

Finding PPE

We have all got used to the initials PPE, meaning protective clothing for people working in the NHS and social care. The government has told us it wants there to be a plentiful supply, and Ministers have authorised spending to provide one. Despite this there is a persistent issue over whether supplies and stocks are adequate in a range of Health and Social care establishments.

I have spent time each day on this problem for the local organisations that report insufficient supplies and stocks. I have badgered the government through Ministers and the Cabinet Office. I have asked the Local resilience Forum for help, as we were told they had an important role locally. I have worked with Wokingham Borough who want to source more clothing for their social service responsibilities.

As a result of the strong MP and media interest and the demands from various hospitals and care homes the centre and the regions have set up organisations to try to ease the shortage. As an alert reader will have noticed, so far I have only mentioned organisations that are trying to buy or obtain PPE. The problem of course lies mainly with the supply. The world is short of PPE because there has been a big surge in world demand.

I have been able to pass on some leads to public sector bodies who need to buy more PPE. There are various manufacturers and stockists out there who can provide more PPE, and who want the extra orders. Some potential manufacturers say they are experiencing delays in getting their product approved and registered as suitable for purchase and use. Clearly the public sector needs to make rapid decisions, though it should see and test a sample of the goods first.

It should not be a logistics problem. The army is doing great work strengthening public sector delivery systems. There are plenty of laid up trucks and vans in the private sector needing work, and plenty of us would volunteer to drive a load in the backs of our own vehicles to an individual local care home if needed.

Given the will to provide more, the money to pay for it and the flexibility of manufacturers in need of work, it should be possible to crack this problem. Companies wanting to supply need to send in urgent samples, and the buyers in the public sector need to respond quickly with orders.