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**From:** TEO HOCS (DS) [/O=NIGOV/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=286B5F4D742442098CBED44F7B75FAAC-TEO HOCS (DS) TEO-]  
**Sent:** 26/03/2020 21:01:12  
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**Subject:** FM / dFM role and corporate responsibility

Karen/Hugh

I had a revealing chat at the end of the day with FM and dFM.

dFM wants to move to a three Executive meetings a week rhythm (Mon, Weds, Fri). When asked why she said “we need to be driving this crisis, we need to be in control”. She is clearly frustrated with being a first minister but actually having little power or influence over the Health Service. FM is more circumspect, recognising the “operational independence” of the health minister. Though she too is frustrated at the lack of information coming out of DoH coupled with frequent surprises eg today’s announcement that hospital visits are to end.

dFM also revealed what has been increasingly clear with SF ministers in recent days is a growing fear of being held corporately responsible, or liable, if things go badly wrong (they floated the idea of verbatim records of all Executive meetings - rejected on the other side). We need to find a way to get them off this hook. If it becomes clear that their main priority is to lay out an audit trail and avoid any future blame then everyone else will do the same thing. And we’ll be paralysed.

On the management challenge, I said we needed urgently to get to a position where Executive ministers were comfortable with the DoH plan for at least the next 6-12 weeks so that we can focus on the other areas where there is major risk. I’ve spoken to Richard and said he needs to turn out his top team on Monday and produce a compelling plan.

But I struggled to answer Michelle’s simple question: “how can we get control of this”?

Need to sleep on these two challenges.

David

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