

41. Local authorities in Wales have shifted their approach to stockpiling emergency supplies, moving away from large reserves of equipment or "kit" in favour of just-in-time procurement practices. The advancement of 24-hour procurement systems and modern supply chains, mean that many supplies can be sourced rapidly. This minimizes the need for excessive warehousing of general items, allowing for a more efficient and cost-effective approach to emergency preparedness. That said, critical supplies such as salt and grit for winter road maintenance, fuel for fleet vehicles, and provisions for national power outages are still stockpiled. Additionally, local authorities collaborate closely with third-sector organizations, which play a vital role in supplying additional resources and personnel during emergencies. Charities and community groups often stock essential items like blankets, food, and medical supplies, and can mobilize volunteers quickly to assist with the distribution of aid. In the event of a power outage, these organizations may also provide emergency shelters, backup generators, and communication tools to support vulnerable populations. This partnership between local councils and the third sector ensures a more comprehensive and community-focused response to non-pandemic crises.

42. Local authorities and care providers were initially left to procure, store and distribute PPE for themselves or as part of regional arrangements. It was not until Welsh Government moved focus away from the NHS and tasked Shared Services formally with supplying social care that stability and a basic level of supply was achieved across the wider care sector. By 7 May 2020 around two-thirds of the social care sector's needs were being met by Shared Services.

43. It was not until 1 September 2020 that the WLGA and Shared Services adopted a service level agreement under which Shared Services would make weekly deliveries to local stores based on councils' estimated requirements (see Exhibit CL/099 – INQ000473470 : Final Draft SLA NWSSP and WLGA). The change from Shared Services acting as a supplier of last resort to supplying most of social care's needs was not formally communicated to social care until 12 October (as outlined in paragraph 30 above). WLGA and individual local authorities assisted NWSSP in ensuring supplies reached care providers in the required quantities. Local authority stores received palletised quantities of PPE arranged by NWSSP and broke them down for delivery or collection to individual providers.

Local Innovation and Supply Chain resilience

44. In March 2020, Welsh Government established a Critical Equipment Requirement Engineering Team (CERET), established to respond to the challenges in the UK/Wales supply chain of procuring key healthcare equipment and supplies. Within the remit of CERET was to work with local suppliers to shift their production and manufacturing to meet the growing