

Message

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on behalf of Imran Shafi <IShafi@no10.gov.uk> [IShafi@no10.gov.uk]
Sent: 10/10/2020 5:18:32 PM
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CC: PM Private Office Support Team - Internal [pmpost.int@no10.gov.uk]
Subject: Readout: COVID update [OFFICIAL]

Dear all,

The PM spoke to CX, CDL, the Health Secretary and Communities Secretary this afternoon.

The PM outlined the strategy and stressed we need to do what we can to get local leaders to buy in to the measures we need to take. We should also encourage them to do more local enforcement. He noted that they were resisting closing hospitality – there was a logic to getting them to co-own this decision, but in due course the Government may have to act at the right time if they did not take this responsibility.

Ed Lister updated on his conversations. People wanted more control of test and trace, and more resources on enforcement. They wanted financial support to avoid redundancies in the face of an uncertain budgetary position. Merseyside looked like it would welcome military support, and wanted more power to close premises down quickly. They did not want to be the ones taking decisions on hospitality, but would probably go along with a Government decision on pubs/bars. Kate Josephs added it felt doable to get Merseyside over the line this weekend as things stood, which would help set the tone in other areas.

The Health Secretary stated we can help on local test and trace. He'd be in favour of stronger, more immediate powers – they wanted the Welsh equivalent to summarily close in 48 hours (but they wanted it in 24 hours) – the PM agreed we must act here (Taskforce - assume you will take forward). We could find a way to give them a greater say on where local testing goes. They'd want funding for local tracing.

The Health Secretary's main concern was that, in his view, the package needed to be tougher and geographically wider to bring infection rates down. He believed this was important to avoid more national measures. Local leaders were unlikely to take responsibility for tough economic measures. CDL argued this was because they did not ultimately have responsibility for their local NHS, unlike the DAs. The Communities Secretary agreed they would be unlikely to own this decision. The Health Secretary and CX discussed the evidence behind where to act, and the extent to which this explained local positions.

The PM concluded by stating we must look to get a deal with Merseyside this weekend. We needed to continue to get them to own the economic actions, and get the package as robust as we can with their support to get R down. He was happy to make calls as required, on the advice of Ed Lister and Kate Josephs.