

MAYOR OF LONDON

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP

First Secretary of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Date: 13 April 2020

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department of Health and Social Care

Dear Dominic and Matt,

I have not as yet received a response to my letters of 31 March to the Health Secretary and 8 April to the First Secretary and there remain a number of urgent issues on which I am seeking urgent clarification.

1. PPE

I welcome your new three-strand plan. However, some frontline staff and organisations like the Royal College of Nursing and British Medical Association continue to say that they are unable to get what they need in a timely way, with inconsistent supply that is in danger of creating a two-tier system across the NHS and social care. This is obviously unacceptable. I would be grateful for an update on the response to the Government's appeal to UK manufacturers to re-purpose facilities to help fill this gap and on action to eliminate the inconsistency of supply to all essential parts of the frontline, including social care.

I also remain extremely concerned and frustrated over inconsistent PPE advice which has led to confusion including whether the police should wear it or not. Further changes to PPE guidance have also put additional pressure on the supply chain, as will any future extensions to recommended usage.

Here in London I have taken advice from my Statutory Health Advisor, the Regional Director of Public Health, and support the prioritisation of frontline NHS and social care staff. However, we desperately need further national advice and guidance for other frontline staff including transport workers, firefighters, police, teachers and those working with vulnerable and isolated people in communities. These all provide essential services, and many have genuine concerns about their own safety which, if not addressed, could impact their willingness to work.

Therefore, I would like you to confirm that your immediate plans will ensure both clear guidance for people working outside health and care settings and that appropriate supplies are made available for all essential workers. In addition, I would like you to confirm that you are thinking about longer-term PPE requirements and procurement, should it take considerable time to produce a vaccine.

2. Testing

I also wanted to raise the issue of testing. When I wrote to the Health Secretary on 31 March, I sought clarity on the approach to testing for key workers, and the factors that were limiting expansion of testing, highlighting that London was well-placed to support the national effort.