

Time to tackle the pandemic from the bottom up

*ClB chairman **Edvard Spalton** follows up on his [earlier article](#) on how the relentless centralisation of public health responsibilities has undermined our ability to tackle COVID-19. As lockdown is gradually lifted, we see that a much-needed localised approach is beginning to emerge.*

The management of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK has been particularly poor, leading to a very high mortality rate in comparison with other European countries and enormous public expense which will take generations to repay. In an [earlier article](#) I outlined how the process of centralisation that has hampered the UK's ability to respond to the pandemic has taken place over decades, under governments of all colours. Front-line public health services, responsible for dealing with infectious diseases at local level, were denuded of trained manpower and resources. Public health is a separate, distinct discipline. The NHS and government should not be allowed to mark their own homework in this respect.

The response of our front-line hospital staff, frequently ill-supplied with necessary equipment and protective clothing, has been magnificent and inspiring. But the massive NHS and government bureaucracies were ill-prepared, sluggish and disorganised – a situation seemingly further worsened by [restrictive EU procurement rules](#). British firms with the capacity to make protective clothing for hospitals were simply ignored when they contacted the central bureaucracy. In frustration, the well-known clothing manufacturer David Nieper [approached Derbyshire hospitals direct](#) and started production very quickly at their urgent request. Everybody feels a debt of gratitude to the doctors, nurses, carers and

others on the front line. They were taking the casualties and

shown symptoms of COVID-19. The caravan accommodation provided