones MP
Chair, Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
Secretary of State
Department for Business,
Energy & Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

T +44 (0) 20 7215 5000
E enquiries@beis.gov.uk
W www.gov.uk

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Dear Darren,

I wanted to provide you with an update on the work my department is coordinating to find a safe, effective vaccine for the UK population.

Last month I announced a new Vaccines Taskforce, to coordinate the work across government, academia and industry to find a vaccine. The taskforce has already made significant achievements, including working with Professor Sarah Gilbert at the University of Oxford, so their vaccine candidate became one of the first in the world to enter clinical trialling in humans in April. These trials were fully funded by the Government and I am pleased to report that Phase 1 ended this week, with over 1,000 adults vaccinated. They are now being monitored closely by the clinical trial team.

Chair of the Vaccines Taskforce

On Friday, the Prime Minister announced the appointment of Kate Bingham as chair of the taskforce. Kate is a leading figure in the life sciences sector and her appointment will enable the Vaccines Taskforce to accelerate the development of a safe and effective vaccine.

Kate is co-ordinating the work already underway across Government, academia and industry to rapidly develop vaccines, and ensure that as and when a viable one becomes available, it can be produced in mass quantities and safely administered to the public – both in the UK and around the world.

Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre

In 2018, the Government announced it would build the UK's first-ever dedicated Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre (VMIC) to ensure the UK life sciences industry remains at the forefront of worldwide efforts to tackle life-threatening diseases.

Since then the urgency for this work has increased, so on 18 May I announced that we are bringing forward the construction of the centre by 12 months, to ensure that it can open in summer 2021. The Centre – which is already under construction - will have capacity to produce enough vaccine doses to serve the entire UK population in as little as six months.

Having looked at whether we could bring this opening date further forward to be able to deal with the current strain of Covid-19, we will open a rapid deployment facility this summer.

Both the acceleration of the permanent centre and the rapid deployment facility will be made through a £131 million investment from Government.

Progress at the University of Oxford

To support the development of the vaccine at the University of Oxford, the Government has committed £65.5 million for its manufacture, so that if current clinical trials are successful, we have dosages to start vaccinating the UK population straight away. This will utilise existing manufacturing capacity and is separate to and additional to the capacity at the rapid deployment facility.

You will be aware that the University has this weekend finalised a global licensing agreement with Astra Zeneca. This means that, if the vaccine is successful, Astra Zeneca will work to make up to 30 million doses available by September for the UK, as part of an agreement to deliver 100 million doses in total.

Crucially, the UK will be the first to get access to the vaccine and we can also ensure that, in addition to supporting people here in the UK, we are able to make the vaccine available to developing countries at the lowest possible cost.

My officials will continue to work closely with the University and with Astra Zeneca throughout the development and manufacturing of the vaccine.

Progress at Imperial College, London

We have also committed a further £18.5 million to Imperial College, London. The funding will also allow Imperial to launch Phase 3 clinical trials of its vaccine later this year. Whilst the work at Imperial is progressing to a later timetable than that at Oxford, it too is one of the leading candidates in the world and we will do all we can to support it.

I will be placing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of the House.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Alok Sharma', written in a cursive style.

THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

