

Critical Equipment Requirements Engineering Team (CERET)

Terms of Reference, Governance Arrangements and Lessons Learned

Remit

CERET's purpose is to support Health and Social Care organisations in the development, procurement and distribution of essential items and equipment in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The NHS Wales Shared Service Partnership (NWSSP) is the customer and it is their demands that drive the teams' activity and prioritisation.

The remit of CERET will be kept under continuous review, initially:

a. Working within a framework of 4 procurement routes :-

- Route 1 : existing supplier base, straightforward procurement
- Route 2 : existing supplier base, some minor restrictions on supply
- Route 3 : supply limitations, requires manufacturers to adapt processes
- Route 4 : supply does not exist

CERET's focus is on developing and delivering Route 3 and 4 solutions.

- b. Leading and managing a co-ordinated response to Covid-19 in relation to engineered solutions within the manufacturing base pan-Wales.
- c. Supporting NWSSP to develop and deliver their response to Covid-19 in key areas such as Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), clinical equipment such as ventilators and any other items identified as essential by the NWSSP.
- d. Co-ordination and reporting of information and activity with wider Covid-19 response cell structures, including actions, information, and escalation (eg. ECCW, Primary Care Cell).
- e. Rapid response to Ministerial requests and informed proactive input into WG and UK Government discussions and decisions
- f. Proposing and supporting medium and longer term Covid-19 recovery options as the UKG and WG response evolves.

Representation

CERET will meet twice daily at the start and end of each day and be constituted by representatives from the following cross-government groups:

- Surgical Materials Testing Laboratory
- Life Sciences Hub
- National Procurement Service
- Health and Social Services
- B&R Innovation

- Thematic Division
- International Directorate
- Finance
- Corporate Procurement Services

Roles and Responsibilities

CERET is chaired by the Chief Executive of Industry Wales. Secretariat is provided by Thematic Division with sitreps published daily and saved in iShare. Significant issues are escalated to Ministers, the ECCW and other response cells as required.

CERET members have an individual and collective responsibility to act in the best interests of the public and the NHS in Wales, including:

- a. Representing the views and concerns of their individual organisations and teams
- b. Proactively identifying emerging issues, resource requirements, risks and opportunities, in their own areas
- c. Communicating CERET's activity and decisions to their organisations and teams
- d. Implementing CERET's decisions in areas of activity for which they are responsible

Governance and Assurance

An MA providing Ministerial authority to procure under the Public Contract Regulations 2015, using Regulation 32 (extreme urgency) is in place. In such exceptional circumstances, responding to the impact of COVID-19, the Welsh Government may need to procure goods, services and works with extreme urgency. Options that may be considered in relation to procurements under the Public Contract Regulations 2015, include: • direct award due to extreme urgency (regulation 32(2)(c)); • direct award due to absence of competition or protection of exclusive rights; • call off from an existing framework agreement or dynamic purchasing system; • call for competition using a standard procedure with accelerated timescales; • extending or modifying a contract during its term.

CERET has the delegated authority to utilise a budget of £5M held by the Thematic Division if and when necessary. All spending follows the Welsh Government's Financial Governance protocols.

Where forecast spend is in excess of £25K, a risk register is created for each proposed purchase order, which is subsequently presented to a Scrutiny Group made up of representation drawn from CERET. The decisions of these scrutiny sessions are also documented and saved on iShare.

CERET - Lessons Learned

Positive lessons have been learned to quickly mobilise an empowered emergency response group across government stakeholders.

Representation on the group has to be of sufficient seniority to propose a course of action and endorse decisions.

Communication via digital channels has proven to be extremely efficient allowing decision making to happen during the course of a 30 minute meeting.

Any future response group will require a dedicated communications lead.

Efficient and clear chairing of meetings has also been extremely important driving the agenda and giving all an opportunity to easily contribute speeding up action points.

However, the rapid rhythm of meetings meant individuals were working extremely long hours, late into the evenings to ensure actions were in-hand prior to the next day's challenges. Staff welfare should be a key consideration.

In these circumstances, leaders must remain vigilant and observe measures to ensure high levels of staff wellbeing. Working in isolation from home with no separation between work and leisure environments creates psychological pressures that should not be underestimated.

It also became evident that some business as usual, pre-covid processes were slowing delivery of key actions and alternative governance measures such as the Scrutiny Group had to be quickly established.

The group also took a number of pressurised decisions that in hindsight led to resources being utilised on activity that currently is not required but this may change if the pandemic enters a second phase as a consequence of poor return-to-work management.