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Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2020. As you rightly acknowledge, the current situation is unprecedented and extremely challenging. I would like to start by acknowledging the professionalism and dedication of your members and the wider monumental effort by health and social care staff across Scotland.

The safety of our staff across health and social care is essential and the Scottish Government is committed to keeping staff across the NHS safe, which includes ensuring continued access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and testing kits for all staff involved in the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

We are working tirelessly with NHS National Services Scotland and colleagues in other UK nations to procure and distribute necessary supplies of the types and levels of PPE required to safeguard frontline health and social care workers.

National Services Scotland is also working extremely hard to acquire additional supplies of PPE equipment including FFP3 masks, hand sanitiser and other items. What we see is that distribution and delivery dates from suppliers are changing at short notice which can impact on replenishment of central stock held locally by health boards. Procedures are in place to closely monitor the demand, use, and replenishment of key supplies to ensure adequate provision is provided to each health board based on demand.

As you are no doubt aware, the global supply chain situation for PPE remains challenging. There has been unprecedented global pressure on the supply chain for PPE and we have daily discussions with Health Boards and National Services Scotland on the supplies to frontline staff.

Additional deliveries of PPE have also been made to GP Practices across Scotland, including facemasks, aprons, gloves and eye protection, in line with recently updated HPS guidance. <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>

National Services Scotland recently established a triage centre for registered social care providers in need of supplies of PPE. This went live on 19 March and has started to deliver thousands of face masks, aprons and gloves to providers all across the country who are providing social care support to people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

We are also contacting business and enterprise networks to see what they can do in supporting this response by providing either equipment or to open up the supply chain locally, nationally and also internationally.

We are closely monitoring the situation and recognise that there are wider supply issues than just PPE, and will continue working with partners across the public sector to understand and manage demand and supply routes.

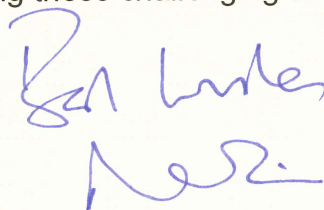
### **Testing**

We must make sure that our approach enables us to save as many lives as possible and protect the vulnerable, which is why we will continue to prioritise testing in hospitals, and why we need to prioritise available capacity to ensure that critical staff can return to work as soon as possible.

Earlier today, the Scottish Government published guidance for NHS Scotland to support prioritising available testing capacity to enable health and social care staff to get back to work, based on the pressures local boards are facing.

Boards are being asked to normally prioritise testing the symptomatic household members of health and social care staff who are not experiencing symptoms themselves, but are in isolation because of those household members. This will mean that if test results are negative, these staff will not have to complete 14 days of household isolation.

Finally, I would like reiterate my appreciation to you and your registered members for their professionalism and dedication during these challenging times.



**NICOLA STURGEON**