

Delivering PPE

I have tabled a couple of questions to try to work out what happened with the much discussed Turkish order of protective clothing for health workers.

It seemed to me that Ministers were desperate to get more protective clothing, hearing of low stocks and possible shortages. They were clearly wanting more to be supplied and happy to provide the cash to pay. They also wanted to make some announcement that illustrated the massive amount of work that was going on to increase the flows into the NHS and care homes.

Presumably the senior managers for procurement volunteered that they had just placed a large extra order with Turkey. I doubt Ministers had arranged it themselves or would have known about it without briefing.

Whatever the involvement of Ministers in actually buying the goods, we do need to know whether they paid in advance, what was said about the specification required, and what if any checks and tests were made before taking delivery of the product.

Of course working at speed with a need for a big increase in supply mistakes can be made, but presumably the usual procurement rules applied. It is normal to issue a specification, and inspect or test samples before taking delivery.

It is also interesting that the UK agreed to go and pick up the consignment. What checks were made before loading the planes?

Let us hope this all has a happy ending. If we do not pay for the goods that did not meet specification no great harm is done. It still leaves me wondering why this particular contract was selected to highlight in the media, and why there were so many problems with it. It seems many other contracts work and the UK is buying a lot more PPE one way or another. Why did officials single this one out for a mention and why did it go wrong?