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Subject: OFF SEN: Readout: CDL/TO Secretaries of State/FMs 05/05/20

Date: Wed, 6 May 2020 09:25:00 +0100

Importance: Normal

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All,

Please find below, and with thanks to Geoff for his comprehensive notes, a readout of the conference call yesterday between the CDL, FMs and TO Secretaries of State.

Summary – a positive call generally, with plenty of areas of agreement, although all FMs were concerned, particularly FMs Scotland and Wales, about not being involved in the process of deciding when and how to lift restrictions and not having information about what the PM might be considering.

CDL set the scene and asked FMs to give a sense of the things they felt UKG should take into account in making decisions at the next review point.

FM Scotland (FMS):

- 4 nations approach important, and all should be as co-ordinated as possible in lifting any restrictions – even if slightly different timetables were to be followed.
- All nations need to be involved in formulating any 4 nations approach - in reserved areas, it is important for the UK Government to take account of the public health evidence in the DAs and she was not sure that this had been done in relation to issues around the workplace and the proposed border measures; on devolved matters formulation was not as strong as it could be.
- FMS did not have any information about what the PM might be considering in terms of Sunday's announcement at the moment but there could be no movement on lifting restrictions ahead of the public health evidence.
- Numbers in Scotland slightly higher than elsewhere – which FM said made sense given that first COVID cases were later – and that meant that at the moment and certainly the next week or so, she could not lift restrictions.
- A 4 nations approach meant either an acceptance that some parts of UK require to go on occasion at a different pace and hinted this might require looking at the Job Retention Scheme, or acceptance that all parts of the UK go at the pace of the slowest.

FM Wales (FMW):

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- Keen to agree a common set of measures and common timetable for lifting restrictions.
- Reminded colleagues of the legislative requirement to put public health as the first priority and outlined the traffic light approach where the red stage would be very similar to existing situation with only very minor changes and only when results of that phase have been monitored and shown to not compromise public health could further measures follow in the amber and green phases.
- Very limited information about what measures the PM might be considering and need to know what is being considered in order to contribute to the discussion if agreement is to be reached.
- In Wales the R value may be 0.9 – meaning less headroom to lift measures. The virus has been travelling north and west and numbers are still climbing in those areas.
- The workplace advice seemed fine as far as it goes, but was very general and more specifics were required to be developed with unions and risk assessments published.
- Concerned about easing outdoor restrictions and would be able to sign up only if it remained limited to where people live – i.e. cannot have people travelling long distances to the beach or Snowdon for example.
- Border restrictions – concerned about the impact on Welsh ports of the current proposals and wished to see evidence on the effectiveness of the 14 day quarantine.
- In general, FMW felt he was in the dark about UKG’s plans.

FM Northern Ireland (FMNI):

- Advantage of 4 nations approach is clear messaging for people.
- Compliance issues around the margins but generally people were following the guidelines.
- NI R is estimated to be below 1 but not much.
- In favour of keeping things largely as they are but there is a need to start looking at the future and what that means.
- Hoping to put in place a roadmap – not dates – but criteria based movement points. But need to understand what UKG is considering.
- Border points made by FMW, had been flagged in reverse.

Deputy FM Northern Ireland (dFMNI):

- Will review this week, but no significant changes.
- Agreed with FM that there is a need to show people there is light around the end of the tunnel whilst also recognising the need to not confuse public messaging.
- Again felt in the dark on UKG’s considerations.

CDL then asked TO Secretaries of State for their comments:

SOSNI:

- Advocated UK wide approach. Obviously needed to manage also the border with the Republic but that can be managed with understand of what each is doing.
- Agreed that business groups in particular want to see some light at end of tunnel.

SOSW:

- Stakeholders and local authorities in Wales want a 4 nations approach.
- Felt one or two safe signals around change could be helpful
- Referenced CMO’s recent comments re wider public health effects of economic impacts.
- Keen to understand more about validity of the R values – sample size, and how numbers are calculated

SOSS:

- Favoured a UK wide approach and clear message across the UK.

- Agreed with FMS that a UK wide approach meant that we need to move at the pace of the slowest – virus doesn't respect borders and neither does the economy. Important we recognise that and try and come out together.
- This was particularly important in relation to the App and encouraged heavy promotion. He felt SG proposals were complementary to the NHSX App which would also provide details of contact with strangers.
- **FMS agreed** and noted they are not competing products, but that if DAs are to enthusiastically back, then answers to questions were needed.

In responding to points raised, CDL:

- agreed that the SG should be given more detail about how the App works to ensure that it fitted in with Scottish NHS IT systems and noted Jeane Freeman had a conversation with Matt Hancock earlier. DAs all had representatives on the board developing the App
- agreed that all needed to be involved in formulating the UK-wide approach
- in terms of the R numbers, asked that the Scottish and Welsh Governments shared the working behind their R numbers
- **FMS intervened** at this point to say that everyone was using the same model for calculating R numbers
- noted the intention to consult with all relevant parties on the advice about safer working environments
- on outdoor spaces, said there was evidence that the virus breeds more rapidly indoors, which means that small adjustments or refinements can be considered such as allowing people to go out from their own home for exercise more than once a day. If there was a further lowering of the R number across the UK, they would then look at other measures such as re-opening schools
- noted any measures would be based on criteria and any dates would only be indicative
- stated that Borders were a reserved area of policy and it was important that anyone arriving in the UK faced the same approach to public health and this would be the subject of ongoing discussions
- concluded by saying that the UK Government would continue to follow the evidence, be guided by the science and share information.

CDL then sought a further round of comments:

- **FMNI** asked whether this would mean a change in messaging, which CDL felt would come, but that it was important to remain as aligned as possible.
- **FMW** emphasised the importance of sharing data. WG is using the same model at UKG but may have additional Welsh data which he would be happy to share if so. He requested formal access to SAGE papers. He would be happy to agree to allow people to exercise more from their homes if that was the general consensus, but people must be discouraged from travelling long distances.
- **FMS** agreed with points on data sharing and would share data being fed into SG's model, and wanted to see a genuinely collaborative formulation of the position and this needed to happen over the next couple of days. On the evidence, there was no basis for any changes this weekend, with the possible exception of exercise more than once a day. In principle she supported a more vigorous approach at the border but would need to see the detail of the proposals.
- **CDL** came back to say that detailed proposals on measures at the border were being discussed. He concluded by saying that any immediate changes would be minor, but the criteria for further change would be set out and UKG hoped to share more in the coming days.

Best wishes, Vicky



Victoria Jones, Principal Private Secretary, Secretary of State for Scotland

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