

demonstrated a clear plateau. On testing, she said that the Government had the capacity to meet the target of 100,000 tests a day by the end of the month, and were on the trajectory to do so. Testing capacity had decreased but this was still above the trajectory. She said that new PPE data had been added to the dashboard to demonstrate the 'time to no stock'. This did not include up to date data on gowns, but did show progression of stock in certain areas, for example clinical waste bags.

Continuing, she said that the virus has affected regions across the UK differently. The South East remained furthest ahead, but the Midlands was catching up. In care homes, the number of cases continued to climb in the South East and the North West, but other regions remained stable. She said the committee should note the number of care homes with outbreaks in the North West. This trajectory was similar to the South East and was one of a few indicators that suggest the North West was a few weeks behind the South East. This would need to be monitored closely.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE said that gowns remained an acute issue for the Government. When communicating the arrival of new PPE stock, the Government should not announce this publicly until it has reached UK warehouses or the flight is on its way. The Government had problems on the ground with the departure of the Turkey flight but this was now due to leave Turkey at 8pm that evening. He said that a flight from Burma was due that evening but the Government would not know how much PPE was contained until it landed. The Government had signed a contract with a factory in China which would provide the UK with all the gowns it required from the 12 May onwards.

Continuing, he said the Government's purchasing rules would be clarified by the Department. The current rules state that the Government should buy at 25 per cent below market value. He said that we should buy above market value in order to become a "go to" customer for global suppliers of PPE.

Responding, the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that these new protocols had already been agreed with DHSC and he was happy for the Government to purchase PPE at the necessary rate, as per the Prime Minister's instructions.