

Sent via email to raynerb@parliament.uk

21st May 2021

Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Ms Hillier

With reference to your letter dated 30th April 2021 please find below our responses to the questions raised as requested:

1. Did your company have experience of providing health-grade PPE before the pandemic? If yes, please provide details.

- Full Support Healthcare Ltd (FSH) has been manufacturing and distributing health grade PPE since 2002. This includes a range of isolation gowns, FFP3 respirator masks (market leader into the NHS pre-pandemic), surgical masks and RPE and other protective apparel, both nationally and internationally. FSH are an existing provider on the current NHS Supply Chain (SCCL) Framework Agreement. Our products were stocked or provided on an e-direct basis through the NHS Supply Chain distribution network.

2. During 2020, were you able to rapidly produce PPE or source it with the correct certification from reliable manufacturers or intermediaries? If yes, please explain how you did this.

- FSH were able to increase production, working with existing longstanding subcontractors and assembly lines, but also opened additional production capacity by working with new assembly lines and diversified businesses. Due to early notification of the impending pandemic FSH rapidly reacted and mobilized every production channel available to us as early as December 2019. As a company FSH also nearly doubled the size of the team, increasing from 25 to 45 staff. Our existing Quality & Regulatory Department were able to manage the required certification processes and navigate a very complex and forever changing political landscape.

3. Did you make an offer to supply PPE to the Department of Health & Social Care or to the Cabinet Office? If you did, did you receive a response? If yes:

- Please describe the response and in what time frame it was received.
- Do you think the Department of Health & Social Care's supplier checking process was set at an appropriate level for new suppliers to enter the market?
- If you did not receive a response, please indicate

- FSH offered to supply a multitude of PPE products directly to SCCL. FSH also tracked depleting national stock levels on a daily basis with regular calls to SCCL, liaising with their Inventory Management Team. FSH made it clear on multiple occasions that high usage PPE items made in Wuhan and supplied to SCCL by multiple suppliers would evidently incur mass disruption to supply. FSH implored the Inventory Management Team to escalate the situation within SCCL and these calls were ignored within the organisation, which was confirmed to us at the time. At this time a pro-active procurement response from NHS Scotland secured the initial manufactured stock of PPE that FSH had manufactured in advance and at great risk to the company. It was only when a mailshot was sent out directly to the NHS that FSH secured the attention of Senior Management within SCCL. It was a number of weeks later when FSH were contacted by a Cabinet Office Procurement Lead. FSH had been recommended by SCCL as a company that could offer advice on PPE and manufacturing in the UK. It was this initial conversation that instigated a wider discussion on FSH's total capability to supply PPE and questions were asked as to why we had not received further orders.

4. Did you make your offer through the Department of Health & Social Care's normal process/portal for supplier offers and/or through other routes (for examples via a minister, MP or senior official)?

- *If you did make an offer through the Department of Health & Social Care's process or through these other routes, please describe the response and in what time frame it was received.*
- FSH had initial contact with SCCL and was then approached by the Cabinet Office as outlined in question 3 above.

5. Were you awarded a contract to provide PPE or PPE-related services? If yes, please describe:

- **What you were contracted to provide and when;**
- FSH were not given contracts, we received purchase orders. FSH were verbally told to go to production weeks, and sometimes months, before these official purchase orders were received. At the time it was imperative to secure production capacity urgently as this was being taken up by the USA at any cost. This was at significant risk to FSH as we did not have anything in writing to support the DHSC's requests.
- Orders FSH received and supplied in full were:
 - Face Visors – total value £830,957,400.00
 - Type IIR Mask – total value £501,446,100.00
 - Type II Masks – total value £85,800,000.00
 - Coveralls – total value £44,388,093.00
 - Isolation Gowns – total value £212,512,575.00
 - Nitrile Gloves – total value £2,340,000.00
 - Aprons – total value £169,376,590.92

- ***What monitoring and oversight arrangements were included in the contract;***
- There was supposed to be a regular meeting with SCCL, which was cancelled by them on a regular basis. This was to discuss delivery schedules, freight options to send stock via sea or air dependent on urgency, along with discussions on packaging change requirements based on what was being dictated by Chinese Officials at the time and any other relevant issues that had arisen.
- ***Whether the contract award has been published by government;***
- We are unsure what has and hasn't been published.
- ***Your experience of contracting with the Department of Health and Social care, and whether you encountered any difficulties supplying the PPE or PPE-related services in the contract. What was the outcome?***
- It was an incredibly stressful time. FSH were asked to go to production verbally, pending receipt of official purchase orders, which took weeks and sometimes months to come through, despite constant chasing by the company. Stock was either being dispatched from China, or worse still arriving at the UK port and having to go into storage with detention and demurrage costs accumulating; with no opportunity for FSH to invoice DHSC. This left FSH totally exposed financially and was an extremely stressful experience considering we were a small family business at the start of 2019.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Stoute
CEO