

How we manage while PM is ill

Scenario A: PM ill but able to communicate

Scenario B: PM unable to communicate his wishes

	Scenario A	Scenario B
National Security [See separate advice]	Relevant deputies identified PM would be made aware and could intervene.	Relevant deputies remain in place but DR is first deputy on decisions.
Cabinet	No need to chair Cabinet as it only meets when the PM wants it do in Recess and all business is carrying on as usual	FSofS chairs when needed
Appointments	All appts can be delayed or delegated.	All appts can be delayed or delegated.
Advice to HMQ	No need for an alternate. Cab Sec/PM PPS liaise with HMQ PPS	No need for an alternate. Cab Sec/PM PPS liaise with HMQ PPS
Direction to No 10	Not necessary – political team clear on any necessary PM priorities and direction.	FSofS giving political direction on C-19. Everything else team (and Ministers) know his wishes or new issues can wait.

To manage scenario B the PM needs to agree that:

- We will be clear he remains in office
- The FS as FSofS has been chairing the daily meetings governing the response to the C-19 crisis. Given this, the PM has asked that the FS also chairs any Cabinet meetings that he cannot attend.

- The Cabinet Secretary and PPS PM will liaise with the Royal Household on the PM's behalf
- The usual arrangements for national security deputies remain in place as it does any time that the PM isn't in constant contact with No 10. FSofS is first deputy.

Actions necessary to line up scenario B

- Conversation with PM (Martin)
- Conversation with Palace (Mark)

Q&A

Will FSofS be having weekly audiences with HMQ?

We have agreed with the Royal Household that weekly audiences will not go ahead in the absence of the Prime Minister. However, the Government will continue to keep the Household fully informed of developments.

[I think the precedent of other ministers taking over the PM's weekly audience is to be avoided. This feels very much something that comes with being PM. HMQ gets a regular box of papers and we can also provide updates through official channels.]

What of PM's powers has PM delegated?

The FSofS will take over the chairing of Cabinet and those committees normally chaired by the PM. He will also provide interim leadership to officials in No10. We would not expect any of the other duties of the Prime Minister, such as advising HMQ on ministerial appointments, to arise during the interim.

[Outside of national security, the PM has very few actual powers and almost no statutory functions. Most of the powers of the PM are formally wielded by the Crown on his advice and in most circumstances can be held over. If we get to a point where that starts to become impossible, we'd have to think really seriously about whether this approach is sustainable.]

Does this mean FSofS is in charge of other Ministers? [Is he going to make the decision about the Home Sec?]

The FSofS will convene and co-ordinate his Cabinet colleagues during the interim period and the Cabinet will provide collective leadership of the Government. The Prime Minister's constitutional responsibilities in relation to his ministerial colleagues remains unchanged and any relevant matters will be held over until his return.

When will the PM be back?

The Prime Minister will return to his duties as soon as medical advice allows him to do so.

What if the PM gets worse?

[God knows what we say here. I suppose the brutal truth here is if we get to the stage where the PM can no longer fulfil his role, that will become apparent within a few days based on how the disease seems to play out. At that point we're into scenario C or a variant (i.e. long term incapacitation). I don't think there's a world in which that level of uncertainty will stretch out in a way that is constitutionally unsustainable]

What if the Cabinet can't agree?

Cabinet Government has always been based on the principle of collective responsibility and that remains the case in the current situation. Ministers will continue to seek collective solutions to any policy differences. The role of the chair of Cabinet or one of its committees is to identify the solutions that best reflect the view of all or a majority of its members.

[If we got into this position we could conceivably consider whether to hold votes in Cabinet. It's a moribund mechanism but not one without precedent - Wilson use to hold votes]

Who are the political advisers in No 10 working for?

[One for PET!]

Who is doing calls with World Leaders?

The FSofS as Foreign Secretary will continue to keep in close contact with our friends and allies across the world.