

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

HMIG (20) 03  
Minutes

Minutes of a Meeting of the  
COVID-19 - Health Ministerial Implementation Group  
held at 70 Whitehall on

SUNDAY 22nd March 2020  
At 1000 AM

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P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Simon Clarke, MP  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and  
Local Government

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Minister for the Cabinet Office and  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP  
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

The Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP  
Secretary of State for the Home Department

Vicky Ford MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for  
Children and Families

Edward Argar MP  
Minister of State (Minister for Health)

Caroline Dinenage MP  
Minister of State for Digital and Culture

Lord Gardiner of Kimble  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
(Minister for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity)

Helen Whately MP  
Minister of State (Minister for Care)

James Heappey MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
(Minister for the Armed Forces)

Wendy Morton MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
(Minister for European Neighbourhood and  
the Americas)

Lord Agnew  
Minister of State at the Cabinet Office

ALSO PRESENT

Prof. Chris Whitty,  
Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health and Social Care

Sir Simon Stevens  
Chief Executive, NHS

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Sir Patrick Vallance  
Chief Scientific Adviser, GoScience

Simon Ridley  
Director General C-19 Healthcare Ministerial Implementation Group, Cabinet Office

Kathy Hall  
Director of Technology & Data Strategy, NHSX

Paul Cosford  
Director, Public Health England

Clara Swinson  
Director General for Global and Public Health, Department of Health and Social Care

Wendy Fielder  
Director of Communications, Department of Health and Social Care

John Manzoni  
Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary, Cabinet Office

Sir Edward Lister  
Chief Strategic Adviser to the Prime Minister, No 10

Munira Mirza  
Policy Unit Director, No 10

**NR**  
Policy Unit, No 10

Joanna Key  
Director, Cabinet Secretariat

Secretariat  
J Feintuck

Introduction &  
Summary of  
strategic and  
tactical

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE said  
that the Group would be reviewing the three-month Plan, subject to further

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approach to  
the epidemic

work. The Plan was designed to achieve the overall strategic aim of protecting life during the pandemic.

THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER said that there were different mortality impacts of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) outbreak: direct impacts; indirect impacts; effects of postponement of non-emergency care and public health programmes; links between poverty & ill-health.

The first priority was to reduce the transmission rate to less than one, to stop exponential growth of the epidemic. The key metrics in this stage of the pandemic were therefore: the doubling time; the transmission rate (R force); and the ICU bed capacity. It was highly unlikely that the virus will be eradicated given its wide spread, and the current lack of vaccines or countermeasures.

Three-month  
Plan to Tackle  
the Virus

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE said that the Plan contained priority actions for the health system, but was cross-government in nature. It drew together the areas of focus for the work ahead and should be kept up to date and added to as when new areas of critical work emerge. The Plan covered six key workstreams: NHS capacity and resilience; supply; testing; technology; social distancing; and shielding. The three-month Plan should be supported with the right metrics that can be tracked live.

In discussion the following points were made:

- to support NHS capacity, elective operations will stop on the 15th April, with individual Trusts tapering to that date at the rate they see fit. Community healthcare providers now have the responsibility for the discharge of medically fit patients, moving the system to a 'pull' model. Individual acute Trusts should also be expanding their ICU capacity. Work across the Ministry of Defence & NHS has created a plan for an additional 2,000 beds housed at the ExCel London centre, which will be needed to support London ICU bed capacity within a week at the current rate of demand. ICU supply and demand data will be broken down by region by the end of the next week (commencing Monday 23 March);
- to support capacity in community care advice to care homes should be updated - current guidance suggests they should accept patients who are asymptomatic even if they have not received a COVID test. The CMO should opine on this to reassure care homes, but a potential option should care homes refuse to accept could be step-down care in hotels. Non-NHS bed procurement should be tracked as part of overall capacity (e.g. hotel beds). Further work is required on Social Care metrics to allow a better