Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Sent via email and hard copy

February 27, 2019

Dear Chair,

DHSC medicines supply contingency planning in the event of a ‘no deal’ EU exit

Thank you for your recent letter asking for further details of the Department’s ‘no deal’ European Union (EU) exit medicines supply contingency planning, specifically on: the potential level of risk, the result of our actions to date and monitoring, risk management and governance.

As I am sure you will have seen, on Monday 25 February the Department made a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) to Parliament providing an update on our ‘no deal’ continuity of supply plans for medicines and medical products. The WMS can be found here  https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2019-02-25/HCWS1358/ and I attach a hard copy of the text here for your information. My officials have already shared a copy with committee clerks.

As set out in the WMS, the Department has put in place a multi-layered approach to minimise any supply disruption. It is important to emphasise that, no one of these measures will work on their own, a combination of securing additional freight capacity, warehousing and stockpiling, regulatory flexibility, and clinical assessment and decision making will be required to help to ensure the continuation of medical supplies.

While we never give guarantees, we are confident that if everyone – including suppliers, freight companies, the health and care system and international partners -
does what they need to do, the supply of medicines and other medical supplies should be uninterrupted in the event we exit the EU without a deal. Patients should not experience delays in getting their prescriptions and local stockpiling is unnecessary and could cause shortages in other areas.

Regarding the additional points you make in your letter on governance arrangements, we have set up weekly project management meetings with each warehouse provider for stockpiled medicines that the Department has contracted with, supplemented by regular site visits. We also have a governance process monitoring progress on stockpiling which reports into the Department’s Chief Commercial Officer on a weekly basis.

I trust that the information provided here and within the WMS answers your questions.

Yours sincerely,

SIR CHRIS WORMALD
PERMANENT SECRETARY