

iMessage  
17/03/2020 23:02:50

David, can I offer a potentially radical view? I'm sure you are getting loads of these thoughts tonight so sorry.

You have a chief of staff on c3 (Chris and Anthony). I think you need something like that on planning side. Perm secs are going into too much detail from what I can see via what's app and are not acting corporately from what I can see via email groups springing up on issues. Which makes me nervous re what I'm not seeing at my level.

Can I please suggest you appoint a chief of staff for planning and for interface with the c3 side.

Maybe select one perm sec for planning. To bridge planing and c3, leaving you with space to look after ministers and key stakeholders and overall control of resources and comms and strategy.

I'm biased. But if you want to shift decision making up a gear to create headroom for you and some form of perm sec control, I'd pick peter for this.

Sorry to be cheeky

Karen

19/03/2020 11:53:54

Anthony is happy to coordinate Ppe via a hub task and finish

You're up next

Ta

Text message  
22/03/2020 21:25:18

Karen, Madeleine keeps asking me if we need any more help. Is it worth asking for any of their people who worked on No Deal, either the planning or operations side? D

iMessage  
22/03/2020 21:56:09

Not sure we need their people just yet. We need them to add value, not create work. We may need their people soon.

We need to properly gear the nio relationships. Spectrum of views are available on this across our perm secs. I'm not bothered about the constitution at this point. Issue is whether they can help keep people safe.

This can't be about nio as a territorial dept brokering contact across whitehall. What can they do which adds value? What are they offering? What are they for in our space?

They need to be clear on this.

For my part, I see a nio role. So it's a "no thanks".

think we need: max access to information, max input to UK planning, sensible day to day contact between us and nio (Ndna isn't the thing anymore. Let's get real).

Typos. Sorry. It's not "no thanks"

Text message  
24/03/2020 20:49:53

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

We will all receive this message via our digital footprints.

iMessage  
24/03/2020 20:54:44

I got one earlier (without the 🤖)

They're doing other imaginative things and a new TV campaign starting this evening (during bake-off!)

During Bake off? Blimey, it's worse than we thought! 😊

I've emailed re off licenses. It's a potential divergence with England if followed literally.

That might be what we want, but maybe not.

I missed the off licence point. Just back from Winemark - bought two bottles of gin just as the shutters were coming down for the last time.

Not sure why as I presume the supermarkets will still be selling booze.

Unless this is the start of a new Prohibition 🤖

Same. Went into winemark for a couple of bottles of wine. Spoke to the staff. They have no idea what is going on.

Maybe the supermarkets will get back to stocking alcohol if other shopping calms down.

We just need this to be driven by right motivations. Not a morality test.

In holywood, in absence of Our abundance of our usual coffee shops, we are doing a socially responsible gin party at noon on Saturday ( Barra Best permitting).

None of my neighbours will leave the confines of our drives (and to have a drive is a privilege) and we will be swapping notes on our situations and of our other neighbours, and exchanging food items (by some sort of system to be worked out. Living In a cul de sac makes this easier).

We Piloted it this morning included talking about shopping lists and who had too much, who could release toilet rolls into the wild. Was brilliant.

I got to speak to neighbours this morning i've only ever waved at. Being English, speaking to neighbors is what you do on Christmas morning if you have to pass them by accident on the street. And then with eyes down on the pavement and with deep embarrassment.

I got Irish gin for Saturday. Solidarity.

Brilliant!

Derek (lives across the road from me) is in his early 80s and lost his wife to dementia last year. Half the neighbours in our cul de sac have called in to offer him food and support. He's overwhelmed.

This will change everything. We just need to do all we can to make sure most of it is for the better. If I didn't believe that I'd give up!

That's absolutely right. I now want to commission a review of kindness Indexes based on town planning, but I'll put that thought on hold until time permits.

Until then, let's keep some stuff open if we can. Winemark? Not our biggest problem.



26/03/2020 15:00:28

I'm trying to link up with nio via google meets kit in ed19

Sorry, Executive meeting put back. I'll let you know new start time

26/03/2020 21:11:20

Ok conversation with nio after you and M left. I don't think they quite get our concerns but there are some things we can do with them. I said please don't see this as a continuation of Brexit. The relationship has to be built from a blank page. The more we talked, the role of the nio liaison officer in the hub, which ministers have agreed, became important. Colin and Anthony will be talking daily in that context. I outlined what we have been doing. Lindy seemed a bit more reassured.

However, clear that Spads are talking to mark About Covid. I said that's exactly what would make us nervous. Mark said they talk regularly about stability of devolution. I said that's exactly my point, why are we hearing now that Covid is being discussed with nio. I said You should be in the loop on that. Mark pushed back to say that's why they want to talk to us. He's missing the point that we don't need to hear the nio report on what our Spads are saying.

Anyway. One useful snippet. Mark said that "they" have had advice that there are liabilities storing up and heads will roll if they get it wrong. I assume he means SF, which would confirm the vibe we were picking up today.

Interesting. My experience is that Mark nearly always overplays or over-reads what he hears from SF and DUP Spads. I often think they tell him what he wants to hear.

I'm going to ask Stephen and Philip about NIO (without mentioning our chats) tomorrow.

The liabilities point is surprising - unless the RHI experience spooked SF more than we imagined.

I said we'd find a way but we aren't having our work marked.

👍 I guess we'll have this conversation with them many times over the coming weeks

Text message  
26/03/2020 23:03:05

David, Anthony, **NR** Andrew. I left work this pm feeling a wee bit too hot. And now a bit achey. I'll work from home tomorrow. Just concerned that I met a lot of people today. Social distancing was practised all day so fingers crossed. I'll stay away tomorrow and will review.

iMessage  
27/03/2020 08:01:38

Karen, sorry to hear that. Needless to say, I hope it's nothing but I think you must now stay at home for at least seven days. Keep in touch and very best wishes, David

Ta. Temperature and snuffles this morning.

**NR** Patrick and Richard need to do as much as they can remotely.

Karen, if you do need to be off for a while I'd welcome your advice on how we cover for you. D



I feel well enough to work from home. I'll be on the dial ins this morning.



28/03/2020 10:51:11

Karen, very remiss of me not to ask how you are today. D

I'm fine honestly. If anything, a little bit better than yesterday

Good, glad to hear that. But be good to yourself!

29/03/2020 16:19:09

Tim Mairs is leaning towards health being in the lead for school. We can't say that today as Tim does not have psni cover for that.

Sorry, that should have been lead for SCG. And he feels CCG is in the right place at the moment

Interesting, George is right on the role of SCG. But I'd rarely question Tim's judgement. I'll wait to see what's said.

George is right to get you to raise it. I think you could just say that you want joint psni and health advice on the point

Ukg invoking SCGs

The scgs will be dealing with PPE distribution

Thanks, just heard that.

How are you today?

About the same. Bored to hell.

30/03/2020 15:10:25

Feeling any better today?

Need a word later about a role for Peter as "bridge" between you and Anthony.

I'm definitely better than yesterday ta. Happy to talk about Peter.

Do you think there's sufficient agreement on our paper to circulate it to depts to get them to start work on the next iteration of the document? I suspect we'll be asked to turn it around within 48 hours or less.

Seems to be. Issue will then be with our colleagues some of whom will say yet another document. So will need careful explanation.

We've just said we will do local modelling on social behaviour.

The document should not require a huge amount of work for most depts.  
The hardest thing will be integrating the DoH element.

Anthony said we should be able to do something on gathering data which  
should improve our understanding of current social behaviour

I've emailed Richard to see if he can get Minister Swann to say he's just  
been on a call with CDL about priorities for key workers when more kit  
comes on line

Prisons, police, ambulance, fire were all discussed today

03/04/2020 11:52:42

For your friend. Off licences are open but keeping odd hours. Winemark is  
10am to 6pm. One person in at a time. Which means a queue of shame in  
the street.

😂 I can live with the shame!

03/04/2020 14:00:49

Has common sense broken out?

I said to Chris McN it would either be bloodbath or rapprochement.

Looks like the latter, but they're always capable of snatching defeat from  
the jaws of victory.

I've long felt that politicians are a different species - can't think of any other  
group of people who can knock lumps out of each other and then behave  
as if nothing happened. 🤖

If minister Mallon doesn't say, it would be important to note that public  
comment could have unintended consequences

Because if market sensitivity?

Yes and possible panic buying

I'll post a message

Edwin might be about to make the point

07/04/2020 17:09:07

Karen, the risk paper is on the agenda at Cab Sec (O) which has just  
started. Any quick points to make on the Paper? Does it look like they're  
marking our homework? D

Our strategy paper remains broadly in line.

Yes it looks like homework marking. Would be good to know the tone of the  
discussion.

Thanks.

Text message  
07/04/2020 22:22:02

Can we get a discussion about lifting measures. Loads to weigh up.

iMessage  
07/04/2020 22:34:14

Yes, I'll set up in the morning. Who all needs to be in? You, me, Chris, Peter, Anthony, **NR**

Do we keep it to core, or pull in from depts at this stage?

You, Chris, Peter, Anthony, **NR** me. To think through options and best way to do the right thing/avoid political divisions if we can.

Text message  
09/04/2020 16:26:54

UKG has limited money left. This is going to have to be a consideration in lifting of measures in coming weeks.

iMessage  
09/04/2020 16:27:58

Yep, politics are about to get interesting!

I've just been quoted 9 weeks of money left. Sensitive obviously.

Not really sure what "9 weeks of money left" actually means. They've already bust their borrowing targets massively, I wonder does this mean there are now pressures on the international money and bond markets and that they're having difficulty borrowing more?

There's never been a time when the whole global economy has shut down so much economic activity at the same time.

Must have a word with Shane Murphy.

Text message  
10/04/2020 22:56:40

<https://twitter.com/georgeleerte/status/1248715782185463815?s=12>

We need to understand how Ireland are counting non hospital deaths. Are the care homes in their figures?

13/04/2020 07:45:33

If we need a core group discussion this morning after ccgni I'm up for that. Couple of issues in my mind: line of sight on the cobr decision this week. And MACA, to get ahead of likely media questions.

I've checked over the MACA guidance which is publicly available. Some types of assistance are hard charged by MOD. UKG can pick up the full costs in exceptional circs. Would be good to know before this becomes a media question.

iMessage  
13/04/2020 08:29:14

Will reflect on whether a catch-up would be good today or tomorrow after CCG. I'm talking to Anthony about a possible paper on MACA to FM and dFM and/or perhaps to the Executive.

15/04/2020 12:27:14

There will need to be a way to give a fuller picture on deaths which protects the integrity of the two sets of stats and communicated in a way which makes sense.

Robin hasn't addressed the point About the total deaths being higher than we would expect. We can look at this before Friday.

Yes, we need a chat with Siobhan Carey about this.

15/04/2020 16:31:45

Main points from cdl call are with you.

17/04/2020 12:17:15

Do you know whether Stephen and Philip picked up on the Plan issue with DoH SpAd? I'm guessing not.

I had a question from Philip on whether the plan could be Annexed to the exec document. I said yes. Radio silence after that.

OK, let's wait and see what happens.

I think it was three weeks ago I said we were either going to have a bloodbath or a rapprochement. I feel the same way today.

Hopefully the latter again.

17/04/2020 13:56:47

Mig is discussion ferries now

I guess there's no way the discussion will be over soon?

It was under aob so it might go quickly. Brandon spoke first

They are nearly done

Finished

Dfi readout. Cdl indicated there might be news later today. Wouldn't get excited until we see movement



Probably ferries only today

17/04/2020 15:43:56

Is there a risk that if they publish, the AG could come back and say that advisory in itself leaves them open to liabilities?

With the AG, anything is possible. Not sure how this is going to conclude.  
I'm not inclined to intervene.

Text message  
19/04/2020 09:35:17

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52339266>

David, Chris, Anthony, Peter. Quite a lot in this. Parks, money for councils.

iMessage  
19/04/2020 16:47:24

Fm and dfm have approved. Dft will phone Stena

Good, I'm sure Stena knew they had us over a barrel. But not much more we could do.

It's good that DfT are going to manage the scheme.

Hope you can relax now

Sorry! Thought I'd de t that to Jackie Robinson

Yes, I can't claim any credit for the work that went into this!

20/04/2020 12:32:51

I've commissioned an overview of what's happening in Europe



We need to update Peter's slides to take account of that helpful discussion on testing and starting to prepare for the relaxation of restrictions. It might also be useful to include reference to the "tests" that would need to be made before relaxations could be considered (UKG five tests, the WHO tests which Michelle referred to).

An important contribution.

Absolutely. And Scotland has its three harms approach.

A good start.

I like the three harms approach.



I do too. Keeps it simple

The welsh model potentially lets one tho g get in the way of doing the right thing

Text message  
21/04/2020 11:15:42

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-52365418>

Chris, David, Peter, Anthony. You may have seen

iMessage  
22/04/2020 13:36:44

There's no logic to what Naomi is saying. We should think about how to kick start Friday's discussion.

<https://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/27801>

Naomi's got herself on the wrong side of this argument and I think she's struggling to correct herself.

The involvement of the CMO and CSO should lead to a more informed debate. 🙌

I've just sent you a DK piece which is worth a read in terms of setting out where the dFM policy direction is coming from.

Reported on Nolan but I couldn't find the source of it.

These deaths figures are going to dominate everything

Yes, shame. Because otherwise this has gone fairly well today.

The Scots have just announced a big increase in their numbers.

If Robin is right, there are 22 deaths to be added into the information already published over previous days. They have to be hospital deaths or people tested positive in hospital and then released.

Yes, that's my reading of it.

We will need to understand if this is an increase in people dying at home or a care home after release. If that's a big part of this, we are going to have an ongoing problem with stats

Let's wait and see. Richard's problem is they are using a system that's designed to help with hospital management to provide an accurate record of deaths in hospital. The proper recording of deaths is really for GRO, but their time lag doesn't allow for the provision of the quick info we need to manage the crisis.

We need to let Richard find and fix the source of the problem. Too many ministers there wanting to dive in.

27/04/2020 12:34:00

Peter has asked for the non Covid health consequences to be touched on in the advice for the next review

Yes, important that they are.

Interesting that dFM hasn't pushed her usual caveats as hard as previously.

Mike told me that Diane is not happy with the paper. Wants to go her own way (and is not in step with her boss on this).

It felt very like Brexit at that point

29/04/2020 14:33:18

Interesting discussion on the impact which test, track, trace will have on those who fall to be traced and who may need support during their isolation phase. But you wonder why this wasn't raised before.

Does this become a possible recovery workstream, or is this ongoing response work?

Makes me wonder do we need to think how we migrate from our existing planning work to the Recovery phase? D

It's that join/meld issue again. There won't be a cliff edge between response and recovery. Support for those going into self isolation feels very linked to response.

Exam question is whether we are geared up for this when large numbers will still be shielded.

We can ask for some work on this at official level.

Couple of health issues I wouldn't mind discussing if you have a minute later.

Will do

01/05/2020 13:58:52

That makes Denis the Lord Woolton of the Covid crisis. He'll have a pie named after him.

🍷 haha! The Fintona Flan

Diane had obviously been well briefed to make sure it ended up with Edwin

Yes, but Denis told me that Edwin was busting to do it.

The war between DARD/DAERA and DfE/DETI over who is responsible for "food" goes back generations. DfE may feel they've dodged a bullet, but they may have lost a war.

07/05/2020 12:36:04

Travel issues will be on gps mig today. Junior ministers are attending. I've prepared briefing.

Just heard the PM is calling the DAs at 3.00 today

Oh joy. Hopefully that's in response to concerns about pre-trailing the roadmap

I was due on the 12.30 Cab Sec mtg but am caught in this Executive mtg. I've asked Madeleine to tip me off about any major developments.

Brandon wanted to talk to Arlene at 13.00. Not sure what about

Text message  
08/05/2020 12:28:35

Welsh government opening garden centres. Announcing today. Email in the system.

iMessage  
08/05/2020 12:29:34

About time, we need some bedding plants!

11/05/2020 08:14:03

Karen, OK if I ask you to comment on what we know about the UKG quarantine plans at CCG? D

Absolutely



14/05/2020 12:26:21

It's on the agenda. Doesn't take effect this weekend.

Yes, thanks. I wasn't sure it had made it onto the agenda!

Naomi is giving a basis for compromise here

Trouble is, I've never seen them pick up on a Naomi proposal for compromise!

What do you reckon, deferred decision until Monday? A vote on the package? A vote on each individual measure?

And of course, if they do oppose, they'll be open to legal challenge given that the medical/scientific advice is the restrictions are no longer needed.

If they can't take this first step it's even worse than I thought

Declan's compromise might just work. And by then the Irish will have moved to their Phase 1

Indeed.

It's all about a good narrative

14/05/2020 16:07:42

Interesting that the AG issued advice at 14.08 which basically said the Executive had no choice other than to accept the MoH advice on restrictions.

The DUP/SF deal must have been "terms endorsed" as there was no mention of the AG letter when they came back.

Indeed. It was an ok compromise

Yes, I shouldn't be harsh, but any competent team could have got there a lot faster.

I really hope they get good public feedback. It'll give them courage.

Yep. As I said to Chris McNabb, this is a good news story and should be played out as such.

I'd send your lines to Chris.

18/05/2020 14:19:14

The comms around today's decision could get messy. The strength last week was on clarity. There will be a lot of "can I" follow u questions.

You're right.

I've asked Chris McNabb if there's any point he thinks we should get FM to make before we move on from this.

Chris is relaxed about today's presser. But follow up work will be needed to respond to the what can I do questions.

Gotta admire his sang froid!

I quite like G Lyons idea of colour-coding the chart to show progress from left to right.

I dialled out to take a call. Still trying to get something for them on other faiths.



19/05/2020 08:36:57

Karen, I got a very nice compliment from Madeleine about your work on borders which I'm more than happy to pass on:

"wanted to say thank you for the really great job Karen Pearson has been doing on the borders work. It's not been easy (or always straightforward). She's worked on this with us in a v constructive way (and over quite a few weekends). We much appreciate this."

Many thanks from me too, you've been a star in recent weeks.

I've advised Andrew and Peter, David

That's nice thank you. It was one of those issues where the DAs could have made a legitimate fuss and none of us did.

I think our slightly softer approach (at official and ministerial level) actually works better for us than the sharper approach we see from SG and WG.

I agree. I'm on the warpath today though over JBC.

Good, I find being angry once in a while is always more effective than a permanent state of indignation.

19/05/2020 12:53:28

Karen, I've a short catch up call with Shan and Leslie at 1.30. Any points I should raise eg on JBC? D

I'll drop you an email in a couple of minutes

Ta

22/05/2020 13:56:15

Emma has asked me to look at the fines issue again

It's being announced later this afternoon. Does she think anything can be done about it at this late stage? Or does she want us to follow suit?

I hope she's not sending you on a fool's errand.

Announcement at 5. She wants me to look again at whether we can follow suit and go to £1000

27/05/2020 12:50:57

Would be good to know which organisation does the phone calls in Ireland

And who Madeleine's broadband provider is!



28/05/2020 09:06:40

Karen, just talking to Neill about the Borders paper. Is it essential that this is taken today? Could it wait until Monday?

FM has not cleared it and we've a concern it could be contentious. D

Health need to lay regs. Monday would be doable but very tight. DFM's office advised both sides had cleared. The fines issue could be problematic I agree. Fm wants £1000 and I think dFM just wants a good case for it. Robin Swann wants £1000. If we move to Monday that would be the last chance to get the regs made and still be in line with UKG. Is there scope for doing anything with it today, curtail discussion if difficult and bring back Monday for resolution?

OK, that's fine. We'll push FM to agree so the paper can issue. Someone like Naomi who hasn't seen it could make mischief.

You could share the paper with Peter M.

If it helps I've been working closely with the police powers lead in doj, cmos office and ports lead in dfi. They are aware of the broad content and the likely content of speaking note which would draw in Robin first and then Naomi. Naomi will say £1000 is too high (she's right) and Robin will say £1000 is essential.

OK, that's helpful. We'll let it run its course.

Damn it. I called it wrong. Minister Mallon is objecting. Sorry.

Yes, shame. I may need to call you I'm on the detail (ie differences between N and S) if it gets down to that.

They can just ignore NM and have done so before, though it would be bad politics.

A uniform approach on the island would take us out of the UK scheme in some key respects.

28/05/2020 11:30:42

Weddings went in as an email (possibly from FM) rather than on the matrix form. Health had to work up the proposal themselves. Really important that the matrix is used.

Agreed, I didn't know that.

Indeed, a proposal from FM which wasn't endorsed by dFM should have had no standing.

We should pick this up with DoH afterwards. I'm surprised they considered a proposal without the matrix having been completed.

04/06/2020 09:20:19

If they want to do something with the point in time review, I'll ask Chris to work his magic on the formatting.

Great, if it doesn't come up at Executive we can suggest through the POs

We've established a guidance group which meets today. I'll press for quick responses to Robin's document

Doh are close to having a vulnerable children paper, hopefully for next week



I don't think Robin is right. It is a standard £1000 fine. I'm seeking urgent update from doh colleagues in case it has changed.

OK, I can send him a private chat message if necessary.

The answer has been given to Michael. There is an escalator for not providing information. Straight £1000 nor breach of self isolation

Ta

For breach of self isolation

11/06/2020 08:19:18

Karen, you've been more magnificent than usual over the past 24 hours. Big thanks 🙏

David

Teamwork.

11/06/2020 13:24:58

The proposal in the paper is to enable people to spend loads of time with another household and stay over. The other ideas are in a different space

Yes, I'm reluctant to intervene but will do so if they move to agree Naomi's proposal, because she's in a different space.

15/06/2020 13:28:03

Tortuous, but they got there.

I thought they might not at one point.

I was about to jump in

I'm hoping to get the "everything else" indicative timeline to them for Thursday

dFM's new appetite for risk is remarkable.

It really is. I think ukg will move away from 2 metres next week ...

29/06/2020 19:29:38

David, Chris stepped in this pm to help health with the 10 to 30 issue- at Micheal McBride's request! Thank you for laying the ground last week.

Good! Always a shame to waste good resources.

30/06/2020 08:54:06

Karen, can you copy Chris in to the work you're doing on relaxations so that he's up to speed if he needs to contribute. Thanks, D

Will do

30/06/2020 17:46:05

Free for a word?

01/07/2020 07:44:27

David I'm feeling pretty crap still. I think the thing that needs fixed is guidance and I'll work on that this morning. Sorry.

Karen, you of all people have no reason to beat yourself up. I can think of no one who has done more over the last 3/4 months to get us through this crisis. You have set an example for us all and everyone I know in the Service, ministers and SpAds holds you in the very highest regard.

We have all been working under huge pressure and at an unsustainable pace. It is perfectly understandable that the occasional mistake will be made. Indeed it's a testament to your efforts that more hasn't gone wrong.

I've had no come back from ministers (and believe me, they let me know when they're not happy), so my advice would be to work on the guidance which will allow us to move on.

Let me know if you hear of any concerns (though I'd not be inclined to go looking for them).

Happy to discuss at any time, but please look on the positives, you've been magnificent and I've no doubt that will continue. David

01/07/2020 18:07:23

Thank you. Just had time with them and Minister Swann and there were no issues.

Told you so!

01/07/2020 20:51:47

How were FM and dFM at the meeting? Neill tells me FM is refusing to sign off any of the SF papers for tomorrow's Executive meeting. Looks like fun and games ahead.

They were grand. I wasn't sure whether to expect fireworks or buckets of cold water. But they got on ok, as did Robin with both of them. Wouldn't say it was business as usual but they were good with each other. It was brisker than normal but they were grand.

Thanks, I suspect Arlene is under pressure from the Party. Points will be made but I'm sure they'll not take it to the brink.

It is, nonetheless, frustrating and exhausting.

I'm sure she is. Arlene looked a bit tired. But I got the sense the working relationship is still in place on Covid at least.



In other news. We are going to need a Hong Kong team.

Yes, I've been expecting that.

Ian Snowden and Mark Browne did a great job on the Syrian scheme before, though Ian is now in LPS. But I'm sure Moira will be just as good.

A possible role for Jeremy Gardner?

Moira would be amazing. The Syrian welcome here was best in UK in my view. Way more than a technical acceptance of people having to be here, genuine welcome.

Moira is key to some of DfC's Covid deliverables so would be worth getting teo and dfc together to discuss emerging priorities. Sense is that a good number will want to come to Ni. Justice will have a contribution re potential problems (and on the basis that all info is useful, Julie Harrison grew up in HK).

In first instance, welcome, housing, schools, health might be first issues. Feels indecent to say but economy have a secondary interest as we may be about to receive highly skilled and economically independent citizens.

And international relations. China might be a bit pissed with all bits of Uk and Tim is back out there.



Chinese CG will not like it. Mme Zhang was in with me on Monday morning, ostensibly to talk about her planning dispute and Covid. But she gave me the PRC line on the new HK security measures.

Several thousand displaced and recalcitrant (towards PRC) HK residents moving here would be a nightmare for them, and tricky for us given our desire to build relations with the 2nd largest economy. An ethical minefield.

The needs and abilities of HK "refugees" would be very different from the Syrian refugees.

A better parallel might be the Vietnamese boat people in the late 70s - that was not a happy experience and most of those people left NI for large towns in England.

There is an established Chinese community here some of which are HK. Ukg assess we are an attractive place. Not sure if the boat people had communities to settle with here. Would love to learn more about that. I think the politics of our aspirations towards China might shift a bit depending on how this plays out. Would be worth a no agenda, no papers think in?

Yes we should do that, I'll arrange. I'm not sure we should include Tim at this stage (to protect him).

Who should we involve- just TEO at this stage? Or DfC and others as well?

The Boat people's problem was the lack of a local Vietnamese community (and they sent most of them to Craigavon 🤔)

Craigavon? Well .... as if the boat people hadn't been through enough.

Teo and DfC and justice I think. Not Tim as you say. And Anthony/Chris in case you need to invoke CCGNI on this. Just to scope. Other depts will need to be drawn in later. This could get big soon on diplomatic relationships and how people even get to leave HK.

And ukg will be in control so need a line into their thinking and arrangements. You'll need a docking in point on that with Leslie and Shan.

02/07/2020 11:17:42

That's a moment

02/07/2020 18:06:23

Karen, Mark B's team have been in touch with the HO re the HK citizens issue. Looks like it will not be a settlement scheme, rather a path to citizenship with no access to public funds along the way (whatever that means). I've held off convening a meeting until we're clearer on what HO plans are, and hence who we would need to invite. Should know more in the next 24 hours. D

02/07/2020 21:04:06

David. I'm going to set out the funerals issue in writing. I need to take my share of the confusion. Karen



Karen, tread carefully. This is now a political problem which, in my view, SF have handled badly. They could have avoided much of their difficulty with a bit more sensitivity and some contrition.

I wouldn't want them getting off the hook by being given an opportunity to "blame" the NICS.

Happy to discuss. D

Can you talk?

08/07/2020 10:26:30

Hi Karen, not sure if you're back at work so apologies if I'm intruding. Can you remind me where we've got to on Air Bridges etc?

Are you free for a word?

Just in the WMC Zoom. Can call around 11.30 if that's OK?

Perfect

27/07/2020 14:00:50

That did not resolve face coverings confusion

No, though do you not think it's largely semantics? The position they've all agreed is that you should be wearing coverings but it won't be legally enforced until 20 August.

Part of the problem is EIS issued the DoH PR in error. It shouldn't have gone out (cock up) and Chris has apologised to FM and dFM.

I think the difference is between commencement and enforcement. And doh need to draft regs. They did lean towards an enforcement approach today but that's not what we've been saying in public. Either way, face coverings are to be encouraged so it doesn't make a difference but it matters for the regs.

Yes, I've just seen your email to Chris.

I think the simplest thing would be for DoH to take the power on the understanding it will be commenced on 20 August if compliance is below 80% (which it will be). Get Robin to confirm this on Thursday and in the mean time ramp up the public messaging that we should all be wearing masks and, if we don't, we'll be compelled to do so in three weeks time.

Robin put in 1 August on the understanding it might get pushed back a bit. He was open to that being the outcome. Dup will be more comfortable with the commencement solution and I'm pretty sure they think that's what has been agreed

Agreed, Michelle seemed to be in that space too.

28/07/2020 13:05:48

Philip advises that recovery workstreams was a question of party management. It was hard to get 8 agreed and he felt he couldn't go back for a 9th. He sees the subject matter possibly aligning with climate workstream.

I'm just off a call on the same issue. He's very keen to keep the total number of workstreams at 8 or fewer. I said we'd work to achieve that (and maybe reduce the number below 8 over time).

Good to know it's not a major policy problem!

And on face coverings. He's clear that the paper would not have been taken last week on the basis it was written. Naomi's interpretation is wrong from his perspective. He's trying to talk to Stephen.

30/07/2020 13:05:26

I'm going to come up to Parliament buildings for the Covid part of the meeting if that's ok

Of course. I'll be there too.

Have FM and dFM reached agreement on the minutes re face coverings?

Yes. Just. Very creative, it's all about the need for good messaging apparently. Health are working on a paper for Robin but no land to raise at the exec today.

Good!

05/08/2020 19:49:13

David. R rate has risen. I've put in a paper for tomorrow which pretty much tells the shape of the week so far. Happy to decode before the exec if needed. Face coverings rumble on.

Thanks Karen, I've read the paper. Have you a clear sense of where FM and dFM are on the key issues: face coverings, wet pubs, school openings etc?

My own feeling is that we need to ease the pace of further relaxations to get a better idea of the cumulative impact of the current relaxations.

Let's have a word in the morning.

They met with Ian Michael tonight. They will agree to look at face coverings on 13th rather than 20th as proposed by Robin. FM not quite there on going mandatory and wants more detail on enforcement.

Both ok with delaying wet pubs.

Both committed to schools.

Thanks.

Sorry, should have added: I don't think FM's position is sustainable any longer but she's clearly under pressure from elements in her Party, and probably the same elements who rebelled against the Buick Bill.

It felt like that today. Gordon lead the charge tonight but it felt like going through the motions.

06/08/2020 15:51:02

CMO tells me they can amend and commence the regs to give effect to the decision that wearing face coverings will be mandatory from the 10th

I'm in touch with Liz to get the ball rolling

Apparently Eugene O'L is on the case

Yes I've seen him confirm to Michael that it's doable. I've updated colleagues who may have work to do in support. Contacting local government now.

14/08/2020 08:27:21

Hi. Michael and Ian are very worried about the Covid Numbers. No pattern, unlike the riskier areas in England. Which makes local intervention more difficult. We have lots of layers of meetings but we don't have a rapid response type meeting short of ccgni. Should we arrange a small get together early next week before the exec? Maybe you, Richard, Mike, Michael, Ian, me, Chris, Eis? I can put together a short agenda if you think this would be useful. K

Karen, good idea. I got the sense at the Executive that ministers are worried but not sure what to do other than ask people to "wise up".

I'm away on Wednesday but have plenty of time on Mon/Tues. Can you liaise with Hannah in the office as necessary.

Safe home, you haven't had much luck with your travels. D

Will do.

It's been a great week. See you next week. K

20/08/2020 07:19:22

Morning. Today's exec dynamic. This is one of 3 updates. New case numbers stabilised over past 3 days. 34 yesterday. Bad compared to the single numbers we were seeing but health not at the point of wanting localised measures. It wasn't apparent to me until late last night that they were locked into discussions with a particular meat plant and close to shutting it down. Would have been good to know earlier in the week. Probably best to update you on the phone on that if you have five minutes later.

2/3.

DFM and junior mins, cmo and CSA, me met last night. Some regs changes proposed. Reduce numbers in domestic settings, have the ability to set an upper limit on outdoor gatherings, reduce the threshold for a risk assessment for outdoor gatherings from 30 to 15. Separately, hospitality sector will propose some tightening which is a good and interesting development. Seeing some responsible steps and leadership from key sectors.

3/3. Mike tells me there's a growing sense that we are being driven by health advice. I've challenged that. I pointed to the facts: all proposed easements so far have been agreed. Only wet pubs, soft play and indoor sorts spectators have been paused in the context of growing case numbers. Social distancing 2 metres issue was against health advice. Face coverings delay was against health advice. Mike was concerned health might want a ni wide lock down. I assured him there is no desire for that anywhere in the system.

Happy to talk later.

Thanks Karen, that all makes sense, especially the indoor settings. As we move into the autumn you will see more "party" type activity.

Disappointing again that DoH are not keeping us in the loop. Do they not trust us?

I wouldn't worry about Mike, he is a little prone to exaggeration at times.

I can't get traction with cmo. Ian is much more accessible. Irony, late last night Michael thought it was a great idea for their regs changes to be included in my paper. Hey ho. I'll get it done.

20/08/2020 14:35:56

I spoke to Mike this morning to say none of the measures today are aimed at the economy. Dianne has been building up to this apparently

Yes, it'll be interesting to see if Edwin comes in on a similar tack.

Her letter to me about NICS returning to work was a personal initiative.

If Conor speaks it will be interesting

I've been up in Portrush and Portstewart over the past two days. Both packed but SD largely being observed and face coverings almost universally worn in shops. Restaurants also well organised - but inevitably when so many people are out and about then the risk increases.

My impression is Diane was on a solo run there. And, as usual, she lacked impact.



When are the revised arrangements for domestic settings likely to take effect?

We've been invited to a 60th birthday party on Friday the 28th and we'd like a good excuse not to go!

I think you'll be safe. Probably middle of next week. 😊

... is the right answer! 👍

This is the case. PA have the story.

23/08/2020 20:35:28

David. Sorry to disturb you you. This weekends numbers are massive compared to Friday. We either have a bad jump or a counting problem. We need another senior meeting. Very sorry Karen

Yes, saw that earlier. Some suggestion it's linked in part to the meat plant. I'll have a word with Richard to see if they know what's going on. D

I'm doing an email. We seem to have gone from 20 on Friday to 71 yesterday to 119 today. We need to understand this. We need more than the stats. We need to know what's pushing the numbers.

Agreed.

Richard says PHA are still unpicking the data to see how much is due to clusters, and how much is background community transmission. Sense is a lot of cases are younger, and therefore not directly leading to hospital admissions. I've said they should let us know if any further tightening is needed when they've worked out what's going on.

That's good.im going to suggest you formalise a spike reporting mechanism short of ccg.We are reliant on stats which we have to interpret. Would prefer a system where health say there's a problem with numbers or sectors.

Grand. I'm surprised the dFM side isn't all over this in the way they were back in April.

Stephen mcglade is on holidays...

27/08/2020 18:38:10

Hi. Decent conversation with Michael today about powers. I can see a way through.

Philip Weir spoke to me today about FM,s query about recovery. Seems ok.

I'm going to offer Philip and Stephen a recovery update tomorrow.

Considering offering Philip and Stephen a general catch up tomorrow before ministers come back next week.

Karen



Thanks Karen, I had a chat with Stephen McG today. He didn't raise any concerns about Recovery.

It was one small query from Philip which has the look of a bit of a concern. He assured me it's not a problem.

Good. My first thought was that this looked like the hand of Emma.

Me too. I thought it might be the shortest recovery strategy ever.

28/08/2020 08:31:02

Karen, after your update on Brexit at the Board could you give a quick update on Recovery planning and anything topical on Covid relaxations etc. Ta, D

Sure

28/08/2020 10:09:09

Have a meeting with Philip and Stephen at 10.30. I'll drop out just before if that's ok.

Thanks Karen, I thought it was useful to flush out the DoF concerns about the Recovery plan. I sense we were being set up a bit. The comments this morning echo remarks by Conor Murphy a couple of weeks ago at Executive.

It would be good to bind Joanne McBurney into the Recovery planning process. But let's not imagine we'll be able to make it easy for ministers to prioritise.

31/08/2020 17:29:04

Have an amazing evening. I'm raising a glass to a very good man. Hope the next chapter is everything you wish for. Karen

Karen, many thanks, means a lot.

You take care. You've been magnificent over recent times so make sure you sharpen your pencil the next time there's a Grade 2 competition.

Very best wishes, David

PS, always happy to take a call if you ever want to share a problem. I do feel guilty about leaving you with the Recovery Plan 🙄