

COVID-19

Item 1: Current Situation Update

1. The CHAIR expressed his gratitude to the NHS for responding effectively and at pace to the increasing challenge of COVID-19. The CHAIR also thanked the Government Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and the Government Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA) for their continuing efforts throughout the response to COVID-19.
2. The CHAIR invited the Department of Health and Social Care to provide an update on the current situation. The SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE said whilst the number of cases in the UK were increasing, they were not as high as those seen in European neighbours France and Germany. Italy and Iran had seen a sharp spike in confirmed cases. Due to US insistence, the repatriation flight of UK Nationals aboard the Grand Princess Cruise would go ahead however it would be more low-profile than previous repatriations.
3. The CMO said there was increased use of intensive care units for COVID-19. That there had been three confirmed COVID-19 deaths and one unannounced death.

Item 2: Update on interventions to delay peak

a: Communications on moving to the delay phase

4. The CHAIR introduced the item and said that the spread of the virus was progressing as expected and the importance of scientific advice in making decisions. The CHAIR invited the CMO and GCSA to outline planned interventions to delay the virus' peak. The CMO said that the UK was quite near the bottom of the upward scale of the peak (demonstrated in the CRIP). There were 270 known cases in the UK.
5. The GCSA said that there were two aims of intervention measures: reducing the peak of the virus to enable the NHS to cope with demand and to reduce the mortality rate. The CMO said there were three stages of intervention with varying individual and combined efficacy:
 1. Self isolation of symptomatic individuals.
 2. Full house-hold isolation where one individual is symptomatic.
 3. A series of currently undetermined measures to safeguard the elderly and vulnerable individuals.
6. The CMO said the timing of implementation of measures was crucial. These measures would possibly be in place for months and public compliance or despondence was heavily dependent on timing. Self-isolation and safeguarding of the elderly/vulnerable were likely to be more effective than full household isolation. That the scientific advice supported early implementation of individual self-isolation. As per usual medical advice, those with heavy respiratory tract infections were to remain at home. The next stage would be for those who are mildly symptomatic to self-isolate.
7. In discussion the following points were made:
 - Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland were not at the same stage as England.