

Message

From: Imran Shafi [/O=PMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=IMRAN SHAFIAF8]
Sent: 10/10/2020 17:26:56
To: Stuart Glassborow [sglassborow@no10.gov.uk]; Perelman, Elizabeth - HMT [Elizabeth.Perelman@hmtreasury.gov.uk]; PM Private Office Support Team - Internal I&S
Subject: PM COVID meeting Thursday [OFFICIAL]

For the record:

The PM met CX, CMO, CSA and the NHS CEO Thursday to discuss Covid and NHS preparedness.

CMO and CSA set out the latest epidemiological position, summarising the conclusions from SAGE earlier in the day. The doubling time was 8-16 days. There was a divergence in the over-60s incidence in places like Liverpool (>400/100k) and Manchester (much lower). In two weeks, we will very likely have over 100 deaths a day even with interventions taken now.

The PM asked about NHS capacity. Simon Stevens stressed the NHS was not overwhelmed and the service was in a better place than March. However, it was unlikely that the steep fall in other healthcare demand in Mar/Apr (which freed up beds) would happen again to the same degree. And as we go into winter, there would be a higher rate for other respiratory admissions. In the NW, esp Merseyside, there were more targeted concerns – Liverpool currently had half the covid patients that it had at peak of the first wave and within 2-3 weeks it would surpass April peak pressures. There was no evidence that current measures were working in this area. Pressed by the PM, he confirmed that we could move some patients around the system, including via the Nightingales, though there was a strong clinical preference not to use them if we could help it – Steve Powis confirmed the Nightingales were a last resort. In response to CX, Simon confirmed independent capacity was available.

We then turned to the question of NPIs. Simon Ridley set out his presentation of the position and potential range of measures for consideration. In order to get R down to 1 or below, there were necessarily some tough economic measures that would be required – the efforts taken so far had, whilst having a major effect, not been enough. Outbreak data showed that many outbreaks were in settings that were priorities for Government not to close (e.g. educational settings) although CMO cautioned against over-reading into this analysis. Simon Ridley noted that the DPHs in local areas were proposing more stringent measures than HMG was, e.g. on the 2m rule.

Simon Stevens argued that – stepping back – not everyone currently accepted there was a problem, people did not think measures were fair, they questioned whether they worked, and if they did work, they wanted financial support. Government response should take these factors into account.

CMO cautioned that any intervention would likely be required in some form over winter – it was unlikely we would be able to come out of difficult measures before Christmas.

CX noted that taken as a whole the range of measures outline by the taskforce would affect ½ million jobs. He proposed addition enforcement in local areas. Dom Cummings noted that other countries had better enforcement regimes than the UK. The Cabinet Secretary suggested we discuss how the army could help with encouraging compliance, and he would speak to CDS.

CMO noted finally that it was critical that any package was co-owned by local leaders. That was our best chance of success.

The PM was grateful for the contributions of all, and said he would discuss further with CX before agreeing a final approach.