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## **Progress in securing a Covid-19 vaccine**

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on Saturday, I am aware that the progress of work towards a safe and efficacious vaccine against Covid-19 will be at the forefront of your minds. I am writing to update you on the work of the UK Vaccine Taskforce, which sits in my Department and which is playing a leading role in the global effort to fight the pandemic.

The Vaccine Taskforce has achieved multiple successes over the past seven months. We have struck agreements to buy 350m doses of candidate vaccines, across a range of vaccine types and including with six of the leading candidates currently under development across the world. This includes the Oxford/AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, both of which are currently in phase 3 trials. The UK is fortunate to have outstanding academic innovators working alongside the highly experienced team at AstraZeneca. This partnership is working at exceptional speed to demonstrate the safety and clinical effectiveness of the vaccine in protecting people against Covid-19 infection.

The Taskforce has also taken steps to accelerate the development of a vaccine. A key element is our ability to conduct safe and effective clinical trials, and 300,000 people have now signed up to register their interest in taking part in these. The Taskforce is also pioneering controlled human challenge studies. Subject to ethics and regulatory approvals, these trials can assess and accelerate the development of effective vaccines more quickly and with fewer participants than standard phase 3 trials.

Every vaccine candidate will go through a stringent regulatory process before it is approved. Experts from the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency will prioritise and conduct a review of any new Covid-19 vaccine, applying their usual, thorough and rigorous standards on quality, safety and efficacy data.

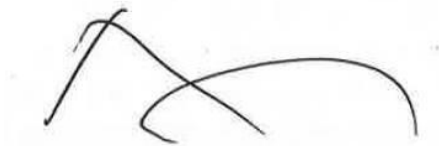
The Government has also funded several UK manufacturing sites to ensure there is no manufacturing bottleneck in developing a vaccine. This includes a £93 million investment to open the UK's first dedicated Vaccine Manufacturing and Innovation Centre, 12 months ahead of schedule; and an additional £38 million for a virtual manufacturing centre, which already has two fully equipped and approved manufacturing suites. We have also announced an additional £100 million investment to fund a state-of-the-art Manufacturing Innovation Centre in collaboration with the Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult, to accelerate the mass production of a successful Covid-19 vaccine in the UK.

The search for a vaccine is a global effort, and the UK has committed to ensuring that everyone at risk of Covid-19 infection anywhere in the world has access to a safe and

effective vaccine. The Government has pledged up to £548 million to the COVAX international vaccine-purchasing initiative for lower and middle-income countries, as well as £71 million to secure access for the UK population.

As we move towards potential deployment of a future vaccine in the UK, this deployment planning is being led by the Department for Health and Social Care.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a stylized representation of the name 'Alok Sharma'.

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