

Message

From: Name Redacted

Sent: 27/01/2020 15:21:24

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Subject: Coronavirus meeting readout

All,

Please see the below for a readout from this morning's meeting with SofS on Coronavirus. Please note the actions and treat sensitively. SofS has asked for more frequent meetings on these, diary schedulers will be shared asap.

Coronavirus meeting: 27/01/2020

Attendees: SofS, CMO, JVT, Perm Sec, Emma Dean, Jamie Njoku-Goodwin, Clara Swinson, Emma Reed, Paul Cosford, Natasha Price, Name Redacted, Kate Thomas, Yvonne Doyle, Sharon Peacock, Lee Bailey

- SofS opened the meeting by outlining his concern upon hearing the update from the Chinese government that the virus is transmissible when patients are asymptomatic and set out the need to plan for the reasonable worst based scenario.
- CMO commented that previously our best understanding was that the virus was unlikely to transmit whilst patients were asymptomatic (but this was/is unable to be definitive). There is still a lack of clarity over what the Chinese official position is. CMO would expect that very symptomatic persons would be more likely to transmit the virus. CMO commented that if transmission was occurring rapidly in the UK, it would be highly likely that this would have come from highly symptomatic persons. CMO was confident but could not guarantee that asymptomatic persons would be less contagious than heavily symptomatic persons.
- CMO commented that current intel suggests that the coronavirus is a moderately severe upper respiratory tract infection. The fact that mortality rates appear to be levelling out imply that our certainty on the gravity of the situation is improving, but this is caveated by our reliance on information from China.

- SofS asked the Department to gain clarification from China on whether asymptomatic transmission is occurring, and to scenario plan accordingly.
 - **ACTION:** Emma Reed's team to liaise with FCO on the above
- SofS reiterated his willingness to evacuate these persons. Perm Sec proposed that we can justify the case to prioritise isolation/public health measures for the 200 British Nationals currently in Wuhan if they are to be evacuated.
 - **ACTION:** SofS asked the department begin preparing immediately for their quarantine or self-isolation, and provide advice on either option.
- CMO commented that our approach must adjust accordingly if the virus spreads to the whole of China (stage 2), or if China is seen to lose the containment (stage 3). CMO commented that we should continue to prioritise work to contain any illness. Currently, cases confirmed outside China do not appear to be spreading uncontrollably but we should prepare for this eventuality.
 - **ACTION:** PHE to continue to prepare for containment of any case confirmed in the UK and NHS to prepare hospitals should containment be lost.
- SofS asked whether we should be implementing a travel ban for the whole of China under the understanding that the virus is no longer contained to Wuhan. CMO commented that this is not straightforward and would not stop the illness coming to this country if it is highly transmissible.
- CMO commented that current stats suggest that on average 1 person has passed the virus on to 3 people, but now that China is gripping the virus, there is potential that this will fall.
- PHE have clinical and epidemiological evidence to loosely suggest that it is only the oldest and most vulnerable who die of the illness (around 3% of those who contract it), but that we cannot be confident here. The reasonable worst case scenario is not too dissimilar to a flu pandemic, where we have significant plans in place.
- SofS and Perm Sec discussed the risk and benefits of quarantine measures, especially any public comms on this point.
 - **ACTION:** SofS asked the Department to focus group this.
- SofS reiterated the importance of managing the public's perception of our response. Contact with the 2000 who travelled from Wuhan last week is critical. The airline has provided information on all passengers, a letter is being sent out with advice to contact 111 if any issues. SofS commented that these persons should be advised to self-isolate and to get the passport numbers to contact.
 - **ACTION:** SofS asked for a daily update on how many of the 2000 from Wuhan have been contacted, and for the Dept to tell these persons to self-isolate.
- Jamie asked what are other countries doing commenting that Germany had advised non-essential travel.
- SofS agreed that we need to improve our communication about our approach to flights and to ensure that everybody on the flight is aware that they have been monitored. SofS asked that as part of enhanced monitoring we ensure that we get the contact details of anybody who is found to be ill, and ask them to sign that they have received advice.
 - **ACTION:** CMO is to provide a background media briefing on the science behind Coronavirus.
- On tests/vaccines, SofS asked that we should pursue every option possible and asked that we do our best to boost test capacity.
- SofS asked to be kept aware of any resourcing problems are, so that the DHSC can fix this and increase resources accordingly.
- On vaccines, CMO commented that it is difficult to quickly develop a vaccine that can be deployed. JVT outlined that the typical timeline is 5 years, but we could hope for 12-18 months if all went well. JVT commented that no one has ever made a vaccine for coronavirus.
- SofS said that all future comms needs to be cleared by Kate, then CMO and Perm Sec before himself.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Name Redacted



Department
of Health &
Social Care

Name Redacted

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