

12. There is though, it would appear, a marked difference of view as between the Welsh Government and the WLGA, as to what actually happened. For instance, the WLGA notes the statement of Reg Kilpatrick, who had been Director General, COVID-19 Crisis Coordination for the Welsh Government (INQ000274156), and how he observes that there was regular communication with local government, and that there being strong pre-existing relationships with local authorities, both collectively and individually, at the outset of the pandemic.
13. Communication is not however the same as consultation and still less is it co-production. The WLGA considers that in several ways Mr Kilpatrick's views about the extent of communication fail to recognise the extent to which there was inadequate *early* engagement with local government – engagement which could have ensured that the operational issues which local government would encounter were properly taken into account and which, had they been, could have much improved outcomes.
14. In the next paragraphs of this statement, I shall draw the Inquiry's attention to particular events which show how relevant these points are.

Local authority public health and public protection roles

15. A notable example of this is the issue of the supply and control of PPE as the Welsh Government has acknowledged that the supply and control of PPE in the Pandemic period was inconsistent. This issue illustrates in clear terms why the WLGA considers that the Welsh Government should develop a better understanding of the wider public health and public protection roles of local authorities, and thus, how better information and consultation between local government and the Welsh Government could have worked better.
16. The starting point is to note how Andrew Slade Director General, Economy, Skills and Natural Resources has commented to the Inquiry that "the market was flooded with fraudulent or substandard PPE" (INQ000319508 - paragraph 23). The Trading