

34. Regular assessment of the R number and other variables would be needed to inform Ministers' judgement about whether, and when, to move from one phase of the response to the next. Such an assessment would be prepared in time for the next statutory review date of 28 May, when the next phase was due to commence. Subject to Cabinet's views and any comments on the detail of the route map and the accompanying publication, the intention was for publication to coincide with the First Minister's statement to the Parliament planned for Thursday, 21 May.

35. The First Minister added that to focus solely on the evolution of the R number over the period immediately prior to any proposed relaxation would give an incomplete picture: other indicators, such as sustained falls in new infections, hospital admissions, Intensive Care Unit admissions and deaths, would also need to be taken into account in order to reach a balanced and broad-based judgement.

36. The document would set out how the basket of criteria would be evaluated at each stage, as well as an assessment of the effect of any changes in restrictions against the four harms. In this complex process, there needed to be a careful balance between social and economic interventions, since both would be required in order to ensure a positive effect on quality of life for all parts of society.

37. Annex B2 of the paper numbered the phases from one to five (with the current lockdown at 'phase one'): the decision had, however, since been taken to ascribe numbers only to the future, transitional phases. Thus, the current 'lockdown' (effectively, Phase 0) would be followed by new Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the transition towards exit from the crisis. All decisions governing the phased approach to varying restrictions would be kept under continuous review, in line with the growing research evidence base on the impact of the virus and the effectiveness of different interventions.

38. The only definite date contained in the document was 28 May (the intended start of Phase 1 of the transition away from lockdown), and it would not be appropriate, at this stage of the outbreak, to specify dates for each of the subsequent phases. While each three-weekly statutory review period would be used as a marker for consideration of further changes in restrictions, transition to a new phase would only take place if justified by the current situation, including the extent to which the pandemic had been brought under control. It was, however, important that the document gave the sense of hope and of a pathway to the future, despite inherent risks and uncertainties.

39. It would be important to bear in mind that future phases could be adapted as appropriate to suit changing circumstances. In the worst case, previously lifted restrictions could be brought back in in the event that the evidence suggested that this was required to prevent a second wave of infection.

40. Cabinet members were invited to consider whether, from their portfolio perspectives, there were any missing components in each of the proposed transitional phases (for example, in relation to the housing market, where changes had already been made in England) and whether any changes needed to be made before publication.