

UK GOVERNANCE GROUP - ADVICE TO CDL ON DA ENGAGEMENT

FOR INFORMATION

ISSUE: Advice to CDL on DA COVID-19 engagement

PRIVATE OFFICE COMMENTS: For your information, we have been copied into advice from UK Governance group to CDL regarding DA engagement on COVID-19. The recommendations to CDL are here:

If you agree with this approach, we (UKGG) will:

- a. work with your office to we could set up weekly meetings with the First Ministers and begin a forward look of agenda items, with a view to reviewing frequency at the end of June;***
- b. work with your office to commission papers on the latest UK-wide picture on social distancing measures to inform the discussions.***
- c. provide briefing on the latest positions from developing discussions with the devolved administrations on the JBC and Test and Trace and a comparison of the rate of 'R' across the UK.***

We should wait until we hear whether CDL agrees to this advice, but if he does, given you have previously expressed reservations around regular CDL engagement along the lines of recommendation A, you may wish to speak with fellow TO SoS' and seek their views. To note, there is no mention in this of TOs joining those calls. We would, of course, follow up with TO private offices also.

No immediate action needed,

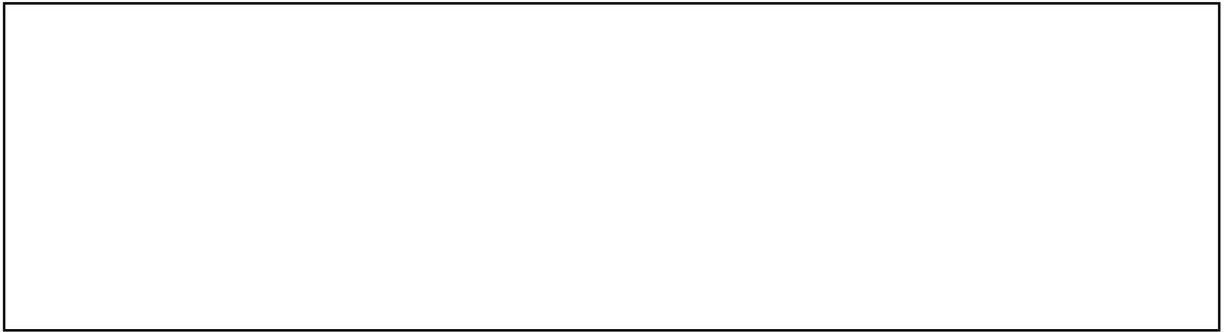
NR

SECRETARY OF STATE COMMENTS:

I remain of the view that as we do a weekly meeting with me and FM/DfM this is not appropriate for CO and NI. This cuts totally across TO work.

I am not opposed to meetings for CO and NI where appropriate for specific issues, such as we have with covid from time to time, in fact that can be helpful but i am very opposed a weekly CO & DA meeting that includes NI. Unnecessary and cuts fully into TO role.that sort of regular communication and that sort of relationship must be for the TO.

I d feel strongly on this issue and suspect other TO SoS will too. It applies even more so with the complications of NI.



From: NR
Constitution Group

To: CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER

**Cc. Secretaries of State for the Territorial Offices
Paymaster General
Minister for the Constitution and Devolution
Rebecca Hogg (No.10)**

DA Engagement on Social Distancing review

Issue

2. Mark Drakeford wrote to the Prime Minister on 12 May requesting a regular rhythm to engagement and a more systematic joint UK approach in the response to Covid 19.

Recommendations

3. This note proposes that you agree:
 - a. to a meeting with the First Ministers next week to reflect on recent announcements on social distancing and a UK wide approach;
 - b. to a regular rhythm of weekly calls to progress issues on both social distancing alignment and supporting programmes;
 - c. to the letter at Annex A responding to the First Minister of Wales.
4. NR will provide further advice on recommended next steps to deliver a UK wide approach.

Background

5. Despite the political and media fallout from a perception that different administrations are taking different approaches to social distancing, the decision to adopt a UK-wide approach that accommodates some divergence between different parts of the UK was agreed by all governments and the level of impact has been overstated.
6. The Welsh First Minister's letter further emphasises the opportunity to realign the UK wide approach to social distancing going forward. He has called for stronger and more systematic joint working with the DAs ahead of the next three week review point and suggested that you convene a UK wide discussion this week, and then on a regular weekly cycle thereafter.
7. Following the publication of the UK Government's roadmap on 11 May, the Northern Ireland Executive (12 May) and the Welsh Government (today - 15 May) have published their own approaches. They broadly recommend similar steps to the UK Government, albeit their administrations are already moving at slightly different speeds

and have not set out indicative dates for lifting restrictions. We expect the Scottish Government to publish similar proposals early next week.

Scope of meeting and proposed response

8. A meeting next week provides the opportunity for a discussion of how to adapt a UK-wide approach as the Government moves from a strategy based on suppression through 'lockdown' to suppression through testing, tracing and isolation.

Suppression through monitoring

9. The meeting could provide an opportunity to agree joint working around two programmes critical to a UK-wide approach:
 - a. On Test and Trace, the significant movement of people between the four nations means an effective and joined-up UK-wide approach is critical to the success of TT strategies in each nation. There has been close UKG-DA engagement over the last couple of weeks and the Welsh and Northern Irish administrations have indicated that would support the roll out of the app, but the Scottish Government have yet to indicate full support.
 - b. On the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC), engagement with the DAs on both the analytical and "response" functions of the Centre have started. It will be important to achieve consensus on the 'alert levels' set by the JBC and on the data and analysis that will feed into the JBC as much of this is held by the devolved administrations.
10. It will also be a useful opportunity to agree the group's oversight of these programmes going forward and to agree the importance of using the forum to ensure progress to ensure UK wide delivery remains on track.

Regular engagement

11. We recommend agreeing to a regular rhythm of weekly calls to progress issues on both social distancing alignment and cooperation on the programmes that will be essential to effectively monitoring the spread of the virus. This has been a persistent request of the Welsh Government, who have been clear that they remain supportive of continuing a UK-wide approach to our response.
12. Regular engagement will provide the opportunity to align messaging going forward and provide strategic oversight of department led efforts to ensure a UK-wide approach on tracing and other monitoring programmes. We would recommend an initial rhythm of weekly calls but this may step up or down depending on circumstances over the next days and weeks.

Next steps

13. **If you agree with this approach**, we will:

- a. work with your office to we could set up weekly meetings with the First Ministers and begin a forward look of agenda items, with a view to reviewing frequency at the end of June;
- b. work with your office to commission papers on the latest UK-wide picture on social distancing measures to inform the discussions.
- c. provide briefing on the latest positions from developing discussions with the devolved administrations on the JBC and Test and Trace and a comparison of the rate of 'R' across the UK.

Annex A - Draft response to First Minister of Wales's letter dated 12 May on regular DA engagement on social distancing

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales

XX May 2020

Dear

I would like to start by reiterating the UK government's commitment to a UK-wide approach in our response to COVID 19.

I agree that there is more in common with our approaches than media reports would suggest. I would like to work together to make that point and realign public perceptions of our approach. Social distancing will be at its most effective if there is a clear message and policy that applies to everyone. Where there is divergence, particularly on the timing of lifting measures, we should focus on the scientific evidence that justifies that divergence and ensure this is part of our collective public messaging. As we look ahead it is important we continue to work together to support decisions that work for all parts of the UK.

To do this it is essential that we not only continue to share information and perspectives on our response to the coronavirus, but that there is more that we can do together, both ahead of the next review of the coronavirus regulations and to continue discussions on the longer term approach to changes to social distancing measures.

Going forward, I hope we can each share our emerging strategic thinking as early as possible so we have the opportunity to align approaches ahead of announcements. It will also be particularly important that we continue to cooperate on the programmes that will be critical to allowing us to monitor the spread of the virus more effectively as we move out of 'lockdown' and to the next stage of our response. Cooperation on programmes such as the Joint Biosecurity Committee, and Test and Trace will be important to ensuring an effective UK-wide response.

I would like to suggest a discussion week commencing 18th May and my office will be in touch to arrange a time. This will allow us to reflect on the last reviewpoint and agree to a continued UK wide approach, albeit moving at different speeds where the science shows that it should. I am particularly keen to discuss our approach to test, track and trace, which work most effectively if there is a joined-up UK-wide approach given the movement of people between the nations.

I can reaffirm my commitment to engage regularly as we go forward and I agree that we should hold weekly discussions initially. My office will be in touch shortly to arrange dates for future meetings.

RT HON CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER