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NHS Trust Chief Executives
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Regional Chief Pharmacists

31 December 2020

Dear colleagues,

Deployment of COVID-19 Vaccine Oxford/AstraZeneca: implications for governance, handling and preparation of vaccines

Thank you for your and your teams' outstanding leadership and contribution to the safe deployment of COVID-19 vaccines. Your efforts have been both invaluable and recognised, and as head of profession I am both very grateful and feel very proud.

Of course, this is a marathon and not a sprint so I am writing to confirm that the content of my letters of [4 December 2020](#) to Hospital Hubs and Vaccination Centres and [8 December 2020](#) to GP-led Local Vaccination Services remain extant. The legal underpinning for temporary authorisation of COVID vaccines remains unchanged, as do expectations of accountability and pharmaceutical oversight.

COVID-19 Vaccine Oxford/AstraZeneca

COVID-19 Vaccine Oxford/AstraZeneca is clearly considerably easier to deploy and handle than the first COVID-19 vaccine. So, for example, your clinical colleagues will be used to handling vaccines with storage conditions of 2-8 degrees Centigrade, as well as the use of multidose vials of other medicines. However, a multidose vaccine with no preservative, as is the case with this vaccine, is unusual, and so good aseptic technique will be important. Good systems of medicines management remain critical to ensure safe deployment and use, and your leadership of that remains very important. This is particularly so as more specially trained vaccinators come on

stream, and with two different vaccines in operational use. I also know Regional Chief Pharmacists and their regional colleagues have found your help in assuring readiness of vaccination sites extremely valuable.

You will also want to consider how best to balance the deployment of your pharmaceutical resources for safe vaccine deployment as the new vaccine comes into use, with the need to both care for patients with COVID infection and maintain business as usual services. This will include continuing to support your staff and their health and well-being.

Information for healthcare professionals and the conditions for the temporary authorisation of COVID-19 Vaccine Oxford/AstraZeneca can be found [here](#). Please familiarise yourselves and your teams with these as soon as possible.

The Patient Specific Direction for Covid-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca will be published shortly [here](#), followed by the Patient Group Direction and National Protocol in the coming days.

Technical Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

To underpin the use of the COVID-19 Vaccine Oxford/AstraZeneca, the NHS Specialist Pharmacy Service has produced a suite of SOPs for hospital hubs, vaccination centres and Primary Care Network designated sites. These are available [here](#). Please note that one condition of the temporary authorisation is adherence to these SOPs.

Vaccination of frontline healthcare staff

With the deployment of COVID-19 Vaccine Oxford/AstraZeneca, instructions have been given to the NHS to expand the vaccination programme, including to frontline healthcare staff – see the letter of [30 December 2020](#) and further operational guidance will be issued shortly.

Once again, thank you for your enormous efforts. It is very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely



Dr Keith Ridge CBE
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer for England