

EXECUTIVE COVID TASKFORCE
STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT BOARD
DRAFT MINUTES
7 DECEMBER 2021

Present: Jayne Brady (HOCS)
Richard Pengelly (DoH)
Mike Brennan (DfE)
Peter May (DoJ)
Chris McNabb (TEO)
[NR] (DfC) – in place of Tracy Meharg
Karen Pearson (TEO)
Peter Luney (TEO)
Jane Holmes (TEO)
[Name Redacted] (TEO)
[Name Redacted] (TEO)

Apologies: Tracy Meharg

1. Minutes of meeting on 30 November 2021

Minutes of the meeting on 30th November were agreed.

2. Update on Taskforce Activity

Karen Pearson provided an update on Taskforce Activity since the last meeting inclusive of Ministerial Sector engagement and 5 Nations Approach.

3. Protect

Richard Pengelly reported that 10% of hospital beds are currently occupied by Covid patients (285 at 6.12.21) which equates to bed occupancy of 105% across the region. Testing continues to increase; hospital admissions continue to plateau. There have been no cases of the Omicron variant reported in NI but that remains an inevitability and the impacts of this strain of the virus are not yet fully understood. New rules on travel, hotel quarantine and the differing rules in ROI were also discussed. A possible 5-nations/tri-lateral engagement later this week is a possibility. Richard also reported an increase of 65k in the download of the Covid certifications and verification since the last report.

4. Adherence

Karen Pearson reported on the recent meeting of the adherence group and discussed enforcement around wearing of face coverings/exemptions/policing on public transport and comparisons in other regions. It was considered that building on the current majority adherence was the way forward. Engagement will continue on this. Karen also discussed adherence at large stadia events

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which has operated on a voluntary basis to date. Cafes/the unlicensed and mixed settings sector will require more clarity and reassurance. Better guidance is currently being worked on ahead of the statutory enforcement date next week. Mixed reports of how sectors are operating the incoming rules thus far.

Peter Luney updated the group on engagement with the Older People's Commissioner and concerns around domestic Covid certificates and the challenges around this.

Enforcement/adherence around Covid certificates, face coverings and to track and trace requirements was discussed. Chris McNabb discussed possible communications with PSNI to aid engagement understanding across sectors. Peter May agreed to discuss options with Chris McNabb and Peter Luney and liaise with PSNI colleagues.

[Action : Peter May]

5. Communications

Chris McNabb reported on developments around the latest media campaign planned around various messaging across a range of platforms. Chris also discussed the challenges around saturation of messaging and concerns around reach with key messaging. The importance of showcasing good practice was highlighted.

Chris McNabb has agreed to provide a draft communications plan in order to discuss with FM/dFM. He also agreed to share details of planned media campaigns and associated launch dates with Peter Luney to inform the draft ECT Paper.

[Action: Chris McNabb]

6. AOB

Mike Brennan reported views and concerns from the hospitality/travel sector around cancellations and the possibility of lobbying for financial support.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Tuesday 14 December.