

COVID-19 (M) (19)

CABINET OFFICE BRIEFING ROOMS

COVID-19 (M) (19)

Held via teleconference, and  
Chaired from the Cabinet Room, 10 Downing Street  
On Monday 12 October 2020 at 1030

Record Of Attendees

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson  
Prime Minister  
In the CHAIR

Officials present

Simon Case  
Cabinet Secretary

Simon Ridley  
Cabinet Office

Imran Shafi  
No10

Name Redacted

No10

Chris Whitty  
Chief Medical Officer

Sir Patrick Vallance  
Government Chief Scientific Advisor

Ed Lister  
No10 Private office

Natasha Grant  
Civil Contingencies Secretariat  
Deputy Director

Name Redacted

Civil Contingencies Secretariat  
Recorder of Actions

Name Redacted

Civil Contingencies Secretariat  
COBR Liaison Officer & CCS Ops

Kate Josephs  
Cabinet office

Roger Hargreaves  
CCS Director

Attendance via Video Teleconference

when needed. She concluded that the primary constraint on testing capacity in Scotland was testing turnaround time and that every effort should be taken to reduce turnaround times.

11. The FIRST MINISTER OF WALES requested further information on the metrics used to determine the assignment of an area to a specific tier. That this would be essential to understand the rationale for varying tiers especially in the context of Wales proximity to Liverpool which had been determined as Tier Three. He asked if a COBR would be held to discuss 'circuit-breakers', which the SAGE papers had regularly advised on. He was disappointed that travel restrictions from parts of England to Wales remained subject only to guidance as opposed to enforceable restrictions. The ability for cross-border travel between areas of England with high infection levels and Wales left people situated within medium and low areas of infection in Wales susceptible to increased risk.
12. Responding the CHAIR thanked the FIRST MINISTER OF WALES and said that he understood the concerns, but regulations would be challenging to enforce and existing guidance clearly stated that people should not be moving to areas of low-infection.
13. The FIRST MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND said that Londonderry/Derry had the highest rate of incidence in the UK and hospital admissions were rising. The Government of Northern Ireland was currently considering when and where to implement measures. The FIRST MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND asked the following questions:
  - Whether it is possible to reduce R-level below 1 without interfering with education?
  - Whether financial support for testing would only be available for areas which sit within Tier 3?
14. The DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND said that the situation had deteriorated. That the highest levels of alert could not satisfy what was trying to be achieved, that immediate action was required and that a tiered system would be needed for Northern Ireland in the next few days. The proposed financial support package may not be sufficient enough to support individuals whose employment had been adversely affected by COVID-19. Economic intervention was key to allowing these decisions to be taken, so further consideration would be welcomed.
15. The CHAIR said the process for moving between tiers involved complex decision making and that the Cabinet Office would discuss the conditions and processes for areas to move between the tiers with the Devolved Administrations.
16. The CHAIR said that the issue of circuit breakers and the ability to keep schools open were particular points of interest. The CHAIR continued that success was heavily subject to individuals' behaviour and that the challenge lay in successfully encouraging a tired and frustrated population to absorb new messages.
17. The CMO said that protecting education was best for young generations in both the immediate and long term, and therefore further restrictions would have to be managed to ensure that this was possible. SAGE had performed modeling on this subject with results indicating that primary schools seemed to have less of an impact on transmission.