



From the chief executive

11 May 2020

Dear Emily and Jonathan,

I am writing to follow up your letter (1 May) to procurement leads about personal protective equipment (PPE), having taken stock of the feedback from our members.

You will be aware that that deliveries to some organisations in the acute sector from the national supply chain continue to be 'hand-to-mouth'. Our own internal polling of 217 primary care network leaders found that only one in four of those who responded felt they were able to access more PPE when they needed it. I appreciate this is a self-selecting sample, but I think it does underline that not all is well in this area.

While we understand the aim to avoid NHS organisations competing in a challenging international market, we strongly urge that you reassure providers that attempts to achieve this will not compromise the supplies they currently receive. One of our members, a major acute provider, described what they see as the further centralisation of PPE procurement as "high risk". It is a view shared by others who do not have confidence in the government's ability to make decisions quickly, especially if sourcing from suppliers not listed on existing national frameworks.

As you acknowledged, many hospital trusts are working together to procure PPE themselves. Again, this is not limited to acute care. Last week, a community care provider told us they had worked with their local CCG to act as an 'anchor', purchasing six weeks' worth of PPE for themselves, GPs, social care and other health and care providers in their area.

I am sure this is not your intention, but many of our members have interpreted your letter as a threat to these local arrangements. With this in mind, we would ask for you assurance that:

- What you are asking will not compromise organisations' ability to protect their staff;
- NHS organisations will be fully informed of national plans for PPE procurement including what progress has been made and how it will affect providers;
- Confirmation that regional hubs will be allowed to procure PPE, including internationally, as long as they continue to remain in contact with national NHS teams;

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