

CDL-FMs Weekly Call
Wednesday 3 February 2021

AGENDA

- 1. Update on international travel measures**
- 2. Update on publication of vaccine supply data**
- 3. Exit strategies - the UK Government and devolved administrations to discuss their respective thinking on exiting lockdown restrictions including lessons learned and next steps.**

STEER

International Travel

An [interim solution](#) on data sharing has been agreed, the Irish Government will text passengers transiting to NI to state that they must complete the UK Passenger Locator Form. CDL may enquire as to Northern Ireland's position on hotel quarantine (managed isolation). Initial signs point towards support for alignment, with TEO work underway. There are no points to make beyond UKG encouraging coordination.

Vaccine Supply Data

DAs, especially Scotland, have requested the ability to publish the number of vaccines sent by UKG, allowing them to demonstrate their performance on vaccine rollout. BEIS support transparency but must ensure that they adhere to contracts. Suppliers may be especially sensitive to this after the EU's strong reaction to delays in vaccine delivery. You should support transparency where contractually possible, but note that this has largely been an issue raised by Scotland.

Exit Strategies

UKG and NIE are drafting reports for mid-February. We do not consider that there are points to raise but it would be useful to assess the Executive's approach to the 18 February Covid-19 restriction review, and any early steers on their exit strategy.

LINES TO TAKE

[If hotel quarantine raised]

- I am keen to facilitate further discussions between Northern Ireland, UK Government and Ireland on this issue.

[If required on vaccine data]

- I would encourage transparency where possible on the supply of vaccines but understand that there are some contractual issues which we must consider.

Background

Exit Strategies

NIE's plan, due for mid-February, will not contain dates and will focus on thresholds. The Executive have stated that they will prioritise the use of measures that the public are familiar with to assist with compliance. The TEO taskforce chaired their first of three all NI department meetings on this on Monday.

UK officials expect that the UK plan, due on 22 February, will consist of a last restriction in, first restriction out approach, with schools being opened first. Ireland's timelines are coordinated with UK and NI, with measures extended until early March.

It is worth noting that in Ireland momentum has gathered behind calls for a 'Zero Covid' approach in the last week. The approach would include a ban on non-essential foreign travel and strict isolation and tracking of arrivals, and has received the backing of Ireland's opposition parties. Sinn Féin have backed Zero Covid, but warn it will not succeed without the same strategy in place in NI.

Scotland could also raise their preference to eliminate Covid-19 as opposed to the UKG's approach to 'contain'.

Hotel Procurement for Managed Isolation

DA Ministers are considering an offer from DHSC commercial to run UK-wide procurement for various aspects of managed isolation policy, including hotels, security and welfare. TEO officials have suggested that FMdFM may accept the offer. If NI accept UKG's offer to lead on procurement, the hotels in question would be near the airport of arrival - not the final destination, avoiding any significant strain on NI hotels considering the small number of international arrivals in NI.

Welsh Government have shared a paper that indicates they will favour "the imposition of stricter guidelines to ensure complete compliance with point-of-departure COVID-19 testing and stricter quarantining on arrival for UK citizens returning from overseas". This is in keeping with their overall cautious approach, the paper suggests that many travellers would board a plane to return home even if they were experiencing early Covid-19 symptoms.