



By email

13 March 2020

## **COVID-19 contingency planning: National Supply Disruption Response**

Dear Colleague,

Further to my previous communications I want to update you on our response to coronavirus (COVID-19). We are continuing to work closely with the World Health Organisation and the international community as the COVID-19 outbreak develops to ensure we are ready for all eventualities.

The NHS and wider health system have well developed preparedness plans for pandemics which follow tried and tested procedures of the highest standards to protect staff, patients and the public. DHSC has stepped up its efforts to further assess the risks, as our understanding of the clinical and epidemiological pattern of the disease evolves.

DHSC are standing up the National Supply Disruption Response (NSDR) to monitor the supply situation and provide resolution where we can. Public safety is the top priority. I am writing to you with details of the NSDR and actions suppliers should take in the event of supply disruption.

We have central stockpiles of a range of medical products, including face masks, to mitigate supply problems and help ensure the uninterrupted supply to the NHS. We have well-established procedures to deal with supply problems, regardless of the cause, and work closely with industry, the NHS and others in the supply chain to help prevent shortages and to ensure that the risks to patients are minimised.

For those of you familiar with the previous NSDR plans for EU Exit, we will follow a similar principle in that you should follow your usual mitigation procedures in the first instance to provide a resolution.

The NSDR processes will monitor the supply situation and co-ordinate actions to address supply disruption incidents where normal procedures and mitigations are unable to provide a resolution.

### Actions in the event of, potential or actual, disruption to supply arrangements

The following table identifies what actions you should take should you experience supply disruption to your supply arrangements for products or services. The overall NSDR system incorporates existing reporting mechanisms, with an additional NSDR call centre to be used as outlined below. If an issue arises and it is unclear who to contact in those circumstances, please contact the NSDR call centre who will be able to advise.

Industry sector	Actions
<b>Medical Devices, Clinical Consumables and Non-Clinical Goods and Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you experience disruption to your normal supply routes, you should do everything possible to remedy the issue within your normal supply arrangements.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>When to contact NSDR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you are unable to resolve a disruption incident, you should contact the NSDR immediately using the details after the table, including your proposed contingency resolution where possible, to allow as much time as possible to assess the urgency and nature of the issue, and help to identify actions with you to mitigate impact on care provision and patients;</li> <li>Please also notify the NSDR of any direct communication to care providers or patients that are planned or that have been issued in relation to emerging supply disruption issues. Where possible, the NSDR teams will support you on communications.</li> </ul>
<b>Medicines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You should continue to use existing medicines reporting arrangements and alert the DHSC Medicine Supply team of any supply issues at the earliest point possible so the team can undertake a risk assessment and implement a management plan where required to help mitigate any potential impacts affecting patients.</li> <li>Guidance about how and what information should be reported to the Medicine Supply team and how to report via the routes below can be found at the following link:</li> <li><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reportingrequirements-for-medicine-shortages-anddiscontinuations">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reportingrequirements-for-medicine-shortages-anddiscontinuations</a></li> </ul>
	<p><b>When to contact NSDR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSDR is linked to the DHSC medicine supply team's existing reporting. Any logistics problem raised with the medicines supply team through BAU routes will be communicated to NSDR; you do not need to separately raise the issue with the NSDR call centre.</li> </ul>
<b>Vaccines</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Centrally procured:</b> For vaccines and other products which are supplied to Public Health England (PHE) under contract, please continue to liaise with PHE directly through your usual routes</li> <li><b>Locally procured:</b> For vaccines which are not supplied to PHE under contract, please refer to the medicines section above.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>When to contact NSDR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSDR is linked to the DHSC medicine supply team's existing reporting. Any logistics problem raised with the medicines supply team through BAU routes will be communicated to NSDR; you do not need to separately raise the issue with the NSDR call centre.</li> </ul>

<b>Clinical Trials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are a trial site, you should contact the lead site for the clinical trial/ clinical investigation which will liaise with the sponsor or the organisation running the clinical trial/clinical investigation using established processes to resolve the issue.</li> <li>• If you are a sponsor or an organisation running a clinical trial/clinical investigation experiencing disruption to your normal supply chain regardless of the cause, you should use your existing processes to resolve the issue in the first instance</li> </ul>
	<p><b>When to contact NSDR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsors/organisations running the clinical trial/clinical investigation should notify NSDR immediately using the details after the table of any issues relating to your normal supply routes which cannot be resolved using existing processes, including your proposed contingency resolution where possible.</li> </ul>

For all the product categories above, disruptions may or may not be related to COVID-19 and may include problems such as component or raw material shortages, manufacturing outages, quality issues, regulatory challenges or delays, logistics or transportation problems, etc. The NSDR will still provide support to any disruption whether it is related to COVID-19 or not.

**The NSDR will be available from Monday 16 March 2020. From this point should any other supply arrangement fail with no immediate resolution available, you should report it to the NSDR unit on:**

Freephone number in the UK: 0800 915 9964

Direct line: 0044 (0) 191 283 6543

Email: [supplydisruptionservice@nhsbsa.nhs.uk](mailto:supplydisruptionservice@nhsbsa.nhs.uk)

Hours of Operation: Mon – Fri, 8am – 6pm

## **Annex A: How will the NSDR work?**

- The NSDR call centre will be available 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday in the first instance;
- Supply disruption issues that are not purely logistical will be immediately passed to teams that can resolve them, using scaled up existing business as usual processes.

Suppliers/sponsors should report emerging supply issues, which might benefit from logistical solutions, at the earliest opportunity to the NSDR so that we maximise the time available to identify solutions with you; often 'early warning signs' are vital in preventing disruption in the future.

Please be assured that we will respect the commercial sensitivity of any information reported to the NSDR and will seek to work with you in the event that wider communication with care providers, patients or the public is required.

It should be noted that the NSDR arrangements have been put in place to support effective response to issues that arise, but all efforts should continue to ensure that we are all as prepared as we can be to prevent supply disruptions occurring.

### **Guidance on reporting supply disruption issues to the NSDR: what you will need to hand**

- In reporting issues to the NSDR, you will be asked for detailed information to help our teams determine the most appropriate response, including;
  - details of the disruption and causes and anticipated duration of disruption,
  - products affected (including product description, product name and product code) and product characteristics, including any considerations with regard to storage conditions and/or shelf life,
  - criticality of products for patient care,
  - potential alternative products within your range or available from other suppliers,
  - the likely impact of the disruption
  - whether the product is part of a clinical trial or clinical investigation
  - healthcare providers and/or patients that could be affected (for the whole of the UK and/or by region/country as applicable).
  - The phone number and email address that the NSDR should use to follow up on an issue, this should include out of hours contact details.
- Note that if you have reported a supply disruption issue to officials in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you should also report this to the NSDR. Close working arrangements have been put in place between the four countries and the Crown Dependencies of Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man as well as Gibraltar, however, early notification to the NSDR will help to facilitate these processes.
- You will need to provide contact details of the key responders within your organisations that the NSDR teams can engage with. This should include office and mobile telephone numbers and e-mail details, including out of hours / on call arrangements; in general, it would be helpful to have a clinical/medical contact as well as supply chain or commercial ones. In addition, please provide details of customer service contacts that care providers or patients can contact for support in the event that supply issues start to manifest themselves ahead of mitigation actions taking effect;
- Note that guidance will be issued to all care providers on the steps that they should take in response to any supply disruption issues that they experience. In the first instance,

providers and patients are directed to try and resolve supply issues through their normal supply routes.

**So that you can promptly identify and manage supply issues, it is important that you take the following actions – Suppliers are asked to:**

- have systems in place for monitoring stock positions and supply chain performance that allow for developing issues to be identified at the earliest opportunity and report any unusual movements;
- have in place effective procedures for monitoring and managing demand to detect and challenge excessive ordering, and control stock despatches and report any unusual movements;
- have put in place the necessary governance structures and approvals processes to allow for rapid response and collaboration with the NSDR on supply disruption incidents;
- ensure that customer service functions are adequately resourced and equipped to manage an increase in enquiries, in the event that supply disruption events start to impact care providers and patients;
- ensure you have processes in place for the rapid reporting of all supply disruption incidents (including potential incidents) through the NSDR – the sooner the NSDR is informed of an incident or potential incident, the sooner it can take action to ensure providers and patients receive the products they need on time.

The Department will continue to work closely with industry and sponsors, through trade bodies and industry representatives, on contingency plans.

Yours sincerely,



**Steve Oldfield**  
**Chief Commercial Officer**