



Department
of Health &
Social Care

To: Local Authorities

From: Eric Finton James, Deputy Director, PPE cell, DHSC

Date: 4 September 2020

Dear Colleagues,

FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

I would like to thank you and all the local authority staff who have supported Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) to coordinate the distribution of emergency PPE to front line services. I recognise that local authorities have played a critical role in the supply of PPE, both as part of the LRF distribution system and by procuring supplies of PPE to support a range of services, particularly the care sectors.

At the peak of demand in April, LRFs received over 35 million items of PPE in a single week. In recent weeks, demand through the LRFs has reduced significantly and now stands at an average of 2 million items a week. The Department of Health and Social care (DHSC) has secured supplies against future demand and at present there is no national shortage of PPE.

Therefore, we have agreed to end the current emergency supply channel of PPE to LRFs via MHCLG by 11 September. We wrote to all LRFs on 14 August to inform them of this (letter attached at Annex A).

This decision was based on the feedback we received from weekly calls with all LRF chairs, in-depth calls with 15 LRFs which included local authority representatives and calls with local authority procurement teams. We also note that no LRF is reporting PPE as a significant concern through Delta returns.

Resilience

We understand that LRFs are considering what arrangements need to be in place locally to ensure resilience in the face of the continuing Covid-19 pressures, and the risk of any future unmet demand for PPE. To support LRFs, we have offered an additional drop of PPE to each LRF via DHSC at a level that would help create local reserves that can be used to manage any temporary increase in demand due to local Covid-19 spikes or in case of short-term disruption to other distribution mechanisms. We recognise that, in many cases, this process will continue to involve you as local authorities.

Funding and reimbursement

We are aware that many local authorities have procured their own PPE to supply their own services, as well as other sectors. Local authorities have reported these pressures to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) via monthly financial monitoring, and MHCLG are continuing to monitor the financial impact of Covid including any unfunded PPE costs.

We have now procured sufficient PPE to meet national demand and would be able to supply local authorities directly with PPE for all Covid-19 use, over and above any BAU use, until 31 March 2021 (see below for further detail). This supply is being made available free of charge and we will not consider funding any further PPE procurement contracts that are entered into by local authorities once DHSC can start to supply these Covid-19 PPE needs. Therefore, we are recommending that local authorities do not enter into any further contracts for PPE except those required in the immediate term to cover the period until we can establish the distribution mechanism necessary to meet your needs directly from our own stocks.

Consideration will also need to be given to local authority procurement arrangements from 1 April 2021, as we are unable to guarantee the distribution of PPE free of charge from that date onwards.

Future PPE distribution routes from 11 September 2020

We are aware of the importance of the sectors that currently source PPE via LRFs and the valuable work that they do on the front line. LRFs have been the source of emergency PPE for these sectors and we will be ensuring that these sectors can access PPE as we make changes to the supply route. From 1 September 2020, the PPE Portal will have been expanded to provide PPE to the following sectors:

- Adult social care homes and domiciliary care settings
- Children's care homes and secure children's care homes
- Children's residential special schools
- Primary Care (GP practices, optometrists, dental practices including urgent dental care centres)
- Community pharmacies
- Substance misuse services

We are considering increasing order limits and working to add other PPE items to the Portal to meet all of the Covid-19 PPE needs of the above sectors. Therefore, we do not anticipate the need to continue supplying these service providers via LRFs or via local authorities in the future.

We are working to determine the most effective ways to ensure continued access to Covid-related PPE for the following sectors:

- Local authorities (including children and adult social care workers)
- Mental health community care
- Personal assistants
- Domestic violence refuges
- Rough sleeping services
- All education (and childcare) services

Among the future distribution routes we are considering are the following two options:

- Local authorities to work with DHSC to receive free PPE directly until 31 March 2021 on behalf of those services in their areas that will not be supplied via the PPE Portal;

- Those LRFs, or nominated lead local authorities, who would like to play an ongoing role in PPE distribution until 31 March 2021 (should local circumstances lend themselves to such a system), to work directly with DHSC to continue receiving free PPE on behalf of those services in their areas that will not be supplied via the PPE Portal.

In both of these scenarios, we will look to set up a distribution push system and the PPE will be supplied at no cost and can cover the full Covid-19 PPE requirements for those services that are commissioned or supported by local authorities, that are not eligible for PPE supply via the PPE Portal. We invite you to get in touch with our team at ppe-requests@dhsc.gov.uk to discuss these options. Please contact us by 11 September to discuss the support you might need to undertake this role.

Communications to sectors

In areas covered by LRFs which decide to stand down, we will work with LAs and MHCLG to ensure that local services have a continuous supply of PPE. Other key sectors that have been eligible to access LRF emergency stocks will also be informed of this development by their respective departments and supported appropriately.

Kind regards,



Eric Finton James

**Deputy Director
PPE cell
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