

Government further boosts UK vaccine manufacturing capacity

- Government partners with Wockhardt to provide 'fill and finish' services as part of the effort to accelerate vaccine manufacturing in the UK
- Wockhardt's facility in North Wales could start work on COVID-19 vaccines as early as September 2020
- agreement will help ensure people in the UK can receive a safe and effective vaccine as quickly as possible once one becomes available

The UK's vaccine manufacturing capabilities will be further boosted today (Monday 3 August) thanks to a new deal to considerably increase capacity in a crucial part of the manufacturing process for COVID-19 vaccines, advancing efforts to ensure a successful vaccine is widely available to the public.

The government has entered into an 18-month agreement with global pharmaceutical and biotechnology company Wockhardt to carry out the crucial 'fill and finish' stage of the manufacturing process, which involves dispensing the manufactured vaccine substance into vials ready for it to be distributed.

This is an essential part of the vaccines supply chain and as part of this deal, Wockhardt will provide these services for the UK government and producers of vaccines being developed around the world in large quantities.

The fill and finish line is expected to start in September 2020. It will take place at CP Pharmaceuticals, a subsidiary of Wockhardt, based in Wrexham, North Wales, which has the capacity to finish millions of coronavirus vaccine doses.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Ensuring the UK has the capability to research, develop and manufacture a safe and effective vaccine is critical in our fight against coronavirus.

Today we have secured additional capacity to manufacture millions of doses of multiple COVID-19 candidates, guaranteeing the supply of vaccines we need to protect people across the UK rapidly and in large numbers.

Kate Bingham, Chair of the Vaccines Taskforce said:

Never before have we needed to find and manufacture a vaccine at this speed and scale in order to protect the UK population.

We have made significant progress in securing a diverse portfolio

of potential vaccines and treatments for COVID-19, adding a fourth vaccine candidate from GSK and Sanofi earlier this week. However, discovering a successful vaccine is only part of the solution, we also need to be able to manufacture it.

Fill and finish is a critical step in the process to get the vaccine in a form to be given to patients. The agreement with Wockhardt will boost our capability to ensure that from the moment a successful vaccine is identified we will be able to produce the quantities of vaccine required, as quickly as possible, for the people who need it.

Founder Chairman of Wockhardt Dr Habil Khorakiwala said:

The pandemic of COVID-19 is a challenge for all and needs a concerted effort to overcome. We are proud to be collaborating with the UK government to make vaccines available and the arrangement brings in a huge sense of purpose and pride, it upholds our ongoing commitment to fight against such a pandemic of global human importance. As a global organisation, we are focused and committed to assist in mitigating the worldwide impact of COVID-19.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

This agreement demonstrates the importance of Welsh manufacturers in the UK's fight against coronavirus, highlighting once again the strengths of working together across the UK to combat the pandemic.

Securing this manufacturing capacity means that safe and effective vaccines, produced in Wales, will potentially be distributed rapidly to people across the UK.

The agreement with Wockhardt complements the new Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre, which is currently under construction in Oxfordshire as a result of £93 million government investment. The UK's vaccine manufacturing efforts are further supported by an additional £100 million for a state-of-the-art Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult Manufacturing Innovation Centre in Braintree, Essex, to accelerate the mass production of a successful COVID-19 vaccine in the UK.

While the Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre is under construction, the government has invested an additional £38 million to establish a rapid deployment facility opening later this summer.

Wockhardt is a global pharmaceutical and biotech organisation that brings affordable, high quality medicines to market. In the UK, Wockhardt is one of the largest suppliers into the NHS for over 20 years, has had a presence in Wrexham for over 2 decades and employs over 400 people at its 612,000 square

feet high-tech manufacturing facility.

The news follows the government securing early access to millions of vaccine doses from AstraZeneca for the University of Oxford vaccine, BioNTech/Pfizer alliance, Valneva and GSK/Sanofi as part of its strategy to build a strong portfolio of promising new vaccines to protect the UK from COVID-19.