

EXECUTIVE COVID TASKFORCE
DRAFT MINUTES
04 JANUARY 2022

Present: Jayne Brady (HOCS)
Peter May (DoJ)
Tracy Meharg (DfC)
Mike Brennan, (DfE)
Denis McMahon (TEO)
Richard Pengelly (DoH)
John Smith (DE)
Bill Pauley (DoF)
Chris Stewart (TEO)
Peter Luney (TEO)
Jane Holmes (TEO),
Patricia McIntyre (TEO)

NR

 (TEO)

1. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of 14, 17, 21 and 28 December were agreed.

2. Health Data

Richard Pengelly reported that in-patient admissions are now up by one third, ICU figures remain static. It will take a few more days to inform modelling. Staff absences will be a feature during this wave; disappointing update on booster vaccines. Any further interventions would take at least two weeks to have impact. Testing demand may exceed supply.

Jayne Brady provided an update on recent DA engagement and reviewed the position across each.

Jayne also looked towards planning for this week's Executive meeting, additional finance support schemes and potential proposals from ECT. The group discussed the economic imperative to provide any financial support to sectors and which department might lead. DfE will provide input on the current thinking around viability of various sectors. **[Action: Mike Brennan/DfE]**

Bill Pauley updated on the hospitality scheme and the definition of a nightclub. This latter work is ongoing to determine whether support, if any, is required. The hospitality scheme will begin to roll out shortly. The financial position remains as it did before Christmas. There is no indication as yet as regards bids or available funding following the January Monitoring round. Bill will provide input to the ECT Executive update to set out the evidence base on the financial position. **[Action: Bill Pauley]**

Peter Luney updated on the financial support position across the UK.

Tracy Meharg advised of concerns around DfC staff absence; it is too early to give an indication around any increase in benefit claimants or any requirement for support. Any change in restrictions could impact on both.

3. **Face coverings**

Chris Stewart updated ECT on the deferral of enforcement around the requirement to provide proof of exemption. Work is ongoing to determine clarity around proving exemption. The grace period around enforcement will remain in the meantime. TEO colleagues are engaging with hospitality, retail and disability sectors.

John Smith advised that colleagues from EA engage. Considering detail around safeguarding and school transport.

John also reported on return to school over the coming days. DE Perm Sec wrote to all school principals on 31.12.21 to reinforce current guidance and issue a call for any additional support from retired teaching staff. Trade Union engagement has also take place. DE currently holding the line that existing measures are sufficient and that the Covid position in schools reflects the position in wider society. John also advised that schools have received CO2 devices to monitor air circulation but schools have also been advised to ensure windows are opened. Mobile units can be made available, if required.

4. **Enforcement**

Peter May advised that over 1000 license inspections have been carried out since the end of November; 8 prohibition notices and 3 fixed penalty notices of £1000 have issued. A small number of premises are failing to co-operate but the picture is generally positive in terms of enforcement of risk assessments, Covid certs and track and trace.

5. **Comms**

Focus on current media campaign featuring CMO; media interest in schools currently. No media focus on face coverings as yet.

6. **Workforce impact**

DE – no big impact on schools; DOJ – police and prisons managing.