

**From:** David Osborn  
**Sent:** 24 March 2022 23:28  
**To:** Jeremy Hunt, Chair, Health and Social Care Select Committee

**cc:** Dame Meg Hillier, Chair, Public Accounts Select Committee  
Greg Clark, Science and Technology Select Committee  
**Subject:** RE: Evidence to H&SC Select Cttee ignored : Healthcare workers endangered across UK

Dear Mr Hunt

Thank you for your reply to my open letter dated 8 February, received 21 March.

To clarify some points:

The mention of the Public Accounts Committee in my letter arose because a number of highly-respected medical institutions, Royal Colleges (Nursing, Speech and Language Therapists), College of Paramedics, BAPEN etc submitted written evidence to the PAC "Lessons Learned" Inquiry.  
<https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/36669/pdf/>.

They submitted their evidence to that particular committee in good faith, since the [call for evidence](#) given out by the Government website indicated that this was the correct Select Committee which was specifically investigating PPE issues. The Public Accounts Committee's "Lessons Learned Inquiry" had the same closing date as the Health and Social Care Committee's "Lessons Learned Inquiry". It was therefore assumed that the two inquiries were working in a "joined up" way. However, with the benefit of hindsight, that was perhaps rather an optimistic assumption.

You can see in the PAC report

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmpubacc/175/17502.htm> that there is no mention of their [evidence](#) (ILG0014), nor mine (ILG0015) anywhere in the body of the report, though you can see mention of it for each of the contributory organisations on the [Published Written Evidence page](#).

In any event, the fact that neither select committee took any notice whatsoever of either written evidence is frankly disgraceful for a "Lessons Learned" inquiry (whichever committee may have been investigating it).

The message given in both submissions of evidence centred around the fact that our brave healthcare workers at the 'front line' in the fight against COVID-19 were not being supplied with the correct respiratory protective equipment that was necessary to protect them from this lethal disease which has killed so many of them and left even more suffering with Long Covid including severe life-changing issues - neurological, gastric, mobility, mental (to name but a few).

You had it within your power (in all three committees) to make the strongest possible representations to the Government, DHSS, PHE/UK-HSA and NHS to rectify this appalling situation. Had you taken the trouble to consider these reports then it is probable that many avoidable deaths and shattered healthcare worker lives may have been avoided.

It is reasonable to assume that, prior to your meetings, all the written evidence submitted will have been reviewed and the priorities for the committees' attention will have been set. Whilst it was all very laudable that the H&SC saw the priorities as being "scientific advice, Test and Trace, vaccines and other interventions", it is outrageous that cogently expressed concerns about the clear and present dangers to the lives and health of healthcare workers were not your top priority – in fact no priority at all since you completely ignored them. This was shameful and unforgiveable.

I remind you of the Government's stated 'raison d'être' for Select Committees is "*We want to know how the government's policies are working in the real world, and we want to know what needs to change to make things better. We call out for comments and views from the public ... there's lots we can learn from them*". Fine words indeed, which now sound very hollow given the short shrift that your committees have given to these well respected medical institutions and myself.

Despite the assurances of Government, this pandemic is not over, as evidenced by the increasing rate of infection as we head into the fourth main wave of the disease, with the ever-present risk of new variants, not just with increased transmissibility (as with Omicron) but potential for variants with increased severity (Case Fatality Rate) and/or vaccine escape potential. That is why the issue of healthcare worker protection still needs urgent consideration and changes to the PPE arrangements implemented.

You have rejected my recommendation that the 3 select committees (or at least S&T and H&SC) reconvene for an inquiry, not about the supply of PPE per-se, but about the fact that the policy-setters responsible for Infection Protection and Control have been, and continue to publish guidance which requires the provision of surgical masks which are not even designated as "PPE" in UK law, let alone the "RPE" (Respiratory Protective Equipment) which healthcare workers need in order to be properly protected from this disease.

It is not just the healthcare workers who suffer by contracting the disease through this route, but patients, their friends and the public in general due to the transmission chains which convey the infection beyond hospital walls.

Instead you direct me to the forthcoming Public Inquiry which will most likely take months if not years to conclude. I am sure that Lady Hallett will certainly consider these issues during the inquiry, (together with the abject failure of your committees to act on the warnings you were given about the danger to healthcare workers). However, it is still within your power to hold a short inquiry taking evidence about these serious matters and then make your views and recommendations known to Government. You should do that since it may compensate in some small way for your neglect in failing to consider the issue properly last year.

Yours Sincerely

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