

TEO MEETING NOTE

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		FM/dFM/HOCS – Pre Meeting before UKG meeting		
DATE:	8 Dec 2021	NOTE WRITTEN BY:		
		Deirdre Griffith		
VENUE:	zoom			FM Advisers: Richard Bullick dFM Advisers: Dara O'Hagan
<p>LIST OF ATTENDEES: First Minister and deputy First Minister</p> <p>JM Middleton</p> <p>Jayne Brady, HOCS</p> <p>Richard Bullick, Special Adviser FM</p> <p>Dara O'Hagan, Special Adviser dFM</p> <p>Deirdre Griffith, PPS FM</p> <p>Donal Moran, PPS dFM</p> <p>NR PS dFM</p> <p>NR PS FM</p> <p>NR PS JM Middleton</p> <p>Karen Pearson</p> <p>Peter Luney</p> <p>NR</p> <p>Jane Holmes</p>				
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:		HOCS provided an update on meetings she had undertaken earlier on 8 December based on her email (text attached) prior to meeting with UKG. Acceleration of booster programme was key. Booster reduced the severity of the infection.		
ACTION POINTS:		None		

HOCS summary of meetings – shared with Ministers

Summary of this morning's meetings with:

- Perm Secretaries of Cabinet (including Patrick Valance, Chris Whitty, Chris Wormald (Health PS) and Simon Ridley (UKG Covid task force lead))
- DA Permanent Secs, Sue Gray and Simon Ridley (UKG Covid task force lead)

Current status

- Significant concerns with respect to impact of Omnicron and speed of transmission
- Cases doubling every three days and UK seeing similar trajectory to SA
- Not clear if anecdotal information on reduced severity is valid, but even if that is the case given the rate of spread very significant implications with respect to wide scale infections quickly
- Not clear whether double vaccination provides significant level of protections both from spread or from severity of infection
- View that Booster will be significant in reducing severity of illness – question is whether the programme will be completed in time to impact

Mitigations

- Rapid rollout of booster program
- Introduction of further restrictions (to slow spread)- Plan B likely to be triggered initially
- Assessing requirement for development of new vaccine

UKG Next steps

- Significant consideration into triggering Plan B- meeting this afternoon with cabinet to discuss [personal view given trailing in papers this am, may be announcement this evening, which we will want to be prepared for]
- Plan B will include Covid Cert, Work from home, Isolation rules
- Hope Plan B will buy time, but may not be enough to get to Jan
- Considering what measures would be beyond Plan B
- Considering implications with respect to hospitals, PPE, workforce planning contingency (given potential for significant absences, even if not hospitalized), supply chains, prisons etc

NI implications and proactive steps for consideration

- We are already ahead of UKG Plan B restrictions
- Need to agree messaging/ lines proactively in advance of UKG statement on triggering Plan B- in train
- Need to understand what UKG plan is beyond Plan B to consider potential for other levers which may influence any further NI plans, eg financial support- requested
- Need to assess civil contingencies implications, NICS staffing resiliency, etc- underway
- Need to assess actions which can be taken now to protect vulnerable/critical groups, prioritizing vaccine rollout, care homes, schools, prisons, essential services– for discussion
- Need to agree plan for briefing Executive