



Department
of Health &
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*From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
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The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Chair
Science and Technology Committee
House of Commons
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Dear Greg,

Thank you for your letter dated 30 March on COVID-19 vaccines manufacturing. Thank you also for your well wishes.

Ensuring the rapid development and distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine is absolutely a top priority in government's response to this emergency. The UK must be in a position to vaccinate as soon as possible after a vaccine is available. To the extent it is complementary to that primary objective, we must ensure longer-term UK vaccine capability and capacity for clinical and industrial benefit. The development of a vaccine is at its early stages but, as you note, progressing rapidly so we are very conscious of the need to be prepared.

To do this, a new cross-government vaccines taskforce has been set up, reporting to the Secretaries of State for BEIS and DHSC as well as Sir Patrick Vallance. It brings together government, industry, academics, funding agencies and other partners to make rapid decisions in order to accelerate vaccine development in the UK, working closely with the BioIndustry Association (BIA). The taskforce will utilise expert scientific and medical advice to make sure all parts of the pursuit for a vaccine are as efficient as possible.

The taskforce will take an end-to-end approach to:

1. **Support discovery** of potential vaccines and scale up;
2. **Prepare the UK to offer itself as an expert clinical trial site and manufacturing site**, proactively approaching companies which are at the forefront of vaccine development;
3. **Review regulations** to facilitate rapid, well supervised trials;
4. **Develop funding and operational plans for procurement and delivery of vaccines**; and
5. **Build on the UK's R&D expertise to support the international effort.**

To ensure that that government can support the development of a vaccine both efficiently and safely, the Vaccines Taskforce is working closely with the MHRA, the research community and with industry on how to best facilitate rapid but safe trials and to support

expedited licensure for new products. Government has also been working with the BIA to understand what is required to achieve the fastest route to treat significant numbers of patients.

The government is also working alongside industry to ensure the UK has the manufacturing capability to produce new vaccines at the levels the UK needs. At present, government and industry are investigating all options for utilising existing manufacturing capacity in the UK, including the NHS Blood and Transplant facility, the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, the Centre for Process Innovation, as well as multiple commercial facilities.

The government is also working with industry to review options for increasing the UK's commercial capacity. One option that government is reviewing in detail is accelerating delivery of the Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (VMIC) so that is ready earlier than its planned operational date of 2022. This planning is moving at pace so I cannot confirm exact timelines at this stage. However, VMIC is already proving to be a helpful partner in our COVID-19 response. Although the centre has not yet been built, the organisation has recruited a team of world-leading experts who are providing expertise to the vaccine development project being led by the Jenner Institute; investigating how the UK can expedite the delivery of increased manufacturing capability; and reviewing how VMIC's capacity can be expanded to provide a population level response.

It is important to note that the production processes to develop novel vaccines are considerably more productive than those for traditional vaccines. This means that there is the potential for a meaningful population level response using existing UK facilities. Ultimately, the type of vaccine manufacturing capacity needed will be determined by the nature of the vaccine that is developed and the technology used to produce the vaccines. This work is proceeding at the fastest possible pace, with the support of industry and academic partners, to ensure that we are identifying suitable capacity across different vaccine types, while those vaccines are still under development.

The government is aware that the hunt for a vaccine will be a truly global endeavour. As the Prime Minister has made clear, we will do whatever it takes in the UK to beat the virus. We have also committed to work with international partners and support the World Health Organisation and others in tackling the pandemic, ensuring the UK is both contributing to and benefiting from efforts around the globe. The UK has to date committed £250 million to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), to strengthen the global search for a vaccine, and is encouraging other governments to contribute to this vital effort.

I hope this answers your questions.

Yours ever,



MATT HANCOCK