



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE AND HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE COMMITTEE

Neil O'Brien MP
Minister for Primary Care and Public Health
By e-mail only

16 January 2023

Dear Neil,

30 November evidence session

On behalf of our Committees, thank you for giving evidence on 30 November and following up on some of the issues we raised in your correspondence of 15 December. We are writing to follow-up on part of your evidence and your correspondence.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

During the evidence session we discussed PPE (Q1587 to Q1590 and Q1597 to Q1598) and you provided further information in your letter. Please can you also confirm:

- the number of PPE items you currently have in stock broken down by PPE type; and
- what percentage of current PPE stock has passed its expiry date or is due to expire within six months, a year, two years or three years;

Effectiveness of measures to increase vaccine take-up

In the evidence session, both you and the Deputy Chief Medical Officer discussed the steps you were taking to address disparities in vaccine take-up between different ethnic communities and amongst those with learning disabilities. You addressed some points raised concerning people with learning disabilities in your letter.

Please can you also let us know what methods you have used to reach different ethnic communities, especially those with lower vaccine take-up rates, how you have evaluated each method and what impact they have had in terms of vaccine take-up rates before and after their introduction?

Leadership for responding to a new pandemic

Finally, in our final panel we heard from Dame Kate Bingham, who led the Vaccine Taskforce between May and December 2020. She argued that there was a lack of industry leadership within Government to “co-ordinate the activities for everything from vaccine innovation scale-up to landscaping and figuring out where the new variants and the new potentially pandemic viruses may come from—people who understand manufacturing scale-up, clinical development and regulations” (Q1602). Can you confirm:

- who is providing leadership within Government to co-ordinate work between the Government, regulators, industry and universities to ensure that the UK can rapidly respond to a new pandemic or pathogen threat;
- what mechanisms are in place to support ongoing co-ordination and co-operation between the Government, regulators, industry and universities to ensure preparedness for producing new vaccines at pace and volume;
- what capacity the UK currently has to manufacture bulk antibodies and how this compares to peak capacity during the pandemic; and
- what specific mechanisms are in place to support SMEs and universities to develop and scale-up new vaccines and treatments; and
- what lessons the Vaccine Manufacturing Innovation Centre (VMIC) has learnt from the Vaccine Task Force, how it will support UK innovation and strengthen links between industry and the UK’s research base.

We would be grateful for your response to these questions by 3 February 2023. As is usual with the Committees’ correspondence, we will place this letter and your response in the public domain.

With best wishes,



Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Chair, Science and Technology Committee



Steve Brine MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee