



Northern  
Ireland  
Office

**Covid Recovery Summit**  
**Thursday 3 June 2021**  
**13:45-15:15**

**Agenda**

- I. Welcome and working together, including to secure recovery (25 mins)
- II. Presentations on the United Kingdom's Covid context (15 mins)
- III. DA Impact Assessments on the economy and public services (50 mins)

**Supporting papers (attached)**

**Attendees:**

UK Government

- Prime Minister (Chair) - Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
- Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster - Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
- Chancellor of the Exchequer - Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
- Secretary of State for Northern Ireland – Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP
- Secretary of State for Scotland – Rt Hon Alister Jack MP
- Secretary of State for Wales – Rt Hon Simon Hart MP

Northern Ireland Executive

- First Minister of Northern Ireland - Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA
- Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland - Michelle O'Neill MLA

Scottish Government

- First Minister of Scotland - Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
- Deputy First Minister of Scotland - Rt Hon John Swinney MSP
- Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy - Rt Hon Kate Forbes MSP
- Permanent Secretary - Leslie Evans

Welsh Government

- First Minister of Wales - Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS
- Shan Morgan - Permanent Secretary

## Overview of Meeting

1. You are attending the Prime Minister's meeting with the leaders of the Devolved Administrations to discuss Covid recovery. This will be a key opportunity for UKG to demonstrate leadership and commitment to engaging with the DAs and it is **expected that the PM will lead the majority of the discussion with the Chancellor and CDL providing input on agenda item 2**. This briefing provides information on how the meeting is likely to run and includes a number of proactive lines to take from an NI perspective should the opportunity arise. Top lines and Q&A as provided in the PMs package also attached at **Annex A** for reference.

## Agenda Item 1 - Welcome, and Working together - 25 minutes

### **Background/Steer**

2. The PM will welcome the DA's and start the Summit by setting out UKG's ambitions and desire to work together on joint recovery. We expect the PM will turn to Northern Ireland's First and deputy First Ministers before turning to Wales and Scotland for an update on key areas they believe this should focus on.
3. It is anticipated that the DAs will wish to use this item to have a discussion about the future relationship between UKG and DAs. 

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 The PM has signalled he wishes to ensure this does not derail the wider meeting, and in order to do so effectively will most likely be in listening mode, with an even tone throughout.
4. The PM is therefore likely to use this agenda item to acknowledge to the DAs that there are disagreements on some policy matters, however will emphasise that these should not stop joint working on Covid recovery. We do not anticipate you will need to provide any specific input on this item however should the opportunity arise you may wish to highlight some of the positive collaboration that has taken to date in tackling the pandemic and how we can build on this as we move to the recovery phase.

### **Lines to take (if required)**

- Since the start of the pandemic, we have all worked closely together to coordinate our response to coronavirus and ensure the safety of all our citizens right across the UK.
- Our joint efforts in delivering the vaccination and mass testing programmes has seen a significant reduction in deaths and hospitalisations. This has been particularly the case in NI with almost 75% of the adult population receiving their first dose.
- It is vital we continue this cooperation to ensure we are working effectively for every UK citizen, particularly as we face the persistent threat of new variants.

## **Agenda Item 2 - Presentations on the United Kingdom's Covid context (15 mins)**

### **Background/Steer**

5. The Chancellor will open this item and talk to statistical information provided in his presentation paper which focuses on:
  - Impacts on the UK economy, including GDP, labour market, household savings, and business investment.
  - Impacts on the UK public finances, including public sector net debt, inflation and interest rates; and
  - UK-wide support and DA funding since the start of the pandemic and the importance of the broad fiscal shoulders of the whole UK
6. CDL will then lead a discussion on **Public Services Recovery** for which he is likely to open by highlighting the critical role public services have played throughout the pandemic. He will also use this opportunity to highlight the various investments UKG has made throughout the pandemic.
7. He will then turn to the challenges ahead, with a particular focus on the health sector and will reaffirm how building on the previous positive collaboration, sharing best practices and data will enable us to not just recover but transform public services right across the UK.
8. Should the opportunity arise you may wish to highlight specific examples of how UKG funding has been beneficial in NI and reaffirm the CDLs steer on the need for close collaboration and data sharing as we move to the recovery phase.

### **Lines to take (if required)**

- I welcome the update from my Ministerial colleagues including the examples of the unprecedented action to support individuals and businesses which has included providing the NI Executive with over £5 billion funding through the Barnett formula to tackle the pandemic.
- Despite the current challenges, Northern Ireland has a promising economic future. Together, with collaboration between business, the UK Government and the NI Executive, we can help the NI economy to recover and thrive.

### **Agenda Item 3 - Impact Assessments**

#### **Background/Steer**

9. Each of the DAs have submitted a recovery strategy document for which the PM will invite them to speak to. As expected each of the DA recovery strategies have a particular focus on Economic recovery, with a green agenda, including: immediate support for key public services (health, education etc),

#### **NI Executive Covid Recovery Strategy**

10. The NIE's recovery plan emphasises the need for collaborative action over the short to medium term, with a particular focus on the following cross cutting areas:
  - **Economic Growth**- Accelerating job creation & growth; enhancing skills; and stimulating the economy through green growth.
  - **Tackling Inequalities** - Enabling a learning recovery; enhancing skills; ensuring equitable job creation across society; providing equitable access to our health services; and reducing poverty.
  - **Health of the population** - Protecting and improving the health of the population; promoting health and wellbeing; reducing poverty; and investing in green initiative that benefit population health
  - **Green growth and sustainability**- How green growth will stimulate the economy and create green jobs through focusing on incentives for the clean, green and circular economy.
11. Once all DAs have delivered their presentations, the PM will sum up. He is unlikely to provide any firm commitments to additional funding at this point however will instead propose further discussion on our recovery strategies with a particular focus on Health and Education along with embedding mechanisms to ensure the sharing of data and best practice moving forward.
12. Should you be afforded the opportunity you may wish to welcome the presentations and general consensus across the DAs regarding the key priority areas of focus- noting the particular issues in the Health sector in NI.

#### **Lines to take (if required)**

- I welcome the presentations that each of the Devolved Administrations have made and note that there is a general consensus across the board that the key focus for recovery should be on economic growth, green recovery and our public services - particularly health and education.
- Health will require particular attention in NI and I welcome the recent statement made by the NI Health Minister in the Assembly which highlighted the key areas of focus of the NI Health Reform Strategy, including tackling waiting lists,

redressing the disruption caused to cancer services and tackling mental health issues.

- As the FM/dFM have highlighted, NI has a promising economic future and if we work together we can help ensure NI economy and public service not only recover but thrive and prosper as we move forward.

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## TRAVEL

**What approach is the UK Government taking towards the resumption of international travel and why are decisions being taken with DAs ‘outside the room’?**

- We have sought to take cautious first steps towards the resumption of international travel, and our priority remains to protect public health - which is why the Green list remains very small.
- Travel will continue to be very different this summer in order to prevent new strains of the virus from entering the country.
- The data underpinning our decisions on countries is based on shared analysis by the JBC and follows a methodology I know each of our CMOs have agreed.
- I am committed to supporting a coherent and coordinated approach to international travel across the UK. To support this join up, devolved administration ministers will be invited to attend Covid Operations Committee meetings where UKG is discussing the approach to international travel for England.

## **On Covid status certification**

- We are committed to a coordinated and coherent UK-wide approach to our Covid response wherever possible, recognising of course that health is devolved. It is crucial that UK citizens, regardless of where they are resident in the UK, are treated fairly and equitably.
- On accessing Covid vaccination status for outbound travel, I understand that the four health ministers have agreed in principle to a UK-wide vaccination letter based on common branding and format, though implementation times vary across each nation.
- Like the DAs, HMG has not yet reached a decision on whether to implement Covid-status certification for inbound international travel or for domestic purposes. However, officials continue to engage DA officials on progress ahead of any decision being made in these areas.
- If we do choose to implement a domestic certification scheme, residents of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will be able to access certified venues and we hope to work with you to agree verifiable proofs. Even if we choose not to mandate certification, businesses will be able to implement it voluntarily if they choose to do so, and we will again make sure that residents of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have the same access to these venues.

## **UKG COVID ROADMAP**

### **On whether UKG is reacting appropriately to the recent rise in case numbers associated with the Indian variant?**

- As we take this next step, we are clear that we must maintain caution. Moving too fast, too soon, risks a resurgence in infections, hospitalisations and deaths. New variants remain a potential risk. We are carefully monitoring variants and in particular variant Delta (the variant first detected in India). It is vital that people continue to follow the restrictions in place to minimise the risks to themselves and others: hands, face, space, fresh air - and take up the offer of a vaccination as soon as it is offered.
- We hope that the continued success of the vaccination rollout, our increased testing capabilities, alongside falling infections and hospitalisations, will allow us to lift restrictions further. However, some measures will still be required - and we must not lose sight of the risks this virus continues to pose.

### **When will UKG make an announcement on Step 4?**

- Step 4 will take place no earlier than June 21st.
- As set out in the roadmap, there will be a minimum of five weeks between each step: four weeks for the scientific data to reflect the changes in restrictions and to be analysed; followed by one week's advance notice of the restrictions that will be eased.
- Only when we are sure that it is safe to move from one step to the next will the final decision be made.

### **What data will be published for Step 4?**

- The decision will be driven by data, not dates, and be based on four tests:
  - the vaccine deployment programme continues successfully
  - evidence shows vaccines are sufficiently effective in reducing hospitalisations and deaths in those vaccinated
  - infection rates do not risk a surge in hospitalisations which would put unsustainable pressure on the NHS
  - our assessment of the risks is not fundamentally changed by new Variants of Concern

## **REQUESTS FOR FURTHER ECONOMIC SUPPORT OR FUNDING**

- The UK government is committed to supporting the recovery from Covid in every part of the UK, as we have done throughout the pandemic.
- Since the start of the pandemic, the devolved administrations have benefitted from £28.1bn of additional funding through the Barnett formula to provide support to individuals, businesses and public services across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in response to Covid-19 and will continue to support the recovery through 2021/22.
- In 2021/22, the UK Government is also delivering substantial UK-wide Covid support schemes and UK-wide investment in recovery that benefits Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Decisions about future funding will be taken at the Spending Review later this year.

We expect the Chancellor to respond to any specific funding issues raised.

## **COVID INQUIRY**

### **Why not start the inquiry sooner?**

- It inevitably takes time to establish an Inquiry and this is an Inquiry which will have a massive undertaking not just in resource terms but also capability. We must not inadvertently divert or distract the very people on whom we all depend in the heat of our struggle against this disease. For these reasons, I expect the inquiry to begin in spring 2022 but work is already underway and officials will be discussing the detail of the Inquiry with each other.

### **Will x,y,z be within scope?**

- The inquiry will be a thorough examination of the breadth of our response – to learn the lessons of the pandemic that will make a difference to the future. Decisions as to the inquiry's full terms of reference will be made in due course but there will be consultation with your Governments and of course the independent Chair of the Inquiry will have a strong role in this

### **Will the DAs be consulted on the ToR? Will this be a joint inquiry?**

- This was a global pandemic that impacted all of us - people, businesses, friends and family - across the United Kingdom. I have said I want to recover as one Team UK, and it is right that we learn these lessons together. I know that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has spoken with you about this and pledged that we will work with your administrations as we establish a fully independent inquiry that can allow us to do just that. We look forward to discussing the inquiry further with you very soon.

## **G7 SUMMIT**

- The G7 Leader-level Summit takes place against the context of the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. We have set out an ambitious policy agenda with a focus on building back better. Leaders will consider the core themes of economic recovery, health, and climate and nature as well as open societies and gender equality.
- Focus can be expected on the need for concerted international action to drive global recovery. We want to ensure that we 'level up' our economies, leaving no-one behind. And we want to ensure that we consider both our immediate response to the pandemic, as well as how to ensure that we are better placed to respond to a future crisis.
- The G7 is a whole-of-year presidency and I welcome the continued support and engagement of colleagues in the devolved administrations, and the constructive engagement at official level.
- **If raised, G7 Ministerials in the Scotland and Northern Irelands:** [*of the nations, only Wales will host an in-person ministerial (Interior Ministers - the Home Secretary has written to Mark Drakeford). Scotland will not host an in-person ministerial event given the associated work of hosting COP26. Northern Ireland was due to host the Trade ministerial but this was cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions so will now take place virtually.*] Scope to host physical meetings has been limited this year due to COVID-19, but we welcome the Interior Ministers meeting in Wales later in the year, and continue to look at ways to engage the whole of the UK, for example through our Engagement Group outreach.
- **If raised, level of DA engagement and consultation within the G7 process:**
  - The G7 is an international forum and is thus reserved to the UK Government.

- We have engaged our DA colleagues through regular working-level meetings and existing departmental structures. The approach has necessarily varied from policy area to policy area depending on the specific topics being covered.
- We will seek to further engage DA colleagues where appropriate following the Leaders' Summit, for example through building links between the G7 and COP26, and specifically with the Welsh Government on the Interior ministerial.

## **COMMON FRAMEWORKS**

### **How has the Covid pandemic affected the delivery of Common Frameworks?**

- The development of UK Common Frameworks has remained a critical joint workstream between the UK Government and the devolved administrations throughout the Covid pandemic.
- Over the course of 2020 and into 2021, the Covid pandemic has placed pressure on resources across government, including the Common Frameworks programme. As a result of this pressure, the Common Frameworks programme has continued in 2021 and frameworks continue to be jointly developed.

### **What is the role of the Public Health framework in relation to the Covid response?**

- The Public Health Protection and Health Security Framework will be critical in ensuring such collaboration continues in the future and in strengthening the UK's collective resilience to health threats.

### **Aside from Covid, what are the main barriers to progress on Common Frameworks?**

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