



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

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The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP  
Chair, Procedure Committee  
House of Commons  
Westminster  
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28 May 2020

Thank you for your letter of 19 May regarding the timeliness of written answers to Parliamentary Questions. I can assure you that I and my Department take parliamentary scrutiny very seriously. I recognise the vital role of Parliament in holding Government to account during the COVID-19 crisis, and it is fundamentally important that Parliament is provided with accurate and timely information to enable it to perform this crucial function.

Throughout the pandemic I have ensured that colleagues on all sides of the House are consistently and comprehensively updated on the rapidly evolving situation and the work that the Government is undertaking to respond to this unprecedented challenge. This has included eight Oral Statements, three responses to Urgent Questions, 16 Dear Colleague letters, and evidence to the Health and Social Care Select Committee.

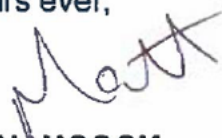
In addition, I have introduced a weekly digital COVID-19 update for Parliamentarians to answer frequently asked questions and to share the very latest information. We have set-up a dedicated helpline for MPs to ensure that colleagues have direct access to Public Health England clinicians to clarify guidance and answer queries about the public health response to COVID-19. And Ministers have hosted virtual briefings for all MPs on the aspects of our response that we know are front of mind for colleagues and their constituents, including our programme of testing, the provision of PPE and the new NHS contact tracing app.

As you note, the Department of Health and Social Care has an exemplary record of providing accurate and timely answers to huge volumes of written Parliamentary Questions. I regret that we have not sustained this exceptional performance in recent months, despite the immense efforts of my officials. Between 1 January and 19 May the Department received a staggering 4,447 Written Parliamentary Questions from Members across both Houses, of which 3,552 have been answered to date.

My Department – along with the entire Civil Service – has worked at an incredible pace and with outstanding dedication to support the Government's response to the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am extremely grateful to my officials for their incredible work during this crisis and I have asked them to redouble their

efforts to ensure that Members' written Parliamentary Questions are answered swiftly as a priority.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

**MATT HANCOCK**