



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From Jo Churchill
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Prevention,
Public Health and Primary Care*

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Your Ref: ML.TS.C0168.CM.6.8.20

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Caroline Lucas MP

By email to: caroline.lucas.mp@parliament.uk

12 November 2020

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your correspondence of 6 August about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). I apologise for the delay in replying, which has been caused by an unprecedented volume of correspondence in recent months.

We have been upfront about the challenges we have faced with the huge international demand for PPE, but we have been committed and determined to support the health and social care sectors. We have worked tirelessly to deliver PPE to protect people on the frontline throughout this global pandemic.

Earlier this year, we issued a public call to action to meet the increased demand for PPE. To date, 15,000 suppliers have offered help and support. All offers were evaluated and prioritised according to volume, price, clinical acceptability and lead time. Companies that could provide a large amount of PPE at a fast pace, while ensuring all new products underwent rigorous safety and quality checks, were given priority for new contracts. PPE provided must be fit for purpose in terms of safely providing adequate protection. Any product that does not meet the specifications is rejected and returned to the supplier, according to its contract.

Many companies responded to our call. We aimed to reach suppliers that had experience of supplying PPE, but also those that had no prior experience but had access to sources of PPE through their business contacts. Many with no previous experience of PPE repurposed their production lines and/or their supply routes in order to begin or increase production or supply of PPE items, such as medical face masks and visors. We are grateful for the extraordinary response from the public in these unprecedented times.

All the contracts awarded contain break clauses, meaning that if the company supplies faulty products, or misses delivery dates, we can cancel the contract and reclaim any money spent. This is standard practice with our procurement; contingency plans are routinely built into all new contracts, and we seek formal agreements with parent companies to mitigate any liabilities. Redacted versions of some contracts are published on Contracts Finder, which can be found at www.gov.uk/contracts-finder.

Some contracts are subject to Judicial Review and we cannot therefore comment on their status. Once the litigation has been resolved, redacted versions of these contracts will be added to Contracts Finder.

In response to the pandemic, we have procured goods, services and works with extreme urgency, in accordance with procurement rules and Cabinet Office guidance. These rules can be found at www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/102/regulation/32. All contracts had to undergo Accounting Officer approval, regardless of value, with higher-value contracts being subject to HM Treasury approval. We have a robust process in place to ensure that orders are of a high standard and meet commercial due diligence.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Kind regards,



JO CHURCHILL