

17 April 2020

Dear Mr Hancock,

RE: PPE for care homes in Richmond upon Thames

There has been much comment in the media in recent days regarding supplies of PPE to the social care sector.

Over the past few weeks, in spite of assurances offered by the Government, there has been an emerging crisis within the social care sector with increasing numbers of providers struggling to source PPE. The situation in Richmond Upon Thames is no different from that been seen across the country.

This problem is causing anxiety amongst employers, staff, the families of the people they care for and the families of the care givers themselves. Care homes and home care agencies are now turning to us, as local authorities, for help as they feel they can no longer rely on assistance from central government.

I am confident that you are fully aware of the importance of PPE in the social care sector which is why I and many local government leaders are struggling to understand why we are still seeing huge gaps in deliveries. Every day our care homes receive orders that are incomplete, missing gloves, or masks, or aprons, and in some cases, deliveries don't arrive at all.

Despite your claims that the suppliers are fully stocked and able to deliver on all orders, distributors are clearly struggling to keep up.

I am writing to you to request urgent action on the part of the Government. We need a sustainable, consistent, and fully available array of PPE. In spite of promises to make this available, that promise simply has not been delivered upon.

We have 48 care homes in Richmond upon Thames, looking after around 1,400 residents. If a home care worker sees 10 people on their shift, that could be 10 pairs of gloves, masks, aprons. If there are 20 staff doing this in one day, that is 200 a day. That is 1,400 a week just for one home care agency. Richmond upon Thames has many such agencies providing care to people.

As a borough, so far we have received around 5,500 pieces of PPE from the Government. This is a woeful supply.

Without PPE our care homes cannot be considered as a safe environment. This will limit hospital discharges and of course cause bed blockages – adding additional strain on the NHS, in turn impacting upon the precious resource of Intensive Treatment Units so critical at this time.

I ask for urgent action on a more sustainable, procurement process to ensure our social care providers are adequately protected and they can enable vital care to continue.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gareth Roberts', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Councillor Gareth Roberts
Leader, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames