



Department of Health & Social Care

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By email

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Dear Colleague,

I am writing to you in relation to the on-going novel coronavirus outbreak, to share some of the measures that the Government and this Department are taking to respond, and to ask you to take some precautionary actions.

The World Health Organization has declared that this is a public health emergency of international concern. [UK Chief Medical Officers have raised the risk to the UK from low to moderate](#). This does not mean that the risk to the public is higher but rather it is prudent for the Government to plan for all eventualities. As of 11th February 2020, a total of 1,358 UK tests have concluded, of which eight have been positive.

The NHS and wider health system are extremely well prepared for these types of outbreaks and follow tried and tested procedures of the highest standards to protect staff, patients and the public. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has stepped up its efforts to further assess the risks, as our understanding of the clinical and epidemiological pattern of the disease evolves.

As part of those efforts, a response group has been established to evaluate the potential impacts of this situation on Continuity of Supply of medical goods (including medicines, medical devices and clinical consumable products), which draws upon expertise from DHSC, the NHS, Public Health England (PHE), the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), and representatives of the Devolved Administrations (DAs). This group is examining the risks and mitigations of the following:

- a) the supply requirements in the case of an expanded outbreak in the UK;
- b) the potential pressures on global supply chains due to the impact of coronavirus and control measures that the Chinese authorities have put in place or may put in place.

Based on this work, we now ask that suppliers conduct a full risk assessment of the impact of the situation on their supply chains, including:

- the implications of coronavirus for business activities;
- how the current restrictions within China may affect production and transport of finished products, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), excipients and components directly sourced from China,
- whether any of their non-Chinese suppliers rely, in turn, on components sourced from China.

In addition, and as precautionary measures designed to help ensure the uninterrupted supply of medicines and medical devices to patients in the UK, the Secretary of State has requested:

- that suppliers who still retain some or all of their EU exit stockpiles, should hold on to them, while the Department considers more targeted approaches;
- that suppliers keep fulfilling all orders and supplying all products to the NHS in the normal way;
- that you monitor orders carefully and consider demand management plans in the event of excessive or unusual ordering patterns;
- that you inform the DHSC of the outcomes of your supply chain risk assessments;

Consistent with this, the Department has already directed NHS Supply Chain to pause ramp-down activity of the centralised stock-build of medical devices and clinical consumables.