

Message

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Sent: 25/10/2020 11:29:07 PM
To: Stuart Glassborow [SGlassborow@no10.gov.uk]; Ridley, Simon - CO (OFF-SEN) [Simon.ridley@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]; Kate Josephs [kate.josephs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]; Catherine Cutts [CCutts@no10.gov.uk]
Subject: draft readout - any thoughts? [OFFICIAL]

Dear all,

The PM met the team today on the forward COVID strategy. Many thanks to the team for all the work that went into this over the weekend.

James Bowler set out the overall potential course to spring, including rising numbers followed by a plateau. We needed to understand now what our strategy was to Christmas (where we would need to plan well in advance), and we also needed to press ahead on no-regrets issues such as compliance.

Catherine Cutts presented an analysis of the current data. Following discussion with the PM on the picture this data told us, we agreed we needed:

- To include what other countries are doing on education, working from home and shielding of the elderly/vulnerable in our comparison charts (noting potential French moves on over-65s, and Italy's moves on schools). We should also keep a close track of what impact their measures are having on transmission
- To continue to improve our assessment of *when* there was intolerable strain on the NHS regionally and nationally, and the potential health impact on non-COVID patients in such scenarios. The PM wanted to see clear trajectories across the key metrics (e.g. over-60s, NHS capacity – others to be defined) and get a daily update on them

We touched on mass testing, where Kate Josephs set out the current picture. We agreed that whilst there was substantial progress, it was not yet sufficient to avoid difficult trade-offs on the overall strategy in November. The PM agreed there must be military support for whole-town testing (I've emailed on this separately).

Simon Ridley set out the strategic choices ahead. We would soon need to decide how to respond to LCR's upcoming 28 day review. Noting Catherine's chart on the general shift towards tier 3 across the country, there was an option to bring some of this forward, as well as introduce tighter measures both within a tiers framework (e.g. converting tier 3 into regional firebreaks – which the PM was attracted to) or alternatively as a national circuit-breaker, as seen elsewhere (which the PM was not currently attracted to, but kept an open mind based on evidence). CMO suggested there was evidence that, if complied with, tier 2 could have an effect – and it may be that the country as a whole is currently one tier too low.

The PM was keen to see the economic impact of the various scenarios. The taskforce was commissioned to work closely with HMT to develop plausible scenario options, and the economic impact of each, specifically drawing out whether short, sharp lockdowns would be more or less detrimental than less intensive restrictions for longer. We needed a judgement on whether we could mitigate economic harm by signalling any sharper restrictions in advance. Whilst mass testing might not help significantly right now, it could potentially also avoid continued short restrictions post-Christmas (this should be modelled as a scenario).

Alongside these wider choices, we also agreed:

- further work was required on mitigating measures within workplaces, which were a source of high transmission

- we needed to understand what it would take to significantly increase compliance with self-isolation, including further financial incentives – we needed to be prepared for this to be expensive if required

The PM was keen for a further update early in the week with CX, followed by further discussions with other Ministers as appropriate.

We agreed to follow up tomorrow to pull together a detailed plan on next steps.

Imran

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