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Subject: OFF SEN Healthcare MIG 2/4/20 and subsequent letter from Ms Freeman

Date: Sun, 05 Apr 2020 15:33:40 -0000

Importance: Normal

Attachments: u418806_02-04-2020_19-08-36.pdf

Inline-Images: image001.jpg

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- The Health Secretary chaired the Healthcare MIG on Thurs 2 April. The Secretary of State dialled in, as did the three DA health ministers (Ms Freeman for the SG).
 - Mr Hancock asked about supplies of critical care beds in Wales and Scotland. The WG Health Minister said that the data in the dashboard was inaccurate and that the position in Wales was better than reported. Ms Freeman had not yet arrived for the call to respond on behalf of the SG and the Secretary of State reported good progress in converting the SEC into a field hospital.
 - The need for accurate data in the dashboard was emphasised by SoS Health and SoS HCLG.
 - The paper on engagement with the DAs, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories in respect of medical supplies was introduced:
 - Ms Freeman said forcefully that she could not agree to the degree of centralisation envisaged by DHSC and she wasn't prepared for NHS Scotland's existing contracts to be diverted to DHSC. The proposal was contrary to what had been agreed by the 4 UK Health Ministers on 30 March. It was a "daft" way of proceeding.
 - Moreover she said the paper had been circulated so late that there was no time to consider it properly and she was not prepared to be "bounced" into agreeing to such proposals.
 - The Welsh Health Minister also said he wasn't prepared for NHS Wales's normal supply chains to be disrupted. He had to be confident that there would be a rules based system securing equitable distribution.
 - The NIE Minister said that he had expected to see a paper setting out the operational detail of how the NIE could access UK wide supplies.
 - Mr Hancock said the paper clearly did not meet DA expectations and that officials should work together to produce something more acceptable.
 - The paper on PPE supplies was introduced. The purposes was to make sure that all parts of the UK public sector get the supplies they need in accordance with the guidance agreed by the four CMOs, and against the backdrop of a worldwide shortage.
 - Ms Freeman said that the PPE guidance was excellent and she would promote it actively. It was essential to stick to the science. The guidance showed that PPE should be used in accordance with the task in hand, not the role of the worker.
 - She could not agree to existing supply routes being disrupted but was prepare to share stocks and benefit from others doing so.
 - SoS EFRA said it might be necessary to relax some EU regulations on food standards to enable PPE to be released to healthcare workers.

- SoS HCLG noted the risk of industrial action if there wasn't adequate communications with staff and unions about when PPE was required, eg in respect of refuse collection.
- CDL said it was imperative that there was transparent information, including from the DAs, about demand for and supplies of PPE.
- The Minister for the Armed Forces said that where military assistance was provided the requesting bodies was responsible for ensuring that the military had adequate PPE for the task in hand.
- Mr Hancock noted that 10,000 tests per day would be achieved by end March.
 - The NIE Health Minister said that a testing equipment manufacturer based in NI was having its products diverted to England when there was a shortage in NI.
- On Thurs 2 April Ms Freeman wrote to Mr Hancock to underline the points she had made at the meeting. Please see attached copy of her letter:
 - She welcomed the PPE guidance. There should be a 4 nations communication strategy to disseminate its messages to health and social care workers.
 - She is happy to agree to a collaborative approach to sharing PPE but she could not agree to the diversion of NHS Scotland's existing supply chains to "any central facility elsewhere in the UK".
 - During the 4 Health Minister call on 30 April Mr Hancock had agreed to provide access to the UK national reserve. She was not aware that had been forthcoming.
- On Friday and Sat both SG and WG asked for specific PPE supplies from the DHSC stock and DHSC asked for details of the DAs' own stocks.
- The need for PPE is urgent but so is a system for the management of the UK's stocks. I have proposed by email to DHSC and DA officials that they should share responsibility for (a) a collectively held inventory of current stocks and contracted supplies, and (b) for agreeing the equitable distribution of all of those supplies. I have also proposed that CCS might administer the system.



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