

Message

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on behalf of Simon Ridley <simon.ridley@cabinetoffice.gov.uk> [simon.ridley@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]
Sent: 06/09/2021 13:17:21
To: Simon Case [simon.case@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]
CC: NR@cabinetoffice.gov.uk
Subject: quick covid update

Hello Simon. I hope you managed a bit of a break. I was back in last week and have just done the weekly cabinet briefing. I think we have a catch up tomorrow.

The summary of where we are data is essentially: we have been in a 'summer equilibrium' where schools out and reduced work have balanced wider opening. We therefore expect cases to go up in coming weeks, but on its own that isn't what we need to worry about. We enter this autumn with far more covid patients in hospital this year than last. Patrick is of the view we need to watch (age adjusted) ratios between cases and hospitalisations very closely as a key signal. Lots of uncertainty, but overall Chris was quite reassuring to the PM on Friday: it will get worse, but in worse case scenarios we shouldn't need to do too much to adjust. I suspect we will cover all this in the dashboard shortly.

A couple of policy headlines:

- we had a long meeting on 12-15 vaccinations on Friday. The PM was again frustrated with JCVI. But CMO's process is underway and he plans to advise on Wednesday. Chris's main emphasis - which he gave again to Cabinet members just now - is the importance that this process is not seen as a forgone conclusion/over riding JCVI etc. First because it isn't and second to maintain confidence that vaccination advice is evidence based and not unduly politically motivated.

- Patrick/Chris more widely clear that in terms of our strategy - protecting the NHS and saving lives - the booster programme is more important as is continuing to vaccinate remaining unvaccinated older people. JCVI timeliness and clarity on boosters at end of this week/next Monday is key

- we had a useful session with the PM on Friday on preparing to publish a winter plan (i.e. the outcome of the September review we committed to at step 4). We are aiming to publish on the 14th, and so we are looking at having a senior 'quad' meeting at the end of this week. CDL is chairing various discussions this week. The most contentious decisions are on asymptomatic testing, certification and testing around international travel. Calibrating language and policy on contingency is also hard.

- Cabinet briefing was useful. Two main issues were children's vaccinations (Grant and JRM setting out their points of view) and some at least implied disquiet on domestic certification (Lord Frost, JRM and Terese Coffey)

- we are trying to end up somewhere sensible on antivirals, which is a fairly sorry tale all told.

There are obviously other things about but I think that's the main stuff right now.

Best wishes
Simon



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