

**Witness Name: Paul Barnaby Webster**

**Module 5 Statement No:4**

**Dated: 6 January 2025**

**In relation to the issues raised by the Rule 9 Request dated 22 November 2024 in connection with Module 5, I, PAUL BARNABY WEBSTER will say as follows:**

**1     My role in assisting the Inquiry on behalf of Supply Chain Coordination Limited (“SCCL”)**

- 1.1     I am the Executive Director of Governance and Legal as well as the Company Secretary of SCCL. I am part of the team responsible for the management of SCCL and the wider NHS Supply Chain.
- 1.2     This is my third witness statement in relation to Module 5 of the Public Inquiry into Covid-19. I refer to my first witness statement dated 19 August 2024 for details in relation to my role and SCCL’s involvement with the response to Covid-19.
- 1.3     The purpose of this witness statement is to respond to a further Rule 9 request from the Inquiry dated 22 November 2024 relating specifically to one aspect of the testimony given by Sir Christopher Wormald on 12 November 2024 in relation to Module 3.

**2     Testimony of Sir Christopher Wormald**

- 2.1     I have been shown a transcript of the testimony given by Sir Christopher Wormald on 12 November 2024. In relation to the relevant passage he is asked about the procurement of surgical gowns in the context of the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Programme (“PIPP”). In response he replies that when it was clear that surgical gowns would not be quickly available under normal procurement procedures a number of what he calls ‘sleepers contracts’ were activated but failed due to the intervention of foreign governments.
- 2.2     I have been asked to comment on this reference to ‘sleepers contracts’.
- 2.3     In my first witness statement I explained how and why SCCL was created in 2017. Prior to that, as I explain at paragraph 3.1 of my first witness statement, the NHS

Business Services Authority (“NHS BSA”) contracted with DHL to manage what is known as the NHS Supply Chain.

- 2.4 The PIPP stockpile existed prior to the incorporation of SCCL. It was a joint project between the DHSC and what was then Public Health England (“PHE”). The stockpile had been controlled by DHL as part of the supply chain contract with NHS BSA. The NHS BSA was used as the vehicle for procurement of the products and the management of the logistics arrangements. This would have included the procurement strategy for the stockpile at the direction of PHE.
- 2.5 These existing arrangements were novated to SCCL as part of the creation of the Future Operating Model in 2018 but SCCL had no part in designing the procurement strategy for the PIPP stockpile and therefore cannot answer any questions about the reasons for adopting that strategy and the consequent contractual arrangements. Such questions should be addressed to PHE (now UKHSA) and the DHSC.
- 2.6 Accordingly, I cannot comment on the existence of so-called ‘sleeper contracts’, who they were with, how they were intended to work or if they worked at all. I do not know how widespread the use of these contracts was, how integral they were to the strategy of the stockpile or whether they worked.
- 2.7 In my first witness statement at paragraph 13.7 I refer to a French supplier of face masks, Valmy SAS. They are the only supplier SCCL is aware of who failed to supply facemasks when contractually called upon to do so on 5 February 2020. I believe that this may be one of the ‘sleeper contracts’ Sir Christopher Wormald was referring to. In respect of that contract, it is true (as I explained at paragraph 13.11 of my first witness statement) that Valmy failed to deliver because the French Government imposed an export ban.
- 2.8 As the contract with Valmy had been novated to SCCL in April 2019 we were instructed by PHE to recover damages for breach of contract from Valmy. However, the instructions in connection with that recovery all came from PHE and the sums recovered were remitted to PHE. SCCL has not been instructed by PHE in connection with any other contracts so I cannot therefore say that I am aware of any widespread failure of these. However, again, that would be a question for PHE to answer.
- 2.9 Accordingly, whilst I am keen to assist the Inquiry the contractual strategy for the procurement of the PIPP stockpile and how effective that was is not something directly within the knowledge of SCCL and pre-dates its existence. I do not, therefore, feel that

I am able to comment further on the questions in the Rule 9 Request dated 22 November 2024.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed:

**Personal Data**

Paul Webster

Dated: 6 January 2025