

RE: Hold: Four Harms Meeting

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Date: Mon, 21 Dec 2020 12:22:17 +0000

Colleagues -

1. This confirms that the Four Harms group will meet in the slot held in diaries for 15:00 today. I know how busy many of you are. Here's an email to focus that discussion. It should also allow any of you who cannot attend – for example, if SGoRR or work on border closures prevents you – to comment separately if you need to; no later than close tomorrow, please.
2. We are not doing a levels review this week of the kind we've done in the past six weeks or so, for obvious reasons.
3. Since the L4/L3 measures announced on Saturday are for introduction for three weeks from 26/12, with a review after two weeks, FM has agreed that there will be no "usual" review next week, nor in w/b 4/ 1. Two weeks from Boxing Day is 9/1, and the first Cabinet date after that is 12/1, so that is the point at which Cabinet will next review the application of levels.
4. The DFM will also take to Cabinet on that date recommendations from the review of the Strategic Framework. I intend to use most of this afternoon's meeting, with Dominic, to prioritise and assign that work. I have in mind three phases, described below, the first of them urgent. Dominic and I haven't been able to discuss the detail of this today (it's one of those days) so he may want to adjust this.

Phase 1

5. Most urgently, I have a commission from FM to consider urgently what additional measures, on top of L4, might be applied if the increased transmissibility of the new strain of the virus makes that necessary, including possibly from 26 December. I should emphasise that this is a "contingency commission", not a policy decision.
6. The first part of that work will be to estimate the effect of the new strain on Rt in Scotland, for which I want to draw on the "policy modelling" work Dominic has been discussing with analytical colleagues, and which he will be able to describe for us. We also need to check our assumptions about how effective T&P will be with a new strain in the virus mix, since that too will have an effect on Rt.
7. The second part will be to assess the additional suppressive effect of measures already added, or which could be rapidly, practicably and lawfully added, to L4 as defined in the Strategic Framework. For introduction on Boxing Day we have already added:
 - a. schools closed except for vulnerable children and those of key workers
 - b. formal childcare, ditto
8. I will be commissioning additional analysis and Four Harms consideration covering:
 - a. the definition of non-essential retail, to consider whether more could be required to close: for example, garden centres and tightening the definition of homeware etc
 - b. requirements and easings of physical distancing and other safeguards in retail, and compliance / enforcement
 - c. returning to a "stay at home" message, in guidance or in regulations
 - d. social mixing outwith the home: possibly reducing from 6 from 2 plus children to one other adult
 - e. arrangements for colleges and universities to resume (or not)
 - f. reducing the limits on attendance at weddings, funerals and wakes
9. In parallel with this, work on compliance continues to be vital, and we will want to reflect that in material for Cabinet, including on a related question about EHO capacity.
10. I also want to commission some rapid sharing and examination within this first phase of the review of forecasts and assumptions on hospital capacity. So far, indicators d and e have not been determinative of levels review outcomes and have not therefore featured much in Four Harms consideration, but that may change in coming weeks. That will be a case of asking Health colleagues to share their thinking and forecasts so that it can be well integrated / reflected in Cabinet consideration and levels review decisions.

Phase 2

11. The period of L4/L3 from Boxing Day allows us to rephrase some other aspects of the review. Regarding what I've described above as phase 1 of the review,

phase 2 is likely to cover:

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- a.\~ contents of levels: with a presumption against any net weakening of suppressive effect, and including...
- b.\~ travel restrictions, noting that these become more important as the prevalence gradient between Scotland and rUK becomes sharper, and in the presence of the new strain of the virus
- c.\~ in-home socialising, to consider when and how it will be safe to reintroduce it
- d.\~ hospitality measures below L4 (in which hospitality is closed)
- e.\~ indicators and ranges, taking account of the Court of Session judgement
- f.\~ the review process, including timings, also taking account of the Court of Session judgement, and including
- g.\~ roles and governance, to ensure we have articulated who does what in a clear and robust manner and have an audit trail of decision-making.

12.\~ I will be asking for comments and contributions on this list rapidly, covering the Four Harms perspectives, so that the work can be progressed between Xmas and New Year, and a draft paper circulated soon after 5/1 for Cabinet on 12/1.

Phase 3

13.\~ FM has agreed that some further aspects of the review can come back to Cabinet beyond 12/1. These include:

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- a.\~ the implications of mass testing, including for assessments of prevalence and incidence
- b.\~ the interaction of levels and vaccination, including in relation to the effectiveness of vaccines against the new strain (on which we should have more scientific advice in a week or so)
- c.\~ the above might lend itself to including scenarios analysis of the kind discussed with Sir Jeremy Farrar
- d.\~ any other relevant aspects of outbreak management and exit strategy

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See you this afternoon,

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Irrelevant & Sensitive

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Original Appointment

[See recipients listed above]

Subject: Hold: Four Harms Meeting

When: 21 December 2020 15:00-16:00 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London.

Where: Microsoft Teams Meeting

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Good Afternoon

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Please hold this slot in your diaries for a Four Harms Meeting on Monday.

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We will be in touch to confirm the agenda.

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You will likely notice that the cast list is shorter than normal. This is because Ken is keen not to disturb people unnecessarily during the festive period when a lot of colleagues will be on leave.

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Kind regards

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NR

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