

## **Ex-Covid – 7 May 2020**

**Perm Sec:** There was a Cabinet Office officials meeting earlier on. PM is speaking to leaders of the opposition and has booked a collective call with the FMs of the devolved administrations this afternoon. Perm Sec is told that UKG keen to have sense of national endeavour. As regards the 21 day review – no specific change to the Regs because R is not at the right level. But marginal changes re guidance and messaging to be discussed later. Messaging will change as regards what people do within the Regs.

Sunday – PM will set out a road map. Cabinet office recognise that R is at different levels in different places. There is a Cobra meeting with the FMs of the devolved administrations on Sunday. FM will set out the future and there will be a need for some differences. Mark Sedwill said that 2 big takeaways on Sunday would be:

- If cannot wfh should be travelling to work. UKG thinks over compliance with Regs. People not working when they should be.
- Outdoor activity – easing some of the restrictions

Our own Ministers – good cabinet meeting today but not conclusive in one area – activity outdoors. Cabinet getting together again at 6pm.

**Andrew Jeffries:** Can you say more about people returning to work please? This is a different message.

**Perm Sec:** View in London is that people are over complying with the message to stay safe and stay home. They haven't heard the message that if you cannot wfh you should go to work and practice social distancing. Which is a little inconsistent. Effectively saying go to work during the week but at the weekend don't go out. Unsurprisingly people have gone to the sharp end of that message. PM wants to correct (as they see it) that message.

Of course the Bank of England announcement this morning about the economic down turn will be the backdrop to the PM's message on Sunday.

**Gareth Williams:** over compliance has got us to the rate we have now. Seems quite worrying development. Scottish FM is very clear that no intention of changing the message from 'stay at home.' Politically we will find ourselves between a rock and a hard place.

**Perm Sec:** certainly the extent of compliance has helped us flatten the curve and WM are aware of that. But PM is very concerned about economic outlook and will want to give a message of hope and opportunity ahead. Probably people's behaviour will have been directly impacted by the media trailing the PM's likely Sunday message already.

Incidentally last week I said we may need to reshape the agenda to ensure it remains relevant and focussed. For now we stick with the updates in 6 areas but we need to focus on blockages and issues we can collectively help on.

**Andrew Goodall:** PPE –still ordering volume. For example yesterday I signed cheque for £27 million order of gloves. Ref to Turkey flight bringing gowns. If kit is not to acceptable standard we will send it back.

**Tim Render:** Shielding. Number of new letters now at 27,000. This is not as a result of changing any criteria. Adds 25% to the number asking to shield. Looking at how we can get an increase in value for money on food offer. MA with Leslie Griffiths and is probably going to Star Chamber.

Where do we go next with this? Do we ask people to continue shielding? Do we extend contracts? Introduce charging? If saying shield for further 12 weeks might need to change support package. How do we turn this into BAU as opposed to special project?

**Perm Sec:** need to keep in touch with what is happening in England

**Tracy Burke:** English number of people shielded ended up at £2.2 million entitled to food parcels. The wider vulnerable from UK perspective is £15 million. Need to be careful as regards what the offer is.

**Andrew Slade:** economic intervention. 9,500 applications made, 5000 offers made, 1000 rejected (so due diligence is working). Paid out on about 2,200, about £32 million. Now have 8 pods working at full strength on SMEs.

**Perm Sec:** Absolutely staggering what has been done so quickly across the piece.

**Albert Heaney:** Social care – this sector is still in respond mode. Care is needed in messaging if talking about easing. Testing is a huge issue. Also other environmental factors go into creating a safe environment.

**Tim Render:** Finance uncertainty – There are a suite of complex and tricky issues here. Local government finance has changed from stable to getting worse. Rents and mortgages are amber and getting more complicated. What we are beginning to see is that some of the terms of the projects are beginning to change as we move into the next phase for some of them.

**Perm Sec:** What should keep us awake at night?

**Tim Render:** The uncertainty of the money and the future demands which are potentially very big on Welsh organisational infrastructure – HE, LG, Transport. Also managing that switch over and how we make space to be thinking about planning whilst managing the pressure of the immediate.

**Toby Mason:** The fundamental question is whether to retain the stay home and save lives messaging. Or move to slightly more nuanced “stay safe”. This absolutely not just messaging but a policy difference. If we say stay home that’s different to England (parks etc). To be resolved by WM in cabinet tonight. Scotland and NI much more reticent but England going ahead. The choreography is really difficult. PM to speak at 7pm on Sunday and will publish guidance and other materials. FM not saying anything today. 12:30 press conference tomorrow which will be our response in full to the May day review. Be clear and reflect the caution about how close we are to the precipice.

CG and another Minister on Sunday. Possibly live BBC after Boris. Maximum exposure for our message to emphasise where similar and where different.

Jane Runeckles thinks most of UK guidance we can live with, with some clarifications. But the whole thing will be confusing. We think we'll err on the side of caution.

No-one understands the effect of messaging on the R rate. We as a government are looking at this different to UKG. For them this is an economic restart campaign. We see this as a public health crisis. The only context UKG mentioned schools is as enablers of economic activity. That is not the way we see our own schools.

**Andrew Jeffries:** At risk of making myself unpopular, the caution cuts both ways. We need to be cautious of the negative effects of lockdown too. This is important in equalities terms. Those suffering most in lockdown are some of the most disadvantaged in our society. The focus on R is easy to put a number on but the impact the other side is harder to quantify.

**Perm Sec:** Yes, the CMO made that very point. To what extent is our position in line with Scots?

**Toby Mason:** Scots are as cross as us. The stay at home thing is a decision cabinet need to make at 6pm. Possible choice for the most repressive campaign short of stay at home - go out but remember the infection rate is still critical.

**Perm Sec:** Scots are engaging with trade unions and as far as I am aware that is not happening in England. At least we are in line with Scots and NI.

**Joanne Daniels** – Contact tracing, Surveillance, Sampling and testing. On all those we are reliant on digital infrastructure workforce, need to communicate with the public in the right way and to learn from other countries.

Contact tracing: Did this in the contain phase – but the difference is that between end Feb and mid March we did 1,273 contact traces. Projections from PHW is that now, per day, we might have 9,000 cases. Enormous shift in scale. Never done anything like this before and neither have the other UK nations. PHW say they need a workforce of 3000 people across Wales. There is an active debate about when tracing should be initiated – when someone is symptomatic (that gives the 9,000 number). Or when someone tests positive (that would give a reduced number). SAGE advice is this should happen when someone is symptomatic but this assumes that a test can be returned in 24 hours so not locking someone down for too long. But UKG say numbers are so large you would basically be locking down again so they would be starting when someone tests positive. It will be a big challenge to get the digital system in place.

Surveillance –relatively speaking this is a doddle. Take data from deaths, admissions and testing. And use that to get more informed picture of R.

Testing – longer term (days) we are likely to join the UK system of testing but needs careful choreography. If we are contact tracing and asking people to stay at home this raises questions of all our vulnerable people.

We have no estimate at present re how much this will cost. Talking to health boards and Local authorities about how to staff up. Some will be redeployment but some of those may have been furloughed. As we move through phases those people increasingly need to return to their day job.

**Perm Sec:** who is the owner of this in Wales?

**Joanne Daniels:** PHW I'd like to say. But the scale of this is that we cannot expect them to resource that. WG has key role to play in bringing other public sector organisations on board.

**Perm Sec:** What about the app in the Isle of Wight?

**JD:** Yes recommendation in MA is that we should use it and I think Ministers will agree.

Our theoretical testing capacity is 5,000 per day but that's just by lab capacity so we don't yet know how that will pan out.

**Andrew Jeffries:** Minister allocated £50 million for testing and appreciate the challenges of coming up with robust estimate. Probably not possible, but the risk is that we won't have the money if we can't work out soon how much it will cost.

**JD:** UKG taken a roasting on data protection and privacy. Fundamental is whether data held locally or in a superstore. UKG say superstore but being done in a way where no identifiable data stored. So ok now.

'track' is a bad word with the public. 'test and protect' is better.