

OFFICIAL'S NOTE OF MEETING

Date: Thursday 15 December 2020

TITLE / ORGANISATION:		HEALTH BRIEFING	
PURPOSE:		UPDATE RE THE R NUMBER	
DATE:	15/12/2020	NOTE WRITTEN BY:	Jane Holmes
Venue – Online – Zoom		Chaired by First Minister and deputy First Minister	
<u>LIST OF ATTENDEES:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Minister• Deputy First Minister• Minister of Health• Minister Kearney• Minister Lyons• Dr McBride• Professor Young• John Loughran, SpAd• Emma Little-Pengelly, SpAd• Dara O'Hagan, SpAd• Mark Owens, tbc <u>Officials:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Richard Pengelly, DoH• Karen Pearson, TEO• NR TEO• NR TEO• NR, tbc• Deirdre Griffith, TEO• Donal Moran, TEO• Chris McNabb, TEO• NR, TEO• NR TEO• Michelle Canning, tbc• Jane Holmes, TEO			
WELCOME & INTRODUCTION: <p>Minister Swann</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vaccine programme is going well – more than 54 care homes at close of play yesterday- Expecting another small bath at the end of this week- Paper with recommendations will be brought to the Executive on Thursday- Feeling is that the 2 week intervention kept us where we were so expect further restrictions at the end of December			

Professor I Young – overview of the R paper

- Average % positive tests has plateaued
- Estimate for R is 1.15 - 1.25
- Hospital admissions – 1 - 1.2
- Average number of inpatients remains at about 350
- Deaths and ICU occupancy roughly steady
- Mobility data – disappointing level of adherence during the 2 week restrictions so not surprising failed to see the anticipated benefit
- Heading into period where R will be above 1 and hospital admissions starting at a high baseline
- Intend to do some modelling before Thursday

FM - Call with DA colleagues re Christmas bubble arrangements and we expect more guidance re this. There has been a suggestion that elderly (>70) should not come together over Christmas, which will be very difficult messaging

CMO – UK administrations made a decision at a point in time but that position has deteriorated in a number of regions. My advice to colleagues is that we have entered into a social contract with the public. Need to provide advice in terms of the decisions they make so they know they are making choices with risks.

FM – thought of leaving elderly alone on Christmas day is very difficult. Can understand when they would stay at home as a couple but some people are on their own.

CMO – responsibility is to provide best advice recognising the mental health issues associated with loneliness and must be fully informed. We cannot prescribe this but support people as best as we can through these difficult decisions.

Minister Kearney – very difficult and on a personal basis I will have to make a tough call if necessary. Strong guidance that advises people is required.

CMO – still time for us all who are in that position to take action. In the run up to Christmas we can take actions, reduce contact and help reduce the risk. The rest of society could also help reduce the transmission in the run up to Christmas.

Minister Lyons – refreshing to hear what CMO has said that there is still some time for personal responsibility to play a role. Private house parties and the way certain people are trying to find ways round the rules is upsetting. Would like more information re modelling on the impact of increased intergenerational mixing versus potential reduction in mixing because people are not at work or school.

Minister Swann – rate is still going up and hospital numbers not coming down and there is only one way for R to go. Do not have the granularity to do the modelling suggested. Already at 1.1 and will not see a decline to 0.7 in two weeks so action will be required regardless.

Professor Young - the last time we had comparable degree of opening was in late September / early October with an R increase to 1.6. In terms of interactions over Christmas versus overall number of contacts the conclusion of SAGE is that it introduces more uncertainty into the estimates and will depend on the interaction

of the factors. The two weeks run up to Christmas and the current baseline are the causes of most concern. Pressures on hospitals will not be seen until mid-January and action is required sooner to reduce that pressure.

Minister Swann – Executive paper should be available tomorrow evening for Executive discussion on Thursday.

ACTION POINTS:	1. Minister Swann to circulate Executive paper by tomorrow evening
Jane Holmes	

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