

Part Six:

The current situation and longer term planning

- 6.4 The large PPE stocks now built up also reinforce the scarcity of BSO PaLS supplies in mid-April 2020, when the peak of the first wave was approaching. At this time, when demand management arrangements had been introduced, and BSO PaLS was despatching PPE to Trusts within 24 hours of receipt, it held fewer than 2 million aprons and just over half a million Type IIR facemasks, compared to 132 million and 115 million items respectively at July 2021.
- 6.5 The RCN acknowledges that the current supply situation is now “much improved”, with earlier issues related to availability and quality of PPE having largely been resolved, albeit that it was still receiving some reports around these issues from its members. IHCP told us that it is currently “reasonably confident” that ISPs now have an assured supply of PPE for the foreseeable future

Local manufacturers have provided significant volumes of PPE during the pandemic

- 6.6 Given the initial global PPE shortages and serious supply chain disruption, statutory bodies attempted to encourage local businesses to commence manufacturing PPE, or to ramp up existing operations. On 20 March 2020, Invest NI sought expressions of interest from its client companies for the supply of a range of core PPE products and hand sanitiser. Construction and Procurement Delivery also published a call for core PPE items on its *E-Tenders* procurement website on 27 March 2020.
- 6.7 BSO PaLS subsequently issued a PPE Supply Chain Strategy in May 2020 with the objective of further developing local manufacturing capacity. To date, it has approved seven contracts with a combined value of £165.8 million with local businesses, to manufacture various core PPE items. BSO PaLS has worked closely with these companies and MOIC, ensuring that assessments were carried out to ascertain if their products meet the necessary technical requirements and identifying any potential problematic design anomalies. Local manufacturers have therefore contributed significantly towards strengthening local supply chains, and their continued involvement will be key to ensuring stronger and more sustainable supply confidence.

The Department and BSO PaLS are seeking to secure longer term and more sustainable PPE supply arrangements

- 6.8 Conscious that it would be unable to indefinitely use the emergency procurement regulations, BSO PaLS started work on developing an electronic Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for PPE and related products in May 2020. A DPS resembles a procurement framework agreement, but provides more procurement flexibility. For example:
- the BSO PaLS DPS will operate for an initial five year period;
 - suppliers can bid to be part of the DPS at any time during its tenure;
 - applicants who fail to be appointed to the DPS can continuously re-apply, and successful applicants can leave at any time; and