

Covid-19 Taskforce meeting
8 February 2022 at 8.00am – via Zoom

Attending: Jayne Brady
Karen Pearson (Chair)
Richard Pengelly
Peter May
Mike Brennan
Colum Boyle
Mark O'Donnell
John Smith
Chris McNabb
Jayne Holmes
Doreen McClintock

NR

Agenda

1. Minutes from 25 January were agreed.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Denis McMahon.

2. UKG/DA update

Jayne Brady provided an update on engagement with UKG on Ukraine. Jayne plans to engage remaining Ministers to determine an interim means by which she can best keep Ministers fully briefed on this matter and other key issues. It was agreed that an ECT officials' paper will be produced to brief PSS each week. A separate brief on the developing Ukraine situation will also be provided for PSS.

[Action: Karen Pearson]

3. Impact of recent political developments

Governance and decision making

It was agreed that the ECT will continue to meet every two weeks to manage the Covid situation. Richard Pengelly advised that the Minister of Health is taking advice on powers available to him in relation to Covid restrictions and guidance, including working from home messaging and face coverings.

4. Protect

Richard Pengelly indicated that there was nothing significant to report and that the key metrics continue on a downward trajectory.

5. Adherence

Peter May advised that the Adherence group will meet again shortly. Peter also advised on the latest position in prisons.

Economic

Mike Brennan reported that there is no evidence of economic restraints. There are signs of economic recovery with key metrics heading in the right direction.

DfC

Mark O'Donnell advised of concerns around budget constraints impacting on DfC ability to discharge statutory functions in relation to homelessness. This situation is further exacerbated by an increase in refugees/asylum seekers. Social distancing in settings such as hostels is also reducing capacity.

DoF

Colum Boyle provided an update on financial support schemes. Karen Pearson advised that DfI are working on a support scheme for taxis.

6. Communications

Chris McNabb advised that all creatives and media have been reviewed until the end of March. Consideration is being given to messaging and comms beyond this in terms of good behaviours.

Karen Pearson advised that living with Covid will be returned to the ECT group at the next meeting. This will have a direct impact on comms going forward.

Covid Inquiry

Jayne Brady and Karen Pearson discussed the recent letter from the Prime Minister in relation to the terms of reference for the UK Covid Inquiry. The means by which a response may be issued with or without Ministers is currently under consideration. Four-nation engagement at official level is ongoing. A briefing note on the current position will be provided to PSS.

[Action: Jane Holmes]

7. AOB

Karen Pearson suggested that it would be prudent to have an early conversation with NIO to ensure that any forthcoming election is Covid compliant.

8. ECT will meeting again on 22 February 2022