

Four Harms colleagues,

## **SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR RETURNING TO LEVELS AND ON-GOING ASSESSMENT OF LEVELS**

### *Introduction*

1. As part of the Strategic Framework we need to agree: (1) conditions for safe transition back to levels approach (“safety condition”); and (2) measures for on-going assessment of levels.
2. In relation to (2), given the fragility and increasing complexity of situation we cannot necessarily rely on previous indicators - test positivity etc - to tell us what we need to know (or at least providing the signals we need to pay attention to).
3. Annex A sets out in more detail issues with indicators. Further work is required.
4. There will be a need for even clearer, simpler communication about true extent of continued risk, the need for vigilance, all of which in context of growing “vaccine bravado” and a general weariness of restrictions. A “data not dates” approach is sensible but will come under increasing pressure in particular if other UK administrations are more explicit in commitments to end restrictions.
5. The remainder of the pandemic can effectively be divided into three phases:
  - *Phase 1* - from now to point at which safety condition is met and geographic levels are re-introduced; this initial phase includes return of schools and other level 4 restrictions (see below);
  - *Phase 2* - application of levels to point at which all areas in Scotland are sustainably at either level 1 or zero which may be the point at which we reach or approach the population immunity threshold “PIT”; and
  - *Phase 3* - “end state” or “endemic Covid”, which is essentially our Routemap phase 4 (“Covid is no longer a serious threat to public health”). Note that levels may need to be retained as an outbreak management tool to reflect potential risk from variation in population immunity (both natural as vaccine effect wears off and due to impact of new variants with vaccine escape properties).
6. Given current estimates, we might expect phase 1 to be February to April; phase 2 to cover April to August/September; and phase 3 to be August/September onwards. These estimates will not be made public as actual progress is conditional on data.

### *Easing level 4 restrictions – phase 1*

7. Cabinet has agreed a cautious, data-led approach to easing level 4 restrictions at a national level prior to the potential re-introduction of a levels based approach.
8. Cabinet has agreed a possible prioritisation for this easing: