



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

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Dear Greg,

I am writing to update you on the work of the Vaccines Taskforce (VTF) in securing a vaccine against Covid-19.

Today, the Government is announcing the acquisition of the Benchmark Vaccines Limited site in Braintree, which will increase vaccine manufacturing capacity in the UK. In collaboration with the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, the investment will fund a state-of-the-art Manufacturing Innovation Centre to accelerate the mass production of a successful Covid-19 vaccine in the UK. Due to open in December 2021, the Centre will have the capacity to produce millions of doses each month. The agreement with the Catapult will ensure the UK has the capabilities to manufacture vaccines and advanced medicines, including for emerging diseases, far into the future.

To support these enhanced vaccine manufacturing capabilities, the Government has also announced further investment to develop national Centres for Advanced Therapies Training and Skills. The new facilities and online training platform will provide industry-standard skills and experience in advanced gene therapy and vaccine manufacturing. This will include sterile techniques for Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), which is the minimum standard that a medicines manufacturer must meet in their production processes.

Earlier in the week, I announced deals with both Valneva and the BioNTech/Pfizer alliance to secure up to 90 million doses of promising vaccine candidates. This is in addition to the vaccines being developed by the University of Oxford and Imperial College London. With this announcement, the Government has now secured access to multiple different types of possible Covid-19 vaccines, giving the UK the best chance of getting access to a safe and effective vaccine as soon as possible. In addition, the Government has also issued a letter of intent in advance of entering an agreement with AstraZeneca to secure 1 million doses of a neutralising antibody. This treatment can be used therapeutically in support of the wider vaccination programme and is currently undergoing clinical trials.

In collaboration with the National Institute for Health Research, the Government has also launched the NHS Covid-19 vaccine research registry to allow and encourage people to sign up to be part of Covid-19 clinical trials. The new online service will allow members of the public to register their interest and be contacted to participate in clinical studies in the UK. To enable large-scale vaccine studies to take place across the UK, our aim is to get 500,000 people signed up by October.

Taken together, these steps bring us significantly closer to defeating this virus and highlight the UK's capability in leading this fight.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a loop and a tail stroke.

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