

PROPOSITION FOR NATIONAL INTERVENTION**4 JANUARY 2021**

1. **This paper presents a proposal for a new, national intervention.** This would be centred on a strong stay home message across the country. It would be a final push before the rollout of the vaccine provided for a gradual easing of restrictions. We expect Scotland to move, this afternoon, to a lockdown comprising: stay at home (unless there is a reasonable excuse), limiting outdoor mixing to two people from two households, a legal requirement to work from home where possible, places of worship largely closed, and ending the existing exemption allowing people to gather at less than 1m in workplace canteens.
2. **We recommend that the national intervention would last until the end of February,** two weeks after the top four vulnerable cohorts have received their first dose, and the point at which those mid-February doses will have an effect on immunity. At this stage restrictions would be eased gradually, potentially through the regional tiers framework.¹
3. **We would introduce new regulations as early as possible.** These would be of ‘national significance’ and warrant a vote in Parliament first. If the regulations are ready tomorrow: recall cannot be achieved before Wednesday, and delaying the regulations to facilitate a vote may not be wise on policy grounds and so a choice would need to be made about facilitating a vote, after they have come into force, either this week or on Monday when the House returns as planned from recess. If the regulations are not ready to be laid until Wednesday then recall for Wednesday would be advisable. The new regulations would include the tiers framework, allowing the Government to exit the intervention into regionally appropriate restrictions once enough of the vulnerable have been vaccinated: the first 4 JCVI cohorts including over 70s and CEV should have first dose by w/c 15 February. The regulations should be sunsetted for the end of March at the earliest to allow time to step regions down through the tiers under these regulations. The new regulations would override the need for an end of January vote. We should still commit to regular reviews of the efficacy of continuing lockdown.
4. **We recommend that the intervention would comprise:**
 - a. **Tougher stay at home messaging:** we would return to March-style messaging across the country starting with a clear message to stay at home to save lives. This would be supplemented with very strong comms to clarify what is/is not permitted (e.g. on support bubbles). Regulations would be based on the current Tier 4 intervention. But we recommend going further by: considering permitting exercise (with guidance on ‘once a day’), but not outdoor recreation (and limiting this to local areas in any event); if primary schools are closed, limiting supervised activities for children and under-18 sport to vulnerable children and children of critical workers;

¹ This is subject to further analysis. The majority of mortality is concentrated in the most vulnerable cohorts (the top 3 JCVI cohorts account for c.15% of the population and c.75% of deaths); we can expect significant reductions in mortality at an early stage of the vaccine rollout. However, projections are sensitive to uptake in these groups, and deaths in the unprotected proportion of these groups would increase when NPIs are eased. The central conclusion from SPI-M’s early modelling was that “it is critical to get extremely high vaccine coverage in the most vulnerable groups before NPIs are eased if we are to avoid a very high death toll”.

banning parent-and-child groups; re-closing animal attractions; and preventing take-away or click-and-collect alcohol from hospitality venues;

- b. **Working from home:** A much stronger message on working from home unless it's impossible, including comms and sector engagement (including public sector) to reinforce the message via Ministers/departments, without changing the underlying policy.
 - c. **Secondaries:** moving secondary schools and colleges online across England, with the exception of vulnerable children, the children of key workers, and - possibly - exam years. Delay exam years' return to 18th Jan if return face to face.
 - d. **Higher education:** a further delay to the return of higher education settings. Non-practical and non-critical worker practical courses (e.g Science, Engineering, Performing Arts), amounting to around 80% of all students, would not return until the end of February, in addition to the 20% who returned in January who study critical-worker practical courses (e.g Nursing, Teaching, Medicine).
 - e. **Protection of the vulnerable:** all CEV would be told to stay at home and not go to work or school. Their household members should also be advised to avoid social contacts. We would advise parents to avoid forming childcare bubbles with grandparents if possible. We will continue to look at options to e.g. provide accommodation for people in their household to isolate if positive;
 - f. **Self-isolation:** eligibility for the £500 Test and Trace Support Payment would be extended to people who test positive and whose income is lower than the median income, at an estimated monthly cost of £120m to be funded from existing Test and Trace budgets.
5. We would supplement all of the above with consistent communications and enforcement to drive compliance against the simpler message. This would involve a new national 'adult-to-adult' campaign to explain what action is required, what actions people need to take and those they must stop, and how all our actions and compliance will make a real difference. This should clearly explain what the data is showing, what this decision has been taken, and for how long it will last, with review points. We would also push the police and local authorities for more visible enforcement.
6. **If we want/need to go further, options include:**
- a. **Primaries:** moving primary schools online, except for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. This should be a last resort. This could be done either by moving all areas into the contingency framework (allowing us to release them on a local basis) or by a separate national decision. If we go ahead with closing primary schools, we may want to commit to a review date part way through the lockdown - for example, in the last week of January - to see if return, even in some areas, is possible sooner.
 - b. **Nurseries:** the closure of nurseries and other childcare providers to all but vulnerable children and critical workers' children - this is similar to primary schools. Specialist schools and alternative provision would stay open as in March, as these pupils are vulnerable or require unique educational support.
 - c. **Limiting outdoor exercise/recreation to single households/bubbles** i.e. not with one other person.

- d. **Closing paid-for open spaces (such as zoos and botanical gardens), outdoor sports venues, and/or outdoor playgrounds.** We would need to justify why these spaces were distinct from parks/countryside, given the long-standing rationale that outdoor open spaces are safer - playgrounds in particular are very important to those on lower incomes, who have no private outdoor space.
- e. **Banning all takeaway/click-and-collect from hospitality** (food as well as alcohol). This would mitigate risk of gatherings outside venues, but would penalise businesses/individuals in areas without reliable delivery services.
- f. **Face coverings:** subject to views from CMO and GCSA, new guidance/obligations to wear them in communal areas in workplaces, potentially including in classrooms for students and teachers in secondary schools and colleges and possibly a legal power for Ministers/local authorities to designate crowded outdoor spaces as ‘mask zones’.

7. **We do not recommend the following for this announcement:**

- a. **Strict 2m requirement:** The SAGE Environmental and Modelling subgroup have recommended a return to blanket 2m social distancing guidance in all settings which are open (including workplaces), but we recommend against this now; instead, we recommend emphasising that 2m should be the default in places that are open to the public (e.g. essential retail) and that face coverings should be worn as above.
- b. **Curfew:** we could introduce French-style self-certification or introduce a curfew.
- c. **Cancel bubbles:** we could cancel support and childcare bubbles, returning to the position in March, but this will cause social and economic harm (e.g. through increased isolation and reducing the availability of childcare to enable parents to work). Instead, we can clarify in our messaging who is eligible for support bubbles and that they should be used for essential reasons (i.e. providing support or care) and not for socialising. Adults should avoid close contact even with their support bubble. In extremis, we could limit the reasons for which someone could lawfully change their bubble or increase the time needed between changes.
- d. **Border:** we are working up options for a tougher system at the border for a time-limited period, resting primarily upon tougher enforcement, but with the prospect of removing current exemptions and/or suspend the travel corridor approach or - at the most extreme end - consider significantly stricter processes on arrival (e.g. on-arrival isolation). But this will not be ready in the short term.
- e. **Self-isolation:** we are looking at options for offering hotel accommodation for self-isolating people but these will not be ready for this announcement.
- f. **Mass testing:** we are exploring options for greater availability of testing (e.g. rapid tests at PCR test sites) or a population-wide testing event to reduce prevalence ahead of the end of February, potentially conducted through the post to reduce logistical complexity;
- g. **Communal worship:** We could return to individual prayer only. This might be justifiable if all schools were closed, but would be strongly opposed by some faiths and many in Parliament.
- h. **Life events:** further limiting weddings/funerals beyond T4. We believe this would have minimal effect and could lead to funeral delays - causing issues for morgue capacity.