

UK COVID19 INQUIRY: MODULE 5

REFERENCE: M5/FELDMAN/01

STATEMENT OF ANDREW SIMON FELDMAN

I, ANDREW SIMON FELDMAN of Personal Data state as follows:

- 1 The facts and matters set out in this witness statement are within my own knowledge, except where I indicate to the contrary, in which case I indicate the source of my information or belief.

BACKGROUND

- 2 I am currently employed by Teneo as the CEO of its UK Strategy and Communications business. I previously served as Managing Partner of Tulchan Communications ("Tulchan") from May 2019 until it was acquired by Teneo in January 2023. Prior to that I was a Partner in Macro Advisory Partners from in or about late 2017. I am also the Director of a business called Andrew Feldman Associates ("AFA") from which I manage some of my commercial activities outside of Teneo, and which was established in 2016.

MY APPOINTMENT AS AN ADVISOR

- 3 From 23 March 2020 to 15 May 2020 I was given leave by Tulchan to serve as an unpaid volunteer for the Department of Health and Social Care ("DHSC"), to assist with the emergency sourcing of protective equipment ("PPE") and other critical medical supplies during the early stages of the COVID 19 pandemic. I took my role as a volunteer in my personal capacity, entirely separately from my employment at Tulchan, and Tulchan had no part in any of my activities as a volunteer. I did not expect any reward or payment for volunteering and I can confirm that myself, Tulchan, AFA, Teneo nor any other entity connected with me have received any such reward or payment

- 4 I was first asked to volunteer by James Bethell on or around 20 March 2020. We knew each other socially and from my time in politics as a CEO and then Chair of the Conservative Party (2008-2016). Lord Bethell explained that there were very severe shortages of PPE and other critical equipment across the NHS and that the normal supply chain was not able to support the significantly increased demand or manage the offers from many thousands of alternative suppliers. He thought that my experience of the workings of Government; of global sourcing from earlier in my career running my family clothing manufacturing business; and my extensive business contacts would be useful to the DHSC. Although, except for Bunzl referenced below, I did not have contacts in the medical equipment supply business. I believed that given the scale and intensity of national emergency, I had a clear moral obligation to agree to volunteer to help Lord Bethell and his team. Lord Bethell was the person to whom I was directly responsible in the department, although in reality I only had occasional contact with him given his extremely high workload, and almost all of my day-to-day dealings were with officials.
- 5 As a volunteer with the DHSC, my role was to assist in triaging some of the many thousands of offers of medical supplies to the DHSC in the early stages of the pandemic, and also from time to time to make suggestions of other potential sources of critical medical supplies, based on approaches made directly to me by third parties, so that officials could investigate the sources that appeared promising. I worked from home for the entire time. I never went into the DHSC offices and never had an in-person meeting with Ministers, officials or suppliers. In practical terms my role was clearly defined. DHSC officials had a list of potential offers. In the large majority of cases, I would be given very general details of a potential offer of help by officials by telephone or email, and I would call or email those suppliers and ask about the products they could supply and the source of the supply, whether they were an established business, and what supplies they actually had available. If the offer seemed credible to me, I would pass the details of the supplier on to officials by email. I used my experience and commercial judgment to assess the credibility of any offers. Those steps sound simple, but they eliminated many of the potential offers. As it became known among suppliers, and other people trying to help by introducing suppliers, that I was undertaking this function, I would be approached directly about individuals or companies that could source medical supplies and in some cases who were seeking to make a donation of supplies. Some of the people making these approaches would have been already known to me through my network, and of these a proportion would have been known to me through Conservative politics. Save for

those referenced in this statement, I do not recall the names of all the suppliers who approached me and, in most cases, I had no idea of their political affiliation. Again, where approaches seemed credible to me, I also passed the leads onto officials.

6 I would estimate that I was triaging up to five offers a day during the first few weeks of my volunteering. This reduced significantly towards the end of my volunteering period, as the supply situation began to normalise, and this was the reason I decided to step down from my role on 15th May. I do not recall either the total number of offers that I considered, or the percentage that I deemed to be credible. The decision as to whether a company would receive a contract, the terms of any contracts, or what items were required by the DHSC were taken by officials. They did not share with me copies of final contracts or orders or otherwise inform me of the final terms agreed. Once I had passed on a potential opportunity that would generally be the end of my involvement, unless either the officials asked me to raise any questions or where I would sometimes chase up a response if I felt there was a delay – I was very aware from my role that these items were in short supply globally, and if we delayed, we might not be able to secure them for the UK.

7 I was allocated administrative support from two DHSC officials. I was supplied with a DHSC laptop (with a DHSC email address) and mobile phone which I received on or about the end of March. The email address was monitored and information collated by the two officials to enable them to support me with the handling of the information and to direct information to the relevant officials involved in procurement. I returned these devices to DHSC on completion of my voluntary work on 15 May 2020. I therefore do not have access my DHSC emails or any texts or WhatsApp's on my DHSC mobile. There were a small number of emails to and from my Tulchan and Andrew Feldman Associates emails, in the short period before the DHSC laptop and email address was available to me, or where people who knew me personally and did not have my DHSC address approached me using those addresses. I believe I have provided copies of these emails where relevant. I also believe that all relevant approaches made through my personal email addresses were passed on to and monitored by officials.

HIGH PRIORITY LANE

8 I was not in any way involved in the thinking behind and the establishment of the High Priority Lane ("HPL"). I was not aware of its existence during my time volunteering for DHSC. I first became aware of it as a result of media reporting in or about the second

half of 2021. I would, therefore, not have been able to refer any suppliers to the HPL. The decision to whom to send offers of help was made by the two officials who supported me and other officials in the DHSC. I did not have a role in or any knowledge of the operation and supervision of the HPL, and I was not contacted by anyone in relation to whether or not they were on the HPL.

- 9 I am aware that in the HPL list published by DHSC I am described as the actual referrer to the HPL of three companies: Mazima [sic] Markets Ltd ("Maxima), SG Recruitment UK Ltd (SG Recruitment") and Skinnydip Ltd ("Skinnydip"). Each of these companies was referred to me by third party sources and I passed the referral on to officials at DHSC, but I had no idea at the time that these were being put into the HPL. The details of these referrals are set out in paragraphs 10-12. They were, in my mind, three amongst a large number of such suppliers that I was dealing with during my volunteering. I also do not know who, or on what basis, decided to refer these suppliers to the HPL. I had no previous and have had no subsequent commercial or personal relationship with any of the companies or their principals. I also had no previous and have no subsequent commercial relationship with those referring the companies.
- 10 As to Maxima, Howard Leigh, who I know socially, connected me with Majid Sadjadi, the principal of Rostam Capital, by an email dated 1st April 2020 to my AFA email address (Exhibit AF/01 [INQ000503297]). I did not know Mr. Sadjadi before this introduction. Mr. Sadjadi wrote to me on 2nd April 2020 to my AFA email address (Exhibit AF/02 [INQ000509811]) suggesting that he had a relationship with a 'medical supplier' supplying PPE equipment and covid tests to the US market and might be able to help the UK. The email does not reference Maxima, but I believe that this was the company with which DHSC eventually contracted and which was introduced by Mr. Sadjadi. I forwarded this offer of help using my DHSC email address to officials, although as I said above, I do not have access to my DHSC email account. I do not recall being asked to nor having any further involvement with the decision to award a contract to Maxima.
- 11 Skinnydip was also introduced to me by Lord Leigh. In an email to my AFA address dated 28th March 2020 (AF/03 [INQ000509812]) he connected me to Lewis Blitz, the principal of Skinnydip. Lewis Blitz wrote me an email on the same day asking if I was free to discuss how he could help with PPE supplies (AF/04 [INQ000503302]). I believe we then spoke and that he was offering help to supply hand sanitizer to the DHSC. I forwarded this offer of help using my DHSC email address to officials, although as I said above, I do not have access to my DHSC email account. I do not recall being

asked to nor having any further involvement with the decision to award a contract to Skinnydip. Although Lord Leigh and Lewis Blitz both refer in their emails to the fact that I met Lewis Blitz at a charity event, this was attended by many hundreds of people, and I do not recall meeting him.

- 12 SG Recruitment was introduced to me by Peter Chadlington, who I know through politics. Lord Chadlington contacted me by text about introducing a potential supplier, and I replied providing him with my DHSC email address. In an email dated 19th April 2020, to my DHSC email address, he connected me to David Sumner, the principal of SG recruitment (AF/05 [INQ000526187]). On 20th April, at the suggestion of officials, I sent an email to Mr. Sumner setting out the PPE that was required urgently by DHSC and the link to the specifications on the government website. Mr. Sumner wrote to me on 21st April 2020 with details of the PPE his company could supply (AF/06 [INQ000510463]). It appears from the email exchange, that I spoke to Mr. Sumner on the phone after sending my email on 20th April. I forwarded this information on to officials with a covering email which said; "An interesting offer from David Sumner who was introduced to me by Lord Chadlington." On the same day in response to an email from officials about the offer, I told them I had spoken to Mr. Sumner and he "seems like a decent guy". Although I cannot access my DHSC emails, the House of Lords Commissioner of Standards, in investigating and dismissing a complaint about Lord Chadlington in relation to SG Recruitment, was able to obtain copies of the relevant correspondence and published his findings in a report dated 27th September 2023. His report is my source of this information, alongside the emails dated 19th April, 20th April and 21st April copies of which have now been provided by the solicitors to the Inquiry. Again, I had no prior or subsequent relationship with Mr. Sumner or SG recruitment, and I do not recall being asked to nor having any further involvement with the decision to award a contract to SG recruitment. The solicitors for the inquiry have also shared with me an email from Lord Chadlington dated 19th April 2020 (AF/07 [INQ000526188]) to my DHSC email address purporting to introduce me to contact called Nick Mason, who apparently had access to PPE. I do not recall this email and do not recall what happened as a result of this introduction.

OTHER SUPPLIERS

- 13 There were a number of other prospective suppliers that I had contact with during my volunteering for DHSC. These included Bunzl, Oxford Nanopore Technologies ('ONT'), Meller Associates and Hugh Warrender. I believe that officials at DHSC will have a comprehensive record of all prospective suppliers with whom I had contact.
- 14 Bunzl is a FTSE100 company in the business of specialist international distribution and services and as part of this is one of the largest suppliers of PPE globally. Bunzl was a longstanding client of Tulchan and remains a client of Teneo. It is not a client that I have worked on, but I know the CEO, Frank Van Zanten. On or about Saturday 21st March 2020, just before I started volunteering for DHSC, I had a conversation with Lord Bethell, in which he asked me if I had any relationship with Bunzl, as this was an important supplier of PPE to the NHS in Scotland and Wales, and he was looking to increase supply from them in England. Lord Bethell mentioned that there was some unspecified historic issues with them supplying NHS England. I told him that I knew Bunzl, that they were a client of Tulchan, and that I would reach out to the CEO to see if he could be of assistance. Accordingly on the morning of 22nd March 2020 I wrote an email to Mr. Van Zanten asking for his help in supplying PPE to the NHS. He responded later that morning saying that Bunzl would do everything it could to help and copied in Chris Wakeman, the Managing Director of Bunzl's Cleaning and Safety Division. Later that day I connected Frank and Chris with the officials in the Cabinet office dealing with procurement of PPE. After that, my only other involvement in the procurement process was to send an email to officials on 25th March 2020 saying that Chris Wakeman needed a quick decision on whether or not DHSC was able to commit to the PPE as he was coming under pressure from other potential customers. I was not otherwise involved in the decision by DHSC to award contracts to Bunzl or the terms of those contracts. These emails were sent from my Tulchan account as I did not yet have a DHSC laptop or email address. I am advised that I cannot legally disclose them without breaching a Confidentiality Ring Order issued by the High Court in or about May 2022 in the judicial review proceedings brought against the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Claim no: HT-2021-000223) to which myself, Bunzl and Tulchan were interested parties.
- 15 ONT is a listed UK life sciences business. ONT, through its CEO, Gordon Sanghera, had been in touch with DHSC directly offering assistance with Covid-19 emergency. I

was asked by Lord Bethell to join a call with Matthew Hancock and Mr. Sanghera on 1st April 2020. This was the first time I had ever met Mr. Sanghera or been aware of Oxford Nanopore. He was offering to help to source PCR tests through his contact with BGI Group in China. This was in response to the announcement that DHSC was aiming significantly to increase its Covid-19 testing capacity, and it was well known there was a significant global shortage of PCR tests. After the call, Mr. Sanghera was connected with officials and they began a process to ascertain the suitability of the tests and to negotiate contract details. I do not have access to my DHSC emails for this period and so cannot provide subsequent correspondence. The decision to purchase the tests and the terms on which they were purchased were taken by officials. Tulchan was approached by Mr. Sanghera about becoming a strategic communications advisor once I had finished my volunteering with DHSC. Tulchan was appointed as an advisor on 25th June 2020 and Teneo remains an advisor to date. I have not, since Tulchan's appointment, arranged meetings between Oxford Nanopore and Ministers or officials, or attended meetings or otherwise communicated with Ministers or officials on their behalf.

- 16 Meller Associates and its principal David Meller had approached DHSC and the Cabinet office directly about supplying PPE before my arrival as a volunteer. I know Mr. Meller socially and through politics, and Lord Bethell was aware of this relationship. I have never had any commercial relationship with Mr. Meller or Meller Associates either personally or through AFA, Tulchan or Teneo. Lord Bethell invited me to join a call with Mr. Meller on 6th April to discuss the supply of PPE (AF/08 [INQ000497139]). I was unable to join that meeting as I had a diary clash. I do recall being made aware about Mr. Meller's offer to supply PPE and that he was engaged in conversations with Lord Bethell and officials, although I do not recall the details and do not have access to my DHSC email account to be able to see whether I was copied into or otherwise involved in any further correspondence. The decision to purchase any PPE from Mr. Meller and the terms on which they were purchased was taken by officials.
- 17 Hugh Warrender was introduced to me by email by David Cameron on or about early April 2020. I did not know Mr. Warrender and have not met him since the introduction. I have never had any commercial relationship with Mr. Warrender or any company associated with him either personally or through AFA, Tulchan or Teneo. I recall that Mr. Warrender was representing a supplier of Covid-19 testing kits. I also recall that I forwarded the offer to officials in DHSC to consider and that officials later advised that

the tests did not meet MHRA published specifications and could not be used. I do not have access to my DHSC email account to provide copies of the emails.

- 18 The solicitors for the Inquiry have shared with me an email thread from (AF/09 [INQ000508326]) concerning an offer from a constituent made to Oliver Dowden MP of Covid19 testing kits from a company called Bio Basic. From the correspondence it appears that this was offer forwarded to me, and that after speaking to the constituent on 19th April, I passed this offer to officials on the same day. It then appears that officials subsequently spoke to the constituent about the offer and in the email dated 23rd April 2020 from officials they say that there is "no immediate need" but they will "keep BioBasic on file". I do not recall any more detail about this matter than is contained on the face of the correspondence.

OTHER MATTERS

- 19 When Lord Bethell asked me to volunteer for DHSC, I recall that we discussed managing potential apparent conflicts of interest and we agreed that his team would send me a contract and a conflicts form to complete, which they subsequently did and which I completed and returned on 1st April. In the conflicts form I listed Bunzl as well as other Tulchan clients who might possibly be relevant as potential suppliers. I did not receive a countersigned copy of either document. I kept officials fully informed of all relevant approaches by suppliers and the source of any referrals. Given that I was not the decision maker in terms of the award of contracts for suppliers or the terms of any such award, and had no financial interest in any of these contracts or suppliers either directly or indirectly, I believe that this was sufficient to manage any actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
- 20 I have a personal mobile phone and it is possible that in the course of my volunteering I sent and received text and Whatsapp messages to that phone, although I do not recall the details of any such messages. Under the terms of my contract with my mobile phone provider, I am entitled to exchange and upgrade my phone every two years. I have done this twice in the last four years and I therefore do not have access to any such messages.

- 21 The solicitors for the Inquiry have asked me to comment on a text message which appears to have been sent by me (A/F 10 [INQ000048366]) and passes on comments from a prospective supplier who was "entirely disillusioned" with the approach taken by the Government. Although the supplier is clearly extremely frustrated, this was not my direct experience of Ministers and officials in the first couple of months of the pandemic. They were in general working extremely hard, very conscientiously and with a deep sense of commitment to dealing with an entirely unprecedented and extremely challenging situation to which there were no straightforward solutions.

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court 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.

Personal Data

Andrew Simon Feldman

Date:

29/1/2025