

demonstrating that local government has been on the frontline in the fight against the virus just as much as our health service.

10. In relation to social care the focus of this response provides a high-level overview on: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE); testing; care homes; the shielding scheme; vulnerable children; care packages; and the workforce.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing

11. Social care is at the frontline of responding to the unique challenges posed by COVID-19 in the personal care they provide, and the workforce is doing an incredible job in extremely testing circumstances, many going above and beyond to care for people. However, it is also a dangerous job with the risk posed by the virus, with colleagues putting themselves, their families and their communities at risk. Ensuring their safety is and has been the number one priority alongside the safety of those they are supporting, with both PPE and testing playing a crucial role in supporting this.
12. While progress has been made, Local Government has held significant concerns over both PPE and testing following the outbreak of COVID-19. Initially, two priority areas for discussion and action for WLGA Leaders has been the appropriate level of supply of PPE for key staff, such as those providing social care and to make the case for priority testing for social care staff, and more latterly, residential care home residents.

Personal Protective Equipment

13. At the outset of the outbreak local government escalated significant concerns about the limited availability of PPE from Welsh Government stocks for social care staff, including lack of clarity on stock levels and inconsistent and incomplete supplies being made available across authorities. Concerns about the supply of PPE dominated early discussions between leaders and Ministers and remained a significant risk for many authorities. One of the biggest issues of concern has been knowing what supplies would be delivered and when, as this was severely impacting on local authorities' ability to be able to plan its use appropriately and have assurance on future supply. Provision then, as is now, was from Welsh Government stock, with the rest procured on the open market.
14. Over the first few weeks, while the supply of PPE was improving, albeit slowly, the publication of updated guidance on the use of PPE on 2 April (and subsequent additional information from PHW which clearly set out detailed guidance on the appropriate and required level of PPE to be used by social care in specific settings) was important in *clarifying* use of PPE by social care staff and increasing understanding of what was required, meaning that the guidance gradually caught up with operational need. Efforts are now focused on modelling the amount of PPE required to ensure compliance with the guidance and that social care staff have the PPE they require to do their job safely.
15. A significant amount of work and discussions have taken and continue to take place on increasing and improving PPE supply and current indications are that supplies to councils from the NHS Shared Services Partnership are now improving. The work of a national group convened by Deputy Minister Lee Waters MS has led to improved coordinating and clarity. Deliveries of PPE are now delivered weekly to Joint Equipment Stores, on set days, for onward distribution to local authorities who provide PPE to the frontline, both to local authority staff as well as social care providers, including care homes and domiciliary care agencies. While it is an improved situation, and recent significant deliveries of PPE have been arranged by Welsh Government, the