

Increasing rates of self-Isolation

1. High rates of self-isolation of those infected and their contacts are key to reducing rates of infection and restoring the economy.
2. Estimated rates of isolation vary depending on the definition of self-isolation and who is being asked. Estimates are in the region of 20% for full adherence to guidance among people with COVID-19 symptoms in the general public (1).
3. Motivation to self-isolate is high in all groups; ability to self-isolate is lowest among the poorest sections of the population (2).
4. SPI-B recommended that a good package of support – financial, practical, information and emotional – had the potential to increase adherence (2).
5. SPI-B warned that an emphasis on enforcement could undermine people's willingness to seek out a test if symptomatic or to share contact information (3).
6. Policy response
 - £500 support for those on Universal Credit.
 - Fines of up to £10,000 for non-adherence by employers and others.
7. Key uncertainties
 - a. What is the impact on rates of self-isolation of implementing the package of financial and practical support outlined by SPI-B?
 - b. Is the impact further increased by removing the prospect of fines for those requested to self-isolate (but not removing fines for employers not allowing employees to self-isolate)?

Recommendation: develop a pilot package with DPHs in areas of high deprivation with rigorous evaluation of impact on adherence.

- c. What is the cost-effectiveness of a fully implemented package?

Recommendation: estimate cost-effectiveness considering costs to the economy of status quo.

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1. Covid-19 Behavioural Science and Insights Unit (BSIU), Public Health England. Compliance with self-isolation: Barriers and facilitators. 4 November 2020.
2. SPI-B. The impact of financial and other targeted support on rates of self-isolation or quarantine. 16 September 2020.
3. SPI-B Policing and Security Sub-Group. Covid-19: Assessing the value of an enforcement based approach to Covid. 21 September 2020.