

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

EXERCISE BARNCHESTER
WEDNESDAY 12TH MAY (1ST JULY) 2021 | 1445-1545

This Exercise considered a local response to a fictional dangerous VOC in a fictional location in July 2021.

POST-EXERCISE ACTIONS

1. **DHSC and COVID-19 TASKFORCE** to work with other government departments to develop a systematic framework for escalation in the event of a dangerous VOC. This will include interventions (such as surge testing and boosting vaccine take-up), financial support, strengthened tools on domestic travel and clear review points.
2. **HMT** to develop a preliminary structure for a financial support package working with **COVID-19 TASKFORCE, BEIS, MHCLG and DHSC**, to be pre-agreed in advance of any urgent action, which is particularly important once current schemes begin to taper.
3. **DfT and HO** to reassess the tools available to support the management of movement in and out of an area if local restrictions were ever to be applied. This should consider innovative approaches.
4. **COVID-19 TASKFORCE and COMMS HUB, DHSC, and MHCLG** to ensure that contingency plans include a clear communication plan, at the local and national level. Planning should reflect on behaviours and a potential decline in compliance over the summer, as well as taking into account areas of enduring transmission.
5. **COVID-19 TASKFORCE** to coordinate the above into an overarching playbook for responding to VOC outbreaks, with input from all relevant departments. Governance should make clear that any decisions on local restrictions would be for a PM-chaired COVID-O.