

not reasonable to expect people to work that out for themselves. She recognised that the PM would likely be questioned on this work at PMQs, and that others would have briefings throughout the day and that she was not yet in a position to sign off the statement, but would commit to working through it over the morning.

The First Minister of Northern Ireland noted that she too had only just seen the statement. She noted that the greater the four nations diverged on approach, the more difficult shared communications would be. On FM Scotland's point on definitions of prevalence, she suggested that this be included as part of an explanatory note in guidance. On the statement more generally she noted that she did not have any difficulty with its content, except that some terms throughout may need defining within the explanatory notes.

The deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland apologised for not being available to join the call the previous evening. She noted that each nation was in a different position in respect of covid, and highlighted some of the challenges Northern Ireland faced in particular. She noted that while she had sympathy with the argument that the group may wish to tighten the arrangements, she was also seeking to be realistic given that many people will have already made plans. She noted that the Northern Ireland Executive would likely need to discuss the approach tomorrow, and that while there remained a desire to be aligned it may not be possible on everything.

The First Minister of Wales noted that his ideal position would be to agree, on a four-nations basis, to reduce the number of households to meet over christmas from 3 to 2, and highlighted the serious position faced in Wales. He further noted that this approach had the support of the Welsh Cabinet. He asserted that, if the group would be unable to secure this as part of changes to regulations, that he remained committed to a four nation approach to the rules as much as possible. On this basis, the Welsh Government would seek to go further through messaging in relation to these issues. He would seek to explicitly communicate that the public would be safest to spend Christmas within their own household, with the next level of risk being an extended household, and that people should only use the freedom to bring together three households where every other reasonable precaution has been taken. He suggested that it would be helpful to set out this 'hierarchy of risk' to the public, with three households being at the highest level of risk. On the points previously made on the clinically vulnerable and elderly, he suggested it would be logical, if possible, to each arrange for respective CMOs to send letters to these groups. He noted that the CMO in Wales has written periodically throughout the crises and that this could be a good vehicle for communication of the advice, further augmenting it with specific guidance. He concluded by suggesting that a letter such as this may send a strong signal to people as to the precautions they needed to take.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster responded to each point in turn. On the suggestion of explanatory notes he agreed that clarifying certain terms such as 'high prevalence' would be helpful. On the suggestion of communicating a hierarchy of safety, he agreed that it would be helpful to provide information where we thought there was increased risk. On the point about CMO letters he noted that it was a good idea but that it would be difficult to guarantee that letters would reach everyone in time, but what we could do was point those groups to particular advice. On the Northern Ireland Executive needing to agree to a specific arrangement, he noted that, while there may be some distinctions in each individual part of the day, the fewer, the better. He noted that it would be helpful to publish a clear agreed