

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP

Chair, Science and Technology Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

29 April 2020

Dear Greg,

COVID-19 Testing Portal for Keyworkers

I am writing to you regarding the UK Government's launch of the COVID-19 Testing Portal for Keyworkers and recent claims from Dr. Frank Atherton, the Chief Medical Officer for Wales, that were made to your Committee. These claims were repeated to me during yesterday's Welsh Affairs Select Committee, at which myself and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales – David TC Davies – were giving evidence.

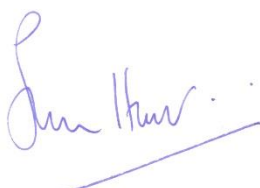
As you know, health is a devolved matter, and UK Government makes health policy for England. Our approach to combatting the spread of COVID-19 has been to work in close collaboration with our counterparts in the Devolved Administrations (DAs) to ensure the most effective response possible. This approach covers all policy areas, both reserved and devolved, including the development of the testing portal, which was designed with all of the DAs involved.

I was therefore concerned when Dr. Atherton told your Committee that the launch of the portal was not discussed in detail with the Welsh Government. This is simply not the case. For example, the Welsh Government Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) was on portal design calls with UK Government from as early as 1st April. A subsequent email was sent to the CSA and his team on 8th April, with frequent discussions taking place in the DA Strategic Test Group.

It is also worth noting that the Scottish Government indicated that they would join the portal ahead of the public launch, and that the portal is now already operational in Scotland. This was enabled by the early and consistent engagement between UK Government and the DAs, in which Welsh Government was also involved.

I am happy to discuss this matter with you further, should the situation require it.

Best,

**Rt Hon Simon Hart MP**
Secretary of State for Wales
Ysgrifennydd Gwladol Cymru