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Rachel Reeves MP
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By email to:
rachel.reeves.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Rachel,

In my letter to you of 22 April, I committed to addressing the specific questions you had raised regarding PPE supply in your letters of 18 and 22 April. As I noted previously, it is the Department of Health and Social Care which leads overall on PPE supply. Nonetheless, I hope the following information will be helpful to you.

First, and most importantly, the Government has set up clear routes for businesses to use if they want to help with the response to COVID-19, and we encourage all potential offers to be directed to the following webform: gov.uk/coronavirus-support-from-business. If businesses use this webform, it ensures that their offer is entered into our system effectively and allows the appropriate team to take it forward. As you would expect, all offers are triaged by officials and we are focusing on prioritising those which can deliver significant quantities of high-quality equipment to the health and care sector.

The response to help with the national effort against this pandemic has been overwhelming, and I am sure you will join me in commending the extraordinary efforts of British businesses and individuals. We have received an enormous volume of offers of support relating to PPE, totalling 10,579 offers as of 28 April. This includes domestic and international purchase and manufacture opportunities, as well as offers to support the distribution of PPE to NHS trusts across the UK.

The annex to your letter of 22 April listed 35 companies or individuals which you suggested "have the capacity to manufacture Personal Protective Equipment and have contacted the government to offer to do so". Unfortunately, we had no record of contact via our webform or Ministerial correspondence teams, either in the Cabinet Office or Department of Health and Social Care, from 17 of those you listed. Of the remaining 18 which had made contact with the Government, we are already contracting with one of these companies, and six are currently under review. Officials have now sought to contact every company on your list to discuss any potential offer. In relation to Unique Disposables, which you mention in your letter, but which does not appear in your annex, we have investigated and have no record of this company on our systems.

In terms of those offering to manufacture PPE where they have not done so before, the Government had assessed offers from 190 companies as of 28 April: we had contacted 170 of these; and 20 were undergoing a Technical Product Review, which involves them producing a prototype of their PPE product for independent testing. DHSC then performs a Product Assurance Review, reviewing and validating the test reports and certification. Unless equipment can be made to the rigorous standards required, offers cannot be taken forward.

As of 28 April, six new PPE manufacturers from across the United Kingdom had contracted with the Government to provide PPE into the national supply chain, and five orders had been placed. For example, we are working closely with Don & Low Limited and Survitec Group Limited in the manufacture of gowns, and Ineos Compounds Aycliffe Limited in the manufacture of hand sanitiser.

I am sure you will also agree though that the Government must allow officials and procurement experts to prioritise the assessment of offers to focus our attention on what will be most valuable for our NHS and for health and social care providers. In terms of offers relating to the manufacture of PPE, officials are following a structured process of offer identification, assessment, triage and prioritisation to determine as quickly as possible which offers should be taken forward.

You asked why Deloitte was “leading on the procurement of PPE”. I can confirm that - while experienced external consultants, including Deloitte, are involved in many aspects of Government’s work in response to COVID-19 - all that work is under the supervision of civil servants. Deloitte is not “leading on the procurement of PPE”.

You asked about monitoring of hospital stock levels. This is a matter for the Department of Health and Social Care and the NHS, but I can confirm that the Government has significantly improved its stock data through its work with Trusts and the National Supply Disruption Response centre.

In terms of the distribution of PPE and other equipment, the Government has brought together the NHS, industry and the Armed Forces to create a new distribution network to deliver critical supplies to those who need it. You will have heard the Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, describe this as the greatest logistical challenge of his 40-year career. The Government has been working to ensure that millions of items are available to Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) who are prioritising delivery to key frontline workers according to local need.

While it is our top priority to ensure that those working in health and care settings are supplied with the PPE they need, we also recognise the importance of ensuring supplies to all organisations and sectors with a critical role in responding to COVID-19. For example, we have provided emergency supplies of PPE to prison services and to the court service. The Government has established a cross-government PPE board, including the devolved administrations, to prioritise requests for PPE to ensure that those facing supply issues and conducting essential work receive the PPE they need. All prioritisation decisions are informed by a clinical framework.

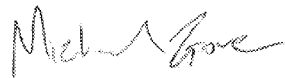
I would like to reassure you that the full weight of the Government is behind this effort and we are working closely with industry, social care providers, the NHS, trade unions, and the Armed

Forces to ensure the right equipment continues to be delivered to the frontline.

Finally, I have received your further letter of 1 May. As you note, I gave a statement to the House on 28 April regarding the response to COVID-19 across our public services, answering a number of questions from you and other members. In the last week, I have also appeared before the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee in order to take questions on the Coronavirus Act and the Government's wider response, and on Monday I will be at the despatch box again for Cabinet Office questions. I hope through these engagements to have addressed queries about those areas for which I am responsible. Where you have specific questions related to the work of other departments, I would suggest contacting them directly.

I look forward to seeing you in the House on Monday and answering your further questions there.

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Gove', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
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