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**Subject:** Official sensitive: note of Ministerial call 15 September

## Official sensitive: note of Ministerial call 15 September

MHSS updated on developments in relation to testing and local lockdowns. UKG Lighthouse Labs had experienced challenges over the weekend in processing samples. A number of tests were being sent to Germany for processing while the issues were dealt with. The number of slots available for new tests has been reduced, and a decision had been taken by UKG officials on Friday evening to cut tests across the UK based on England only data, with a disproportionate impact on Wales and Scotland. MHSS spoke to SoS Health over the weekend, who acknowledged the problem at their end. Work is ongoing to overcome the issues, but the labs aren't expected to be running at full capacity for another three weeks. There are challenges for WG in the interim, including with the University year starting. Mobile testing is being repurposed to help where possible.

The TAC report circulated to Ministers highlights the increase in cases across the UK and that the R number is now over 1 across the UK as a whole. The TAC report also states that when SAGE met they thought the R number in Wales could be up to 1, WG advisers now believe the Wales number is above 1, particularly as a result of the rise in cases concentrated in Caerphilly, RCT, Merthyr and Newport.

FM and MHSS met with leaders of Newport and RCT Local Authorities yesterday to discuss whether further restrictions are needed. Further discussions will take place today.

A number of measures are being considered, at either local or national level, particularly in relation to pubs. While most transmission takes place within people's homes, pubs are high risk for transmission. Late night drinking in particular causes problems, with alcohol consumption resulting in people not adhering to social distancing, and also problems with contact tracing. Options include closing all pubs in an area, requiring customers visiting pubs to order food, and restricting opening hours. An important consideration is whether introducing measures would displace activity into neighbouring areas and would increase chains of transmission.

The TAC report says we are in an equivalent position to early February. Decisions will need to be made soon as to whether local action is working, or whether wider measures are needed to avoid the difficulties seen elsewhere.

Scottish Government requested a meeting to discuss testing with the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster yesterday, to which other Devolved Administrations were invited. Unfortunately, neither CDL nor SoS Health were able to find the time in the diary which is disappointing. FM and MHSS have called for COBR meetings to be restarted given the rise in cases across the UK.

Areas of discussion included:

- Communication with the public on thresholds for national lockdown measures. MHSS agreed to share a note from Gill Richardson regarding thresholds and how data will be used to make decisions
- Impact on areas with very low levels of transmission if national measures are implemented
- Care home testing and the impact of lighthouse lab delays.
- The experience of the first few weeks of schools reopening, and impact on testing. MfE agreed to give a full update at the next Ministerial call.

METNW updated on an announcement which will be made tomorrow regarding Hitachi pulling out of the Horizon project in Ynys Mon. The company have cited supply chain issues as a result of Fukushima. METNW is speaking to SoS BEIS today. The Horizon team will stay in place to the end of the financial year. The US Government have shown an interest in the project. The FM noted the work that had been undertaken by Welsh Government and Ynys Mon to bring the project to fruition, and that the UK Government had delayed key decisions twice.

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