

## SOCIAL DISTANCING: TEMPORARY ADDITIONAL MEASURES

1. This paper proposes imposing a number of temporary additional measures to increase social distancing across the UK, with the aim of pushing the reproduction number below 1. It begins by reviewing briefly the current context, before detailing the restrictions to be imposed. It then turns to the timescale for their imposition, and the options around enforcement, noting that some potential means of enforcement require further development. It concludes by summarising the next steps.

### Context

2. Social distancing is happening, but it is uncertain whether there is a sufficient level of compliance to prevent infections growing exponentially. In headline terms, the latest available data show that:
  - a. there has been a big drop-off in transport by Londoners, with bus use down 61% Saturday compared to the same day last year, and tube use down 87%;
  - b. this decline in journeys has been mirrored at a national level - based on Google data UK stations had 20-30% of usual levels on 21 and 22 March;
  - c. foot traffic in flagship shopping locations has fallen and continues to do so, with a near 80% reduction by the end of last week in Oxford Street;
  - d. journey activity remains much higher in London and Manchester than in other major foreign cities; and
  - e. in London, parks are the only key category recording higher activity than normal according to Google data.
3. Given that it is not possible to draw clear conclusions from this data about the overall level of compliance with social distancing, and the importance of pushing the reproduction number below 1 in order to contain spread, further measures to increase social distancing should be imposed.

### Restrictions

4. The fundamental step that the Government should take to increase social distancing is to issue clear instructions about what people need to do, and to relay this message through a wide-reaching and invasive communications campaign.
5. This means **telling all citizens to stay at home, except for a very simple and restrictive list of permitted activities:**
  - a. shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible and no more than once a day;
  - b. one form of exercise a day - e.g. a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with your household;
  - c. any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person; and
  - d. travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home.
6. In addition, and to support the clarity of this message, the Government should:
  - a. require the **closure of all non-essential retail**, including clothing and electronics stores, and other premises including libraries, communal places within parks (playgrounds), and places of worship (except for funerals) - a full list is set out at **Annex A**;

- b. **ban all gatherings of more than two people** in public, excluding households or work-related; and
  - c. **ban all social events**, including weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies, but excluding funerals.
7. As last week, guidance will specify which premises must close rather than which may stay open, in order to avoid omitting an essential service; this list will be kept under review. However, an indicative list of 'essential' premises is at **Annex B**, and examples could be provided in any announcement for reassurance. Premises that do remain open will have to comply with clear standards on: ensuring an interpersonal distance of two meters between customers and shop assistants; letting people enter premises only in small groups, to ensure that spaces are not crowded; and queue control outside of shops and other essential premises. Limiting public transport services or otherwise constraining travel is not recommended, given the importance of ensuring workers who need to can still commute, in particular healthcare workers.
  8. It is important to note that closing non-essential retail will have very significant GDP, employment, and fiscal effects, with significantly higher use of the furloughed worker scheme announced by the Chancellor last Friday. There are circa two million non-food retail employees in the UK. It is more difficult to assess the impact of limiting gatherings, but it will be vital to avoid the risk that the messaging around this implies wrongly that individuals cannot be in places where there are more than two people (e.g. in workplaces), as otherwise the economic and social impacts would be very significant.
  9. Taken together, these measures are considered likely to drive compliance with social distancing above the threshold needed to bring the reproduction number below 1.

#### Timescale

10. These measures should be announced this evening, to **take effect from midnight tonight**, with affected businesses closing as soon as possible and not opening tomorrow. They will severely restrict citizens' quality of life and economic activity. It will therefore be important to be clear that these measures are a temporary response to put a break on the spread of the virus, and will **last initially for the next three weeks to the Easter Weekend**, when there will be a review and further announcement.

#### Enforcement

11. As above, these measures would initially take the form of guidance. Police will be able to provide non-binding advice to shops and individuals found to be in contravention of that guidance immediately; the expectation is that this will be sufficient to disperse groups not complying with the guidance in the majority of circumstances.
12. If there is no increase in compliance with these social distancing measures, it is proposed that there is escalation to stronger enforcement. In relation to the closure of additional premises, this could be done quickly by building on the Regulations made on Saturday 21 March, and which are being enforced by Environmental Health and Trading Standards in the first instance, as well as the police.

13. More widely, the other measures could be enforced from Thursday, when the relevant powers should be available across the UK. In England, this will require urgent Regulations under the Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act. Regulations will allow for a system of fines or penalties to be imposed and **the police to be able to levy fines** on business or individuals in contravention of the guidance in England. This enforcement will not be comprehensive, but it will provide an additional deterrent, particularly once there have been a few high-profile cases of fines. These fines would initially be small (e.g. £30) but could be increased if compliance was not deemed to be reaching sufficient levels; this type of ratchet has been deployed in France. Welsh Ministers have parallel powers but need to make their own legislation. The Coronavirus Bill will confer equivalent powers on Scotland and Northern Ireland and these powers will be available after Royal Assent, which is expected on Thursday. In practice, this means that the earliest moment for nationwide police enforcement is Thursday night or Friday morning. This does not prevent us announcing the measures as *guidance* from tomorrow.
14. In addition, the UK could implement a system of self-validation for movements, similar to those in place in France and Italy. This would mean that anyone leaving their residence would need to pre-declare their purpose on a form or hand-written document, ensuring that it meets one of the permitted exceptions. This would principally serve as a behavioural check, requiring people to complete a process before moving around, but this could be tied to enforcement by the police, who could stop people and ask them to produce their self-validated form. This system would clearly rely on a high degree of both simplicity and public understanding to be credible. Further work is being taken forward urgently to develop a system and set out possible enforcement, but it would be possible to announce today that such a system will be put in place, and that if deemed necessary this may be checked by the authorities.

#### Next steps

15. In order to proceed with implementing these measures, the key next steps are to:
  - a. announce the package tonight;
  - b. publish clear guidance immediately after the announcement;
  - c. clarify arrangements on enforcement and self-validation, with a view to implementing later in the week; and
  - d. proceed with wide-scale communications activity to push the core messages.