



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
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Nicola Sturgeon  
First Minister  
Scottish Government

Our reference: MC2020/13403

Mark Drakeford  
First Minister  
Welsh Government

Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA  
First Minister  
The NI Executive

Michelle O'Neill MLA  
deputy First Minister  
The NI Executive

30 September 2020

Dear Nicola, Mark, Arlene and Michelle,

Further to our conversation on 19 September, I am writing to extend an invitation for your regular, weekly attendance at the UK Government's Covid-19 Operations Committee, starting from this 1 October.

As we move into an intensified phase in managing the epidemic, it is vital that we are able to respond swiftly and effectively to the challenges we may face across the United Kingdom. I propose the Covid-19 Operations Committee serves as a forum to support collaboration and to help ensure that the decisions taken across the four nations align as far as is possible and appropriate.

As such, I envisage equitable opportunities to raise points of discussion so all four administrations have the chance to suggest agenda items where UK wide discussion and decisions are needed to ensure the best possible outcomes for our citizens. I propose that we use existing weekly official-level calls to seek to agree a forward look of agenda items, to ensure each administration then has the time to prepare appropriately for discussion items. Given the pace at which we are having to respond, however, we should recognise that a degree of flexibility will be required on occasion to accommodate urgent items at a shorter notice. The UK Government will endeavour to ensure that any papers are shared with all attendees as far in advance as possible, and I would similarly ask that that the devolved administrations do the same for any papers you wish to table.

To ensure meetings that are as effective and useful as possible, I propose that a senior minister from your administrations attend alongside one official per agenda item, wherever possible. I

would leave it to your judgement to determine the most appropriate ministerial attendee depending upon the agenda items being discussed. Standing members to this meeting will include me (as chair), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (or Chief Secretary to the Treasury), and the Secretary of State for the Department for Health and Social Care. In addition other Secretaries of State are invited pending the agenda items up for discussion. The Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland will also be invited.

I would be grateful if your officials could contact **NR** as the Covid-Operations Secretariat lead (Central mailbox - **Irrelevant & Sensitive**) and set out who should be the point of contact within your offices and who will attend the weekly officials meeting. We can of course take additional relevant attendees at this meeting as required.

I thank you, your offices and officials in advance for your cooperation and flexibility in these challenging times, and continue to welcome your thoughts and views in how we fight this epidemic, both within the Covid-19 Operations committee, and in our regular and on-going discussions outside of this forum.

**With every good wish,**

**Personal Data**

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster  
and Minister for the Cabinet Office**