

FOI Case 202400394258 - Information for release

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Key to redactions

- Section 26(a) – Disclosure prohibited by an enactment - UK Covid-19 Inquiry General Restriction Order
- Section 30(c) - substantial prejudice to the effective conduct of public affairs
- Section 36(1) - legal advice
- Section 38(1)(b) – applicant has asked for personal data of a third party

Document 1

Note of actions following meeting of 24 August 2020

Colleagues

Please find attached the actions from this afternoon's meeting. If any have been misattributed please let us know.

Actions from COVID-19 strategic review discussion, 24 August 2020.

Except for the first two, all of these are for reporting back to FM by Friday 28 August. The report back should come from Paul Cackette & Jim McMEnamin.

1. Report on action taken to resolve issues on **testing** (discussed at separate meeting): **Christine McLaughlin**, as soon as possible and ahead of FM's next media briefing.
2. Agreed package of mitigation measures for **FE/HE** importation risk: **Lorna Gibbs**, by close on Tuesday 25 August
3. Advice on measures to apply **quarantine** retrospectively by at least one week (rather than prospectively) for any new country removed from the list of those exempt, including advice on (i) the implications for Border Force (ii) engaging the UKG and the other Four Nations on this change (iii) increased checks on and measures to encourage or enforce compliance with quarantine measures: **Scott / Wightman / Rachel Sunderland**.
4. Advice on requiring **self-isolation of all household contacts** of those identified as close contacts in large case-clusters, as applied in the 2 Sisters cluster in Tayside: **Paul Cackette**.
5. Advice on possible cross-system **countervailing measures** to reduce transmission risk, with a focus on learning from T&P data, including on indoor hospitality: **Dominic Munro & Paul Cackette**.
6. Assessment of **resilience of Test & Protect** in the face of possible multiple concurrent large clusters of outbreaks: **Jim McMEnamin**.
7. Development of **strategic analysis products** as described for the discussion on 24 August: **Jim McMEnamin & Roger Halliday**.
8. Reinforcement of messages and other measures in relation to the continued closure of **non-essential offices**: **Paul Cackette**.
9. Arrangements for **further strategic reviews**, with agendas identifying key issues and developed options for action, with a view to reviews being held on Fridays from 4 September: **Paul Cackette with First Minister's Office**.

[Redacted Section 38(1)(b)]

Team leader

SGoRR

Document 2

Note of actions following meeting of 7 September 2020

Colleagues

Please find attached the actions from yesterday afternoon's meeting. If any have been misattributed please let me know.

1. **Scope out package of work on tackling barriers to self-isolation**

Action should include:

- Revised communication strategy around how proactively and effectively to tell people what self-isolation means and how to do it;
- Options to improve support package for self-isolation
 - financial support
 - other practical support (e.g. deliveries of food and medicine)
 - working with businesses to improve awareness, encourage them to support employees, and improve compliance
- Strengthening compliance and enforcement, including resources at local level

ACTION: Richard Foggo to co-ordinate, consulting others

2. **More analysis of what is actually happening on the ground**, including comparison/contrast with the picture in April/May, including geographic distribution. What can we learn from other countries further along the curve, especially France / Spain, including in relation to hospitalisation rates?

ACTION: Jim McMenamin/Roger Halliday to lead

3. **Advice on how we can better identify what is working** and not working in terms of **compliance** with restrictions

ACTION: Jim McMenamin/Directors of Public Health/others

4. **Advice on refreshed public communications strategy**, setting out how we can get people listening again, especially in target age groups; how we can step up proactive communication, and how we can be clear about who we are communicating with, why, and on which dimensions

ACTION: Comms, News and Marketing to lead

5. **Countervailing measures** – accelerate work to develop options, with particular focus on hospitality and car-sharing

ACTION: Paul Cackette/Alisdair McIntosh to co-ordinate, in consultation with Dominic Munro and others

6. Strengthen messaging around discouraging **international travel**

ACTION: Scott Wightman / Rachel Sunderland / Comms

7. Work up a proposed **publication on the strategic response to local outbreaks**, drawing on lesson learned and explaining approach for next phase

ACTION: Paul Cackette/Alisdair McIntosh, in consultation with Dominic Munro and others

Updates on all of these to be prepared ahead of next meeting, in w/b 14 September

Ken Thomson to propose content/agenda on 11 September, based on assessment of progress on action points and developments in the meantime.

[Redacted Section 38(1)(b)]

Resilience Division

Head of Response and Communications Unit

Document 3

Note of action following meeting of 20 October 2020

Afternoon team,

During the Gold Command meeting this morning the First Minister asked for engagement with Business Organisations and the Hospitality sector to warm them to the ideas we are planning to announce tomorrow.

The First Minister would appreciate a read out of these calls as soon as possible after they have happened please.

Many thanks

[Redacted Section 38(1)(b)]

[Redacted Section 38(1)(b)]

Private Secretary to the First Minister

Document 4

Follow up clarification regarding points raised at meeting on 16 November 2020

Roger, Audrey –

This are points from FM following the “Gold” discussion, about the Analytical Report (version circulated with your email below).

The first is about dates: why do the ICU forecasts run only as far as 14/12, when the Hospital forecasts run to 21/12?

The second is about the translation of the data from the Hospital and ICU forecasts into the “signal words” (Moderate, Low, etc). Looking at the Glasgow page, for example, Hospital is signalled as Low, when the forecasts show it breaching capacity by 21/12; and ICU is shown as Moderate, when it will breach sooner (7/12). What are the ranges being applied here? While there is of course a need to apply them consistently, across authorities and from week to week, my sense of FM’s comment was that it was hard to explain a “Low” signal being applied to a forecast breach of capacity.

I need you, please, to check the these points and come back to me as soon as you can. You might want to do that to the full list, since other Ministers noted this too, and it will be live in discussion at Cabinet tomorrow. Thanks.

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 5

Note of meeting of 3 December 2020

Good meeting. FM said it had been useful; I said it had given officials steers needed for preparing Cabinet paper.

The steers are pretty much as set out in the slides:

- L4s to move to L3
- monitor Aberdeen & shire for possible escalation to L3
- examine case for Angus, Falkirk, D&G moving down (but be cautious)
- need to keep Edinburgh and Midlothian also under scrutiny, because pressure from those authorities to come down
- scope and timing of review approved
- in-home socialising: we'll get the right answer (which isn't quite the answer the FM gave us in the call): lift the ban in the "Highland islands" but not mainland L1s yet

The main thing we've got from it is confirmation of the intention to use next week's and the week after's reviews to set levels through to 5 January.

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 6

Note of meeting of 28 June 2021

PS/FM -

1. This note, for information, records key points and actions from the Gold discussion with the First Minister earlier this morning. As the DFM requested, this is copied to him also.
2. On **cases**, we noted the very rapid increase early last week; the current high level of new cases; that Tuesday's specimen-date total (the highest seen in the pandemic in Scotland) has not yet been exceeded; and the need to examine each new day's data to assess the current trajectory.
3. On **testing**, we noted the current high volumes and the impact on the proportion of samples processed within 24 hours; that processing within 48 hours is, however, holding up; and that, with UKG, plans are being implemented to accelerate bringing additional capacity on-stream.
4. On **contact tracing**, the additional time to get test results and the very high volume of new cases impacts on turnaround times, and we took an action to bring an update to the next Gold on T&P system performance and deployment at current case numbers.
5. On **public messaging**, the First Minister would use tomorrow's media briefing to emphasise that the virus is out there; be careful; get tested; if you have symptoms and/or test positive, you need to self-isolate; and get vaccinated. Other comms work will reinforce these messages.
6. Advice will come to Ministers today on **vaccination**. The registration portal reopened this morning to book appointments for first doses for anyone over 18. Vaccination currently exceeds delivery of Pfizer supplies. As expected supplies pick up from next week, so vaccination will ramp up, including through drop-in centres, a "bumper weekend" and a higher risk-appetite on using up local stock. The milestone of 50% of 18-29 year olds receiving a first dose, likely to be passed in the next 24 hours, will be a hook for messaging especially to younger adults.
7. **Risk-assessments** are in hand for institutional settings and older age-cohorts, given the higher incidence of new cases, and we can report key points from this work at future Golds.
8. **Operational planning** is well under way with NHS Boards to prepare for a likely rise in hospital admissions and occupancy following the rapid rise in cases.
9. The First Minister asked for **further Gold meetings** on Wednesday and Friday this week. We shall expect to hear from you about diary slots for these. She was minded to hold a **Cabinet meeting** the week after next (on Tuesday 13 July), though as she noted, a good deal of water will go under the bridge between now and then.
10. The First Minister emphasised the need to ensure that **everything that lies within our control is working to the highest level possible** to respond to the current level of new cases.

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 7

Note of meeting of 30 June 2021

PS/First Minister

1. This note, for information, records key points and actions from this afternoon's "Gold" meeting on COVID response issues.
2. The First Minister, Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care and Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Economy took part, along with senior clinicians and lead officials. The Deputy First Minister is on leave, but asked to be copied notes of meetings in his absence.
3. We provided a sitrep in advance of the meeting. I have reattached this for the DFM. In discussion:
 - a. We noted a **further large increase in today's reported total of new cases** and patterns in the recent distribution of cases by specimen date, as set out in the sitrep material.
 - b. The First Minister asked for a reminder and update of material she recalled from FMQ briefings some time ago, on **patterns in the testing system affecting the midweek numbers** (Richard Foggo has action in hand).
 - c. The First Minister asked for confirmation of the up-to-date **proportion of new cases in the under-45 age group**. The data are confirmed below.
 - d. We noted the likelihood that, a week on from the first step-change in new cases, the effects would begin to be seen in **hospital admissions and occupancy**, and confirmed that this will be covered in the next sitrep (officials are meeting on Thursday to advance this work).
 - e. We noted that simple observation suggests that some **current restrictions** are being less adhered to; but that others (for example, working from home, physical distancing in hospitality settings) probably do still have a suppressing effect on transmission.
 - f. We confirmed our advice remains to **retain current measures**, rather than apply "emergency braking"; but that option is being maintained, in terms of the design of the measures (Level 4) and the ability to apply them (through regulations, including during recess).
 - g. We noted the possibility of making use of **vaccine certification** for higher-risk activities and settings, as for example the Irish are considering for hospitality settings. After the Gold, this was a late addition to the agenda for Wednesday's CDL-led Four Nations call. We propose to return to this in Friday's Gold, to confirm Ministers' views and scope what further work may be necessary (action for Dominic Munro with Richard Foggo and colleagues).
 - h. We noted the need to engage with **business organisations** to make clear that they should encourage and support staff to get vaccinated. Ms Forbes is convening the business organisations on Thursday morning to underline this message and ensure joined-up, proactive engagement and communications.
 - i. Similarly, officials will engage with **local government** officials to ensure a shared understanding about the approach to and timing of further decisions on Levels (action for Penelope Cooper with Communities colleagues).
 - j. We noted that arrangements are in hand to prepare for **Cabinet** and the **First Minister's statement** to a virtual session of Parliament on Tuesday 13 July.

4. The First Minister confirmed she will do a further media briefing this week, and wishes to have a further Gold meeting on Friday. We will be in touch with you separately on the timings and participation in those.
5. The data the First Minister requested on new cases by age-group are set out in the table below. This presentation - by week, starting on Mondays - is as given on the PHS dashboard, whereas the figures the First Minister used in yesterday's media briefing were for the then-latest seven days of complete data. In broad terms, under 45s currently account for around 80% of current cases. For the week beginning 21 June, the figure was 83%. For this week so far, the figure is 77%, reflecting a lower share of the total among the 20-24 age group and a higher share in the 65-74 age-group. We are also seeing in the current week a return to broadly similar numbers of cases among males and females across age groups.

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

COVID-19: new cases by age group

Age group	w/b 21 June	w/b 28 June		
		%	(part week)	%
0-14	2,601	13%	643	13%
15-19	2,382	12%	645	13%
20-24	4,352	22%	856	17%
25-44	6,896	35%	1,641	33%
45-64	2,810	14%	820	17%
65-74	283	1%	266	5%
75-84	138	1%	33	1%
85+	23	0%	5	0%
Total	19,485	100%	4,909	100%
0-44	16,231	83%	3,785	77%
45-65	2,810	14%	820	17%
65+	444	2%	304	6%
Total	19,485	100%	4,909	100%

Document 8

Note of meeting of 2 July 2021

PS/First Minister -

COVID-19 RESPONSE: "GOLD", Friday 2 July

1. This note records key points and confirms actions from the Gold discussion earlier today.
2. The First Minister was joined for the discussion by the Deputy First Minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care, and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance & the Economy, supported by advisers and officials.
3. In discussion, Ministers noted:
 - a. the pattern in recent testing results, and a levelling-off in demand for PCR tests; that we should not assume that any Euro effects explain all of the recent variation; and that other influences, including any possible effects from the closure of schools at the end of term, may become apparent in the data over the next few days. Action: officials and advisers to continue to monitor and assess testing data closely.
 - b. informal assessments from PHS and on clinical networks that England may be 2-3 weeks behind Scotland's trajectory for new cases, with rising but more diffuse incidence, and that the trajectory of the Delta variant in continental Europe may be 6-7 weeks behind the UK, but with vaccination rates further behind;
 - c. the updated projections for new infections and hospital use, that so far the lower conversion rate from cases to hospitalisations appeared to be holding, that nevertheless the recent step-changes in new cases would result in additional pressure on the NHS, and that further runs of this modelling will inform advice and planning into next week;
 - d. the implications for the NHS, summarised below, that there was no immediate prospect of the NHS being overwhelmed, but that work should continue in anticipation of COVID occupancy rising into the range 400-500 ;
 - e. work in hand on clinical networks to reduce the impact of self-isolation on the healthcare workforce;
 - f. the importance of re-emphasising current key messages - take care, get vaccinated - through media briefings, marketing, business and employers' networks and through influencers and channels likely to reach younger age-cohorts, as yet unvaccinated and accounting for the great majority of new cases. Action for Marketing, Economy, and Compliance officials (Jill Walker, Reuben Aitken, Don McGillivray and Matt Allan)
 - g. that there should be a further Gold meeting in the first part of next week, or earlier if necessary (and now arranged for Monday morning); and that
 - h. officials should continue to develop options and assessments for the Cabinet to consider when it meets on 13 July. Action for Dominic Munro and Penelope Cooper with colleagues.
4. John Connaghan summarised the current position in the NHS and planning in hand to manage pressures. While hospitals and other services were busier than usual for the summer and there were local hot-spots, there was no immediate prospect of the NHS being overwhelmed, nor any anticipated impact on scheduled care in the immediate future. NHS Boards were currently meeting planned profiles for the remobilisation of services. Current pressures included high "front-door" demand for unscheduled care. A package of additional resourcing was planned for next week, allowing Boards to open up additional capacity, for example by opening additional wards in community hospitals. Further modelling of demand on a three-week horizon was being used to anticipate future pressures, including from COVID cases. Impacts on scheduled care would be progressive rather than a switch from "on" to "off", and would depend on the as yet uncertain scale of future COVID-related demand.

5. Finally, the First Minister noted that she will want to discuss with the CMO and the National Clinical Director some representations made to her in a consistency capacity by senior medical staff in relation to aerosol transmission and PPE. Action: First Minister's office to arrange a discussion.

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 9

Note of meeting of 2 July 2021

Good afternoon,

With apologies again for the late-notice cancellation of this morning's meeting, and further apologies for the late delivery of this note (due to lap top issues on my part).

To confirm a meeting of Gold Command took place this morning with the following attendees:

FM and PO staff, DFM, Cab Sec Health and Social Care, Cab Sec Economy and Finance, Permanent Secretary, Interim DCMO Marion Bain, NCD Jason Leitch, NHS CEO John Connaghan (and successor, John Burns), DG CEA, and Directors Reuben Aitken (Economy), Penelope Cooper (Covid Co-ordination) Dominic Munro (Covid Exit Strategy), Richard Foggo (Covid 19 Director)

There was a discussion covering the current state of the pandemic, current and potential pressures on the NHS and possible policy responses that might be applied now. Decisions made with respect to the current state were to:

- Continue to monitor the data
- Convene another Gold meeting early next week
- Reinforce compliance with existing restrictions by all relevant and available means

I anticipate that there will be a 4 harms meeting next week to review advice that will be put to Cabinet the following week.

Regards,

Penelope

Penelope Cooper | Director, Covid Co-ordination | The Scottish Government

Document 10

Note of meeting of 5 July 2021

PS/First Minister

1. This note, for information, records key points and actions from this morning's "Gold" meeting.
2. The First Minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Economy and the Minister for Public Health, Women's Health & Sport took part, along with senior clinicians and lead officials. The Deputy First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care are on leave, and these notes are being copied to their offices for their awareness.
3. We provided an agenda, key points and a sitrep in advance of the meeting.
4. In discussion, we noted that this morning's reported total of **new cases**, 2,327, does not indicate a further shock. Testing numbers over the weekend were consistent with the pattern of recent weeks. We know that perhaps 300 or so positive samples have been delayed somewhat and therefore do not appear in today's total. Even adding those back in, today's figure is moderately encouraging, and well down on the reported total for last Monday).
5. Given the usual shape of the week, we would expect the specimen-date numbers of new cases to move up again over the next few days, reflecting the number of tests conducted. These tend to peak in mid-week. We will provide some further commentary on the case numbers for tomorrow's call (**action** for the Covid Co-ordination team).
6. Today's anticipated new cases for **England**, if confirmed at c.23,300, would be their largest reported-date total since the end of January, and would mean that Scotland's figure is again about 10% of England's.
7. The First Minister asked for confirmation of the **top 10 UK local authority areas** by new cases per 100k population. These are listed at the foot of this note. We will include some commentary on the Four Nations data in an update for tomorrow (**action**: Covid Coordination team).
8. The **T&P system** remains under significant pressure due to the number of new cases, with laboratory capacity put under further pressure by the upward trend in numbers of tests in the UK as a whole over the past month. Additional laboratory capacity, expected soon, will help address this issue. A digital solution is now in place for contact tracing in Scotland, providing some easing of pressure there.
7. The situation in **hospitals** remains much as reported on Friday, with some further increases in numbers over the weekend, reflecting increases in new cases in the previous week. There is likely to be further upward pressure in the coming week.
8. The **vaccination programme** is progressing as planned, with some minor disruption over the weekend caused by bad weather.
9. The First Minister approved the **communication** options set out in the Gold materials, to increase compliance and vaccination uptake. She asked communications and marketing teams

to consider further "tonal" options to emphasise the importance of compliance if case numbers remain high or rise further (**action:** [Redacted Section 26(a)]).

10. The News team will lead in preparing **lines on some specific issues** including the scheduling of second doses of vaccine and the recall of Parliament (**action:** Chris Mackie).
11. The First Minister concluded that **there was no reason in today's data to depart from the current policy track**, but that the situation should be kept under close review. A further update call will be arranged for Tuesday morning (**action:** First Minister's office).
12. The First Minister will take part in a **Four Nations call** being convened by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for this afternoon. This is expected to confirm the content of a statement by the Prime Minister on the UKG's "Step Four" decisions for 19 July. (**Action:** Penelope Cooper with First Minister's Office.)
13. Work will be taken forward on **policy options** for a draft Cabinet paper later in the week, based on those set out in the materials for Gold meetings on Friday and today (**action:** Dominic Munro).
14. Finally, Ministers heard that an **outbreak affecting the Tesco distribution centre** at Livingston has the potential to put food deliveries at risk. Clinical advisers confirmed that the outbreak is being well managed by the local IMT, and that protocols would be considered to mitigate risk to food supply, seen as an aspect of critical national infrastructure. The Food Standards Agency and portfolio officials are also engaged. A further report will be co-ordinated for tomorrow's update call (**action:** Penelope Cooper with colleagues).
15. I invite the First Minister to note this update.

K

UK cases by area, last 7 days, top 10 upper-tier local authority areas by rate of new cases per 100k population. Data taken from coronavirus.data.gov.uk at 12:45 on 5/7/21.

1. Dundee City, 816.4
2. Midlothian, 686.8
3. Newcastle upon Tyne, 620.2
4. East Lothian, 594.8
5. City of Edinburgh, 587.5
6. South Tyneside, 530.5
7. Gateshead, 517.7
8. County Durham, 516.1
9. Renfrewshire, 511.4
10. Manchester, 508.1

(The *lowest* rate per 100k in the UK is Na h-Eileanan Siar, at 11.2. Of the bottom 10 areas, one is in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland (Armagh City), three in England (Norfolk, Suffolk and the Isle of Wight), and half (five) in Wales (Newport, Merthyr Tydfil, Ceredigion, Bridgend, and Neath Port Talbot).

Document 11

Note of meeting of 6 July 2021

PS/First Minister

1. This note, for information, records key points and actions from a further update call this morning for the First Minister with senior clinicians and lead officials. I attach for information the short set of slides we provided ahead of the call.
2. The following were the key points from the discussion.
 - a. We noted that this morning's reported data continue to show no new shocks and a downward trend, probably now showing the influence of school closures; but that it will be important to see the trend in the data for the rest of this week before beginning to draw conclusions.
 - b. Meantime, officials will continue work towards a draft Cabinet paper, developing the consideration and options set out in the slide. In line with taking account of as much as possible of the coming days' data, we are scheduling the bulk of the drafting work over next weekend towards sharing a draft paper with Ministers on Monday (not Friday, as indicated in the slides). Key components will be discussed on Friday at a meeting of the Four Harms group of chief advisers and senior lead officials.
 - c. We noted that the UKG's announcements and publications of yesterday amount to an intention to remove nearly all restrictions while case numbers in England are forecast to rise significantly.
 - d. By contrast, the SG's Level 0 retains many restrictions the UKG proposes to remove from 19 July (one of the slides compares the two).
 - e. The First Minister indicated that she wishes a further update call on Friday (**action**: First Minister's office).
 - f. The First Minister is minded to offer a call to Scottish party leaders on Sunday or Monday, ahead of her statement to Parliament next week (**action**: Colin McAllister)
 - g. Finally, we provided a short update on the outbreak affecting Tesco's Livingston distribution centre. There is good liaison between the company, the local IMT, Food Standards Scotland and relevant portfolio officials. The latest update (since this morning's call) confirms that the overall situation has been assessed as stabilising, case numbers are not increasing significantly, and staff are beginning to return to work on the site. We are considering with FSS and other colleagues the issues raised for food supply and other aspects of resilience of large numbers of staff being asked to isolate as a result of the recent high numbers of cases.

K

Document 12

Note of meeting of 8 July 2021

PS/First Minister

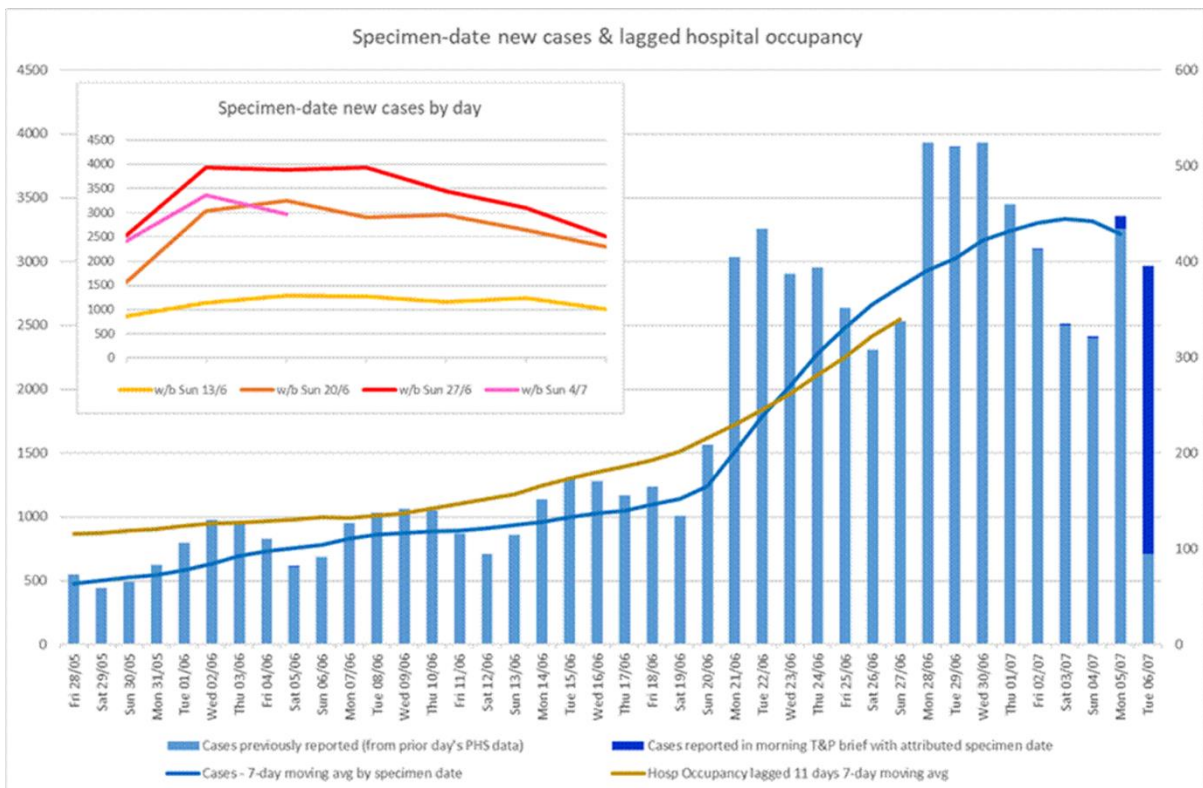
1. This note, for information, records key points and actions from this morning's discussion with the First Minister, focused in the main on the options for consideration ahead of Cabinet next week.
2. I have copied this note to Cabinet Secretaries and the Executive Team for their awareness, and have reattached the slides provided ahead of the discussion, setting out an agenda and key points, and referenced below. I should be grateful if officials would ensure that other colleagues with a need to know see this update, while also ensuring the material is handled with the care required to protect space for Cabinet's collective consideration next week.
2. We noted signs of the recent sharp increases in case numbers beginning to level off and turn down (slide 3), and that today's reported total of new cases - at 2,802, down about a thousand on the previous day and down about 1,600 on Thursday last week - was likely to distribute to specimen dates in a way that continues this trend. I have included below an updated version of the chart at slide 3, confirming this. Note that the data for Tuesday 6 July are not yet complete, but are likely to settle at a total significantly below the same day last week.
3. We noted also updated projections for infections, hospital occupancy and ICU occupancy (slides 4-5). These will be important inputs to Cabinet's consideration next week, by which time we will have some further actual data also.
4. In relation to decisions for 19 July and the material set out on slide 6, the First Minister noted five possible options:
 - a. move to Level 0 on 19/7 as indicated;
 - b. move to Level 0 on 19/7 but with some specific modifications to restrictions;
 - c. consolidate to Level 1 on 19/7 for areas not already at Level 0;
 - d. no changes of levels on 19/7, i.e. pause; or
 - e. apply higher levels.
5. On current data and updated projections, the First Minister anticipates the need to work up option b. She asked that we consider specifically options based on the following, and the Four Harms impacts of these including for specific settings and activities:
 - a. continuing to emphasise the need to work from home wherever possible;
 - b. rephrasing planned changes to physical distancing, for example by moving to 1 metre indoors and outdoors from 19 July;
 - c. emphasising the importance of ventilation for indoor settings.
6. [Redacted Section 36(1)][Redacted Section 26(a)] [Redacted Section 36(1)][Redacted Section 26(a)] [Redacted Section 36(1)]
7. Among other elements of the COVID response (slide 7), the First Minister noted the importance of considering the impacts of self-isolation on staff in healthcare settings, other essential services including education, and for travellers. In response to questions at her later

media briefing, the First Minister indicated that she hoped to have more to say on this in her statement next week (action: Covid Co-ordination Directorate).

8. She noted the importance of timely advice to Ministers on pressures facing hospitals, and we confirmed that Health colleagues have already reemphasised that point to NHS Boards (action: John Burns).
8. In relation to the forward look set out at slide 8, the First Minister intends to convene a further discussion on Monday, with the DFM and others, to take stock of cases and hospital pressures ahead of Cabinet and to consider the draft Cabinet paper (action: First Minister's office). I confirmed that we shall of course continue to monitor the data between now and then, and provide further updates as necessary (action: COVID Co-ordination Directorate).
9. I invite you and copy recipients to note this update.

K

The chart below is updated with data reported to today, **8 July**. We have also adjusted the lag applied to hospital data to better reflect the gap between changes in numbers of cases and in hospital occupancy, by assuming 7 days between infection and hospitalisation, and an average length of stay of 4 days. The actual gaps of course vary from case to case, and the overall position is also influenced by the age mix of those admitted to hospital following positive tests for COVID, with younger age-groups tending to experience less severe disease and thus stay shorter periods in hospital. There are of course many other pressures on hospitals and wider healthcare systems alongside COVID patients.



Document 13

Note of meeting of 12 July 2021

PS/FM –

Thank you for giving us this ahead of the "Gold" meeting earlier. I'm replying to respond to FM's note and to identify, following the meeting, the positions and remaining decisions we will reflect in finalising material for Cabinet.

On scene setting, we will provide some points and metrics to support the messages in FM's note, for [Redacted Section 38(1)(b)] to draw on as needed.

The message of "continued care and caution" and gradual easing is very much in line with what the options analysis tells us, and we will reflect that in the Cabinet paper.

We will also reflect the NIMT's advice, including the point the CMO relayed on the need for clear central guidance to local authorities on events and other issues.

The Cabinet paper will confirm that cases are on a downward path, will cover the WHO criteria, and will confirm that vaccination remains on track. It will be as well to be cautious about the progress we are seeing in the daily testing data, since we know that not all infections are confirmed by testing; there are likely to be fewer tests happening in younger age-groups, now that schools are closed; and we continue to monitor both the ONS survey data and waste-water sampling to help get as full a picture as possible of the course of the epidemic.

On the measures from 19 July, FM considered in our discussion how best to effect gradual easing, including Option C of those set out in the material circulated ahead of the "Gold" discussion (a move to Level 1). Her preference (subject to the Cabinet discussion) is for Option B: moving to Level 0 but with specific modifications or the holding back of some easings (discussed below).

On working from home, and consistent with the theme of gradual easing rather than braking or going into reverse, her view was that we should be aiming to prevent further acceleration of a return to workplaces. We will work with Ms Forbes' portfolio officials to find the best tone for that message. This will be a matter of guidance and dialogue, not statutory regulation.

On physical distancing, we will set out options in the Cabinet paper as clearly as possible, including :

- moving as planned to 1m generally in indoor public places, recognising that delaying that move might be counterproductive if it resulted in widespread lack of adherence
- but emphasising the need for continued care, cleaning, ventilation and other mitigations
- outdoors, we identified the option of retaining the "15 from 15" rule currently part of Level 0 (which FM indicated in a previous statement that we hoped to remove)
- we could remove the requirement for physical distancing *within* 15/15 groups in public outdoor places, so that groups meeting in parks would be subject to the same rule as those meeting in private gardens
- that would mean retaining the requirement for physical distancing *between* informal groups in outdoor public places
- we would indicate the intention to keep this under review, as part of encouraging gradual change.

We will ensure that the Cabinet paper reflects the points Ms Forbes made on the implications of changes to the proposed rules on physical distancing, including outdoors, for the weddings and events sectors.

On hospitality, we discussed the need to find the best way of ensuring gradual change, recognising that the sector will continue to push for complete easing. FM's note asks about 11.30 pm as a closing for indoor hospitality in Level 0. We will work with Ms Forbes' officials to identify a closing time option which offers some easing from Level 1 but a more gradual approach than returning straight to local licensing rules. We will also pick up Mr Yousaf's request that we ensure there is a clear and consistent message to local licensing authorities.

We noted the intention to keep Level 0 the same wherever it applies, reflecting the need for clarity and consistency across Scotland, and recognising that would mean some changes for areas already at Level 0.

On baseline mitigations, and reflecting both the FM's and the DFM's points, we will set out in the Cabinet paper and for FM's statement what Ministers are asking people to continue to do, including on face-coverings, distancing (as above), hygiene and ventilation. This material will reflect slide 9 of those circulated earlier (but without a legal requirement to engage with Test & Protect, since that would be a new measure).

On isolation / quarantine, we will include in the Cabinet paper consideration of the role of PCR testing in exempt double-vaccinated people from self-isolation if identified as contacts.

We will include in the Cabinet paper advice covering the FM's two points on international travel: on the timing of removing the requirement to self-isolate on arrival from Amber-list countries, and on how people would prove their vaccination status.

Reflecting Mr Yousaf's point, we will note in the Cabinet paper the need to continue to monitor incidence in other parts of the Common Travel Area and consider CTA travel restrictions when necessary.

On self-isolation of under 18s and on vaccination of 12-17 year olds, we will reflect FM's comments in the draft of her statement.

Otherwise on self-isolation, the Cabinet paper will reflect the material on slide 9 of those circulated earlier.

We will set out in an annex to the Cabinet paper clear recommendations on the "Other changes to Level 0" developed from those on slide 8 of the material circulated earlier, and any other points requiring decisions (for example, in relation to licensing hours for airside hospitality at airports, as a consequence of not moving to local licensing hours in Level 0).

We will ensure FM has a copy of the letter from carers referred to by Mr Yousaf.

Finally, on radical options on ventilation and on contingency planning on hospital capacity, we will provide advice separately (but not ahead of Cabinet).

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 14

Note of meeting of 28 July 2021

(apologies. Resending only to correct a formatting problem.)

PS/FM

Cc: Gold participants

There follows below a short note of yesterday's Gold Command meeting, for colleagues. Actions are being commissioned from relevant colleagues.

Alan

—
Alan Johnston | Deputy Director, Covid Co-ordination (Governance and Decision-making) | The Scottish Government

GOLD COMMAND MEETING, 29 July

- First Minister, while reasonably encouraged by the situation, felt continued care was needed. It was appropriate to aim to move beyond Level 0 from 9 August – the question was, how far. It did not seem wise to lift all restrictions now. Rather, the next step should be somewhere around the 'small step' and 'big step' options set out in the slide-pack table. It was a matter of, which restrictions did we want to keep.
- Subject to further advice, the First Minister's broad inclination would be to keep rules on Face coverings as they are; to lift physical distancing outdoors, but perhaps keep it indoors for some settings; with the consequences for hospitality and office return thus flowing from that. She would get into the specifics of that in the coming days.
- Further advice would be provided this week on the 'step' options and baseline measures
- In terms of what we might learn from current trends, the First Minister was interested in any emerging impacts of the (more significant) easings which had taken place in England from 19 July. That might be the more instructive picture for our own decisions around 9 August.
- The CMO reported that he would be following up discussions on this with his English counterpart. The COVID(O) meeting had focussed on the economic benefits of opening up to international visitors.
- On this, the FM noted that limiting the exemption for double-vaccinated UK residents returning to the UK to those who had been vaccinated in the UK was beginning to seem overly restrictive. This exemption should perhaps be extended to UK residents who had received recognised and approved vaccines, wherever that had taken place
- Ken Thomson noted that, in terms of legislative terms, going beyond Level 0 but still retaining some Regulations was achievable, but a more complicated process – so it was helpful to have the steer at this point that this was a potential outcome. This process should also sweep up any similar issues, like the one just discussed.
- Ken also highlighted two further points: that advice would need to capture the position and narrative on the previously stated 'Gateway condition' related to vaccination, not least for audit purposes; and that there remained a threat of legal challenge from night-clubs, which

would have to be carefully considered as part of this process. Further advice would be provided on these points

- In relation to these points, the First Minister identified a potential risk that, if vaccine certification were made a condition of visiting a night-club in England but not in Scotland, we might see substantial travel across the Border to take advantage of that difference. She stressed that she did not want entirely to rule out vaccine certification, not least because of this risk. She highlighted the need to make progress on a digital solution, in case it was needed to deal with such a scenario.
- First Minister also raised the issue of the JCVI position on 12-17 year-olds. Recognising the sensitivity of the issue, she asked if work could be undertaken rapidly to explore how appropriate advice could be provided as a basis for decision-making on such issues distinct from the JCVI process. The position in Ireland and Germany – informed parental consent – was seen as a potential alternative approach to the issue, subject to appropriate advice. CMO also undertook to discuss this further with his counterpart in Ireland.
- First Minister agreed that as well as a further ‘Gold’ meeting on Friday as planned, further meetings should be arranged for Monday 2 August, along similar lines to Monday 12 July – that is, a smaller Gold in the morning; a briefing for party leaders around lunchtime; and a fuller ‘Gold’ involving other Cabinet Secretaries in the afternoon.
- First Minister confirmed that she would be responding to Shirley Rogers’s submission on a Scottish dimension to a public inquiry. Her initial view was that a ‘stand-alone’ Scottish element to the UK arrangements would be required – though how wide-ranging this should be would need to be considered further. The Deputy First Minister highlighted the need to demonstrate progress on this issue as part of the ‘first 100 days ‘ (that is, by 26 August).

Document 15

Note of meeting of 30 July 2021

PS/First Minister –

1. This note confirms the basis on which officials are taking forward drafting of a paper for Cabinet on 3 August on the Scottish Government's COVID response. It serves to record discussion at the "Gold" meeting the FM held earlier today with the DFM, the Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care, and the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism & Enterprise, supported by officials and advisers.
2. It also records the First Minister's steers in response to advice from [Redacted Section 38(1)(b)] yesterday afternoon. For ease of reference, I have reattached both [Redacted Section 38(1)(b)] email and a slightly updated version of the "Gold" slides. The substance of this note follows the order of the slides.
3. This note is for information, and does not pre-empt the paper for nor decisions to be taken at and following Cabinet. If the First Minister has further steers on the drafting of the paper, we should of course be glad to have them. As we discussed, officials and clinical advisers will take stock with the First Minister on Monday ahead of a planned call with party leaders; and you will co-ordinate arrangements for a further "Gold" meeting with Cabinet Secretaries before the paper for Cabinet is finalised.
4. I have copied this note more widely as an end-of-the-week update for Cabinet Secretaries, the [Redacted Section 30(c)], the Executive Team and others.

New cases

5. As the chart in slide 3 shows, cases in Scotland continue to fall, perhaps a little more slowly, though it is too early to call that a change in the trend. The 7-day average is now close to the level it was at before the "spike" starting on Monday 21 June, six weeks ago. Hospital occupancy is also trending down, though more slowly than cases. Deaths (not covered in the slides) remain at low levels compared both to earlier peaks and to all-cause mortality. These data are covered in more detail in the "State of the Epidemic" material, circulated separately.
6. The First Minister asked us on Wednesday to monitor the position in England (slide 4). This is harder to read at present. Today's data for England, now published, show that the reported total, at 26,241 (England only) is down by 1,283 (4.7%) on the previous day, after two days of rises; but, again, it is too early to call that a change in the trend, especially given the "noise" in reported-date data. Hospital admissions and deaths in England are also down on the previous day, though hospital occupancy is slightly up. These data are available for all Four Nations at the UK dashboard, <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk>.
7. The First Minister noted that England may be now where Scotland was a couple of weeks ago. This point is well explored in a [Twitter thread](#) by the FT's John Burn-Murdoch, who reaches the same conclusion.

Cabinet paper, options and considerations

8. Slide 5 outlines the structure and key issues for the Cabinet paper. In discussion, we noted that the evidence shows scope for easings, with the assessment criteria and the Gateway Condition met, though there are significant continuing pressure on the NHS, both COVID and non-COVID. The central recommendation of the Cabinet paper is therefore likely to be that Scotland should move beyond Level 0, as earlier indicated, on 9 August.
9. The First Minister confirmed she was content for the paper to be drafted on that basis. She continues to reflect on the best way to make the move beyond Level 0. Her current view is that it is likely to be preferable to do so with some sensible precautions. As set out on slide 6, these are likely to include both "baseline measures," likely to be in place for the foreseeable future, and the temporary retention of some regulatory measures for a period beyond 9 August, with a review of the latter within 3 weeks (by Monday 30 August).
10. In terms of the options set out in [Redacted Section 38(1)(b)] advice (paragraphs 8 ff):
 - a. the First Minister wants the Cabinet paper to consider retaining indoor physical distancing in public places for a period beyond 9 August, and for that consideration to include clinical advice. The CMO, supported by Jason Leitch, noted his view that indoor physical distancing remains an important evidence-based mitigation of transmission risk. The Cabinet paper will incorporate that advice, and will develop the option of requiring 1m physical distancing between (but not within) groups of 15 in indoor public places, as set out in the earlier advice.
 - b. The First Minister is content for the paper to be drafted on the basis that restrictions on outdoor physical distancing will be removed, but wishes it to consider the retention for a period of caps on numbers attending outdoor festivals and events, with the ability to apply for exemptions or higher limits.
 - c. The paper will also consider retaining, for a period, the requirement for table service and collection of customer details in hospitality venues and similar settings.
 - d. Consistent with the previous point, the paper will propose that the requirement for nightclubs to remain closed will be lifted, as earlier indicated, but they would require to operate consistently with measures in place in hospitality venues – with 1 metre physical distancing between groups of up to 15, and requirements for table service and the collection of customer details.
 - e. The paper will consider continuing to encourage working from home where possible.
 - f. As discussed with Ministers separately and recorded elsewhere, officials will develop a COVID certification scheme for possible application from September, including if necessary to manage the risk of displacement of attendance at nightclubs and similar venues which might arise if venues in England were subject to certification while those in Scotland were not.
 - g. The requirement to wear face coverings in indoor public settings and at outdoor events, when not seated, should also be retained. This is likely to become part of the baseline measures (see below), rather than a shorter-term retained measure.
11. The Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism & Enterprise noted that engagement with business organisations earlier today had been broadly constructive, with support for sensible precautions as part of the move beyond Level 0, if that avoided a return to higher levels of restriction. Retention of requirements for physical distancing indoors and associated measures such as table service would impact on the hospitality, events, and related sectors, who could be expected to resist them. The focus of continuing engagement would be to help businesses see this as a step towards the removal of remaining restrictions; an approach supported by the Deputy First Minister.

12. [Redacted Section 36(1)][Redacted Section 26(a)] [Redacted Section 36(1)][Redacted Section 26(a)].
13. The Cabinet paper will also set out the baseline measures which are likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future while they remain necessary, proportionate and justified means of protecting public health in Scotland. These will reflect the components of the COVID response set out in the latest iteration of the *Strategic Framework*, and will include:
 - a. vaccination, including preparations for extensions to the programme, for example booster campaigns;
 - b. testing and contact tracing, but (as the First Minister confirmed in discussion) the requirement for self-isolation for double-vaccinated contacts will be removed from 9 August;
 - c. the use of face-coverings in certain settings (as noted above);
 - d. international travel restrictions as they continue to apply; but domestic (CTA) restrictions will be removed;
 - e. support for adherence to measures and behaviours which avoid and mitigate risk; and
 - f. care and support to mitigate the harms of the crisis.
14. COVID certification may be added to this list at a later point, as also noted above. The Cabinet paper will set out which measures will be maintained in regulations, and which through guidance and advice. All other restrictions currently in regulations will be removed.
15. The First Minister confirmed she was content with the approach to regulations set out at paragraph 20 (a) of the earlier advice: revoking the existing local levels regulations and introducing new regulations for retained measures. It would of course be possible to reintroduce the levels system at a later date were that to be necessary, justified and proportionate, and subject to Parliamentary approval.
16. The Cabinet paper will set out an approach to financial support for businesses based on a set of principles being developed by Economy Ministers with officials, and affordable within existing, limited, provision.
17. It will also include a summary of the position reached in preparation for the return of schools, colleges and universities later in the year; and updates on a number of other issues, including ventilation, continuing vaccination and preparation for a public inquiry or inquiries.

Forward look / next steps

18. As noted above and in slide 7, you are arranging a stocktake for the First Minister with officials and clinical advisers on Monday ahead of a call with opposition party leaders. Subject to diary practicalities, we also aim to arrange a further “Gold” meeting on Monday for all Cabinet Secretaries. We hope to be able to circulate a draft of the Cabinet paper ahead of that meeting, subject to timings and to progress with the drafting work over the weekend. Officials and advisers are also available for a discussion over the weekend, for example should there be any notable changes in the case data.

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 16

Note of meeting of 26 August 2021

Permanent Secretary,

As requested, please find attached a read out of the Gold meeting held this afternoon by First Minister in response to the rise in case numbers over the last 7 days.

Summary

- First Minister is not minded to introduce new restrictions but has requested a review of what can be done to strengthen and enforce what is already in place, and improve the marketing message to reinforce this. Officials are now working on this.
- DFM has taken an action to work with Cabinet Secretaries to confirm that they are following up on FM's strong request at Cabinet that they engage with their sectors to increase compliance. He meets with them tomorrow morning at 09.45, attendance compulsory, with Dominic Munro and Penelope Cooper the only officials present.
- Next week's cabinet paper will focus on what action can be taken short of introducing restrictions to stem the tide of rising case numbers.

To note, although the specific issue of the return of SG employees to work in the office was not discussed, FM's request that the message on baseline measures be strengthened included the requirement to work from home. DFM also questioned why the floor arrows had been removed from SAH, a matter he has subsequently picked up with Lesley Fraser (in copy).

More on this may come out of DFM's meeting tomorrow, in which case I will keep you and Lesley informed.

Kind regards,

[Redacted Section 26(a)]

Penelope Cooper | Director, Covid Co-ordination | The Scottish Government

Document 16

Notes from Gold Command Teams meeting held on 26 August at 15.30 (sent as an attachment with the above)

Summary

- First Minister is not minded to introduce new restrictions but has requested a review of what can be done to strengthen and enforce what is already in place, and improve the marketing message to reinforce this. Officials are now working on this.
- DFM has taken an action to work with Cabinet Secretaries to confirm that they are following up on FM's strong request at Cabinet that they engage with their sectors to increase compliance. He meets with them tomorrow morning at 09.45, attendance compulsory, with Dominic Munro and Penelope Cooper the only officials present.
- Next week's cabinet paper will focus on what action can be taken short of introducing restrictions to stem the tide of rising case numbers.

Meeting detail

FM opened the meeting by noting the challenge of the increasing case numbers and hospital admissions without the public backing for further restrictions. Whilst she doesn't rule out the use of restrictions she felt it will be difficult to get buy in, and wouldn't start with these before exploring other options.

CMO gave a review of the current situation. He explained that although there has been a big increase in testing, which would lead to finding more positive cases, the fact that the proportion of asymptomatic cases is constant suggests a real increase in prevalence. Glasgow and Lanarkshire are rising, but D&G have started to fall which may be a sign of some change.

He reported back from the morning's NIMT meeting that the highest number of cases is under 40 (70%), and there is no particular incident or locus for transmission as there is now so much mixing in the general population. However, life events, nightclubs and hospitality account for roughly 5% each.

Based on the conversion rate of cases to hospital admissions he would expect the 4925 cases today to convert to 160-167 hospital admissions.

FM questioned what the other half of the equation in the form of vaccination or acquired immunity added as the pool of those without antibodies must be falling.

CMO agreed it was reducing, but cited Lanarkshire where the unvaccinated over 60s number 13000. He explained that the Delta variant had reduced the vaccine effect on transmission, and even vaccinated people testing positive carried a high viral load and spread the disease.

FM felt this called into question the option of vaccine certification.

CMO agreed that this is not a public health measure, but an economic one as it allows venues to continue to trade.

Jason Leitch (JL) agreed and suggested LFT tests for access for all might be better. He explained the position of Scotland in relation to the rest of the UK.

FM explained she was looking to find out if Scotland's position was odd in relation to the rest of the world, and were we doing something wrong here to cause the case rise.

CMO offered that Israel has similar issues, although there was some difference between his numbers and those of the FM.

JL confirmed that Scotland is neither special, nor wrong, but has experienced Delta at a different moment.

FM explained that she wanted to avoid doing something just to be seen to be doing something, and she was looking for something that could have meaningful impact on transmission voluntarily without reimposing restrictions. She saw a need to turn the dial up on the unvaccinated pool and think about what we are actually going to do.

DFM agreed that the message needs to get to people that they need further vigilance, to do regular LFT tests and increase compliance. He was unsure that the threat of reimposing restrictions carries enough weight.

FM was clear she was looking to get the sectors such as supermarkets to take hard actions. She expressed her annoyance that she had read in the newspapers that 'someone close to SG planning' had leaked that the government is planning a circuit breaker. This creates a public backlash which makes it harder if we do need to bring restrictions back, and she would like officials to understand this.

Dominic Munro (DM) explained that there were 2 kinds of options to consider – those we can do immediately and those that created additional harm elsewhere that needed to go to Cabinet. He requested a steer on whether we should be preparing to introduce restrictions next week.

FM was clear that promoting vaccination is essential, although the impact is not immediate. The day to day marketing at all levels needs to be thought through to increase compliance without additional restrictions. She questioned whether Cabinet members had followed up on her request at Cabinet that they engage with their sectors to improve compliance. She requested a systemic run through of the available measures to develop actual, concrete actions that could be followed through. She was concerned that at the last business engagement the business leaders wouldn't even do a joint communication.

DFM questioned if she was clear we weren't returning to restrictions.

FM was unable to rule this out.

DFM was clear that this wasn't to happen in the short term, next week, and that baseline measures need to be reviewed to see that they are being communicated and enforced if possible. He was aware that Scotrail are not enforcing face coverings.

FM felt it was worse than that as Lothian buses had tweeted that they weren't enforcing face coverings as the Government don't expect them to.

DFM agreed that if restrictions are not being reimposed we need to turn up the dial where we can around face coverings, physical distancing, working from home. He noted, as an example that he had been surprised by the removal of the floor arrows in SAH.

FM explained that had happened 2 weeks ago, and she was not consulted.

DFM agreed that there was a need to marshal resource to do the maximum that can be done on communications and enforcement where we can of guidance, and find ways to flex arrangements around what is possible. Only then will we be able to judge if stronger measures are required.

FM requested that a detailed package of this sort be marshalled in the next 24-48 hours. She would like businesses to be crystal clear that the cost of not cooperating is that we end up facing more restrictions.

DFM noted we can encourage more hybrid working, and give the message correlating the proportion of cases to hospital beds, and how quickly hospitals will be overwhelmed.

FM was clear that we need to do more on vaccination, to get some fresh thinking about how to reach the unvaccinated population. She expressed her frustration that the JCVI had still not agreed to allow vaccination of 12-16 year olds, although this may happen in time for the return of schools in England.

CSH explained that he had spoken today about this and there may be a decision from the JCVI next week. He added that he would work up options around certification and large events to encourage vaccination uptake.

FM thought that was already happening.

CSH explained that he would now be able to have advice about what a scheme would look like.

FM agreed with this, and requested that the vaccination programme be ready to deliver vaccines to 12-16 year olds as soon as this is approved.

CSH confirmed this is the case.

DM summarised the next steps as marshalling activities and options as a key component for the cabinet paper this week. He confirmed that FM's statement is on Wednesday next week.

DFM confirmed that alongside the core elements of the cabinet paper, the key element is what to do short of restrictions to stem the increase in cases.

FM thanked everyone and closed the meeting.

Penelope Cooper
Director Covid Coordination

Document 17

Note of action points of meeting of 28 November 2021

All - this is to quickly record action points from the Gold meeting this evening.

- On testing, First Minister wants to be clear in her statement tomorrow about how and if possible where surge testing will be deployed. This will require input from the local IMT, to that timescale.
- First Minister would like work (including 4 Harms work) to proceed on possible extension of protective measures. (Ken Thomson undertook to provide advice on further measures by close tomorrow.) Until decisions were made on that, existing mitigations should be stressed, including changing language on social distancing and Working from Home.
- A meeting with business organisations should be convened tomorrow, as well as engagement with Local Government
- The First Minister would like to write jointly with Mark Drakeford tomorrow - on COBRA; on PCR use on day 8; and on financial assistance, if required. Penelope Cooper advised that work was well in hand, co-ordinating with Wales, and that a draft would be provided this evening. (Note – draft now with Colin McAllister.)
- Work should also be done on next steps for travel restrictions
- A letter will be provided to enable FM (with CMO) to write to Parliament tomorrow, advising them of tomorrow's statement. FM would then give the statement to Parliament as normal on Tuesday.
- KT will look for a time for further discussion tomorrow, perhaps in the afternoon; and will provide an update in the course of the day.

Alan

Alan Johnston | Deputy Director, Covid Co-ordination (Governance and Decision-making) | The Scottish Government

Document 18

Note of action points of meeting of 5 December 2021

Thank you to those who were able to take part in the Gold meeting this afternoon. This is to quickly record the key actions coming from the meeting (and their implications for the draft Cabinet paper):

- Given its primary importance at the stage of the new variant, First Minister would like advice on how to optimise the operation of contact tracing. Are more resources required? It would also be helpful if material for the draft Cabinet paper (including assessment of any options Cabinet should consider) could be checked and revised and developed as necessary, in light of this call. **(Action – Christine McLaughlin)**
- Material inviting Cabinet to consider options on the extension of certification should also be provided for the draft Cabinet paper. **(Action – Richard Foggo, Marion McCormick.)**
- The draft Cabinet paper material on possible contingency measures – and further material on such measures – should reflect the need to be able to consider measures on an individual basis, rather than being constrained to a ‘bundled’ approach. These should be presented as different stages of gradation of justifiable measures, and should allow flexibility in responding to the developing situation with the new variant. The draft Cabinet paper should also illustrate the implications of the potential course of the epidemic on the timing of decision-making, and address the issue that in some circumstances it may be proportionate to adopt a preventative approach. **(Action – Ken Thomson, Alan Johnston.)**
- A key message in Tuesday’s statement and wider communications should be that this is a serious, developing situation, and that there is a need to do things now which will help us withstand what is coming our way. People needed to be encouraged, all levels, to apply the existing requirements and guidance fully **(Action – Comms)**

Please let me know if any queries, or if anything should be added.

Alan

—
Alan Johnston | Deputy Director, Covid Co-ordination (Governance and Decision-making) | The Scottish Government

Document 19

Note of meeting of 12 December 2021

PS/FM –

1. This note provides, for a wider distribution, an update on and confirmation of actions in hand following today's developments, as discussed at this afternoon's "Gold" meeting.

Summary of developments

2. The First Minister took part in a "Four Nations" call at 13:00 today. Ministers on the call noted that the Omicron position across the UK continues to develop in line with forecasts of Omicron's rise to dominance and exponential growth, and continues to give cause for serious concern. Discussion then focused on accelerating vaccination. Following a subsequent UK Cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister has [announced this evening](#) the UKG's intentions for England. The devolved administrations are accelerating their programmes similarly, including through an earlier [announcement from the SG](#) on opening the Scottish booster programme to those aged 30-39 from Monday.
3. While there was Four Nations agreement that accelerating vaccination is necessary, both the First Minister and the First Minister of Wales expressed concern that it will not be sufficient. Wales and Northern Ireland supported the First Minister's point that it is unacceptable for the devolved administrations to be unable to access financial support for the measures they judge necessary to protect public health, and instead to have to await triggering of Barnett consequentialia if / when UKG makes decisions for England.
4. There is likely to be a another COBR call tomorrow, Monday 13 December, at which there is likely to be further consideration of the Four Nations' Omicron responses.

Actions

5. The "Gold" group of Ministers (FM, DFM, Mr Yousaf and Ms Forbes) met at 16:00 with support from chief advisers and senior lead officials, to take stock of developments and consider next actions. The actions from that discussion are set out below this note.
6. In short, there will be SG communications tonight and tomorrow morning in relation to accelerating vaccination; Cabinet will meet as planned on Tuesday morning; and the First Minister will make a statement to Parliament later on Tuesday, also as planned.
7. A paper for Cabinet on Tuesday 14 December will provide further updates and seek decisions on additional elements of the SG's Omicron response. Subject to further development, these are likely to focus on:
 - a. accelerating the vaccination programme to achieve a run-rate of 70k/day;
 - b. giving regulatory force to the current guidance on working from home;
 - c. reintroducing measures to reduce transmission in retail premises, for example by controlling numbers to avoid crowding, maintaining physical distancing, promoting face-coverings and hand hygiene;
 - d. giving advice on reducing risk in gatherings of friends and family: for example, limiting gathers to three households, use of LFDs, etc; and

- e. confirming arrangements for protecting people in institutional settings while ensuring visits can be safely maintained.
8. The paper is also likely to set out proposals to maintain the certification scheme in its present form meantime, and to confirm arrangements for self-isolation including the approach to reducing impact on critical services. The paper will not at this stage propose closure of any sectors or settings, in the absence of agreement from the UK Government for access to financial and economic support; nor additional measures for example in hospitality which would exacerbate harm 4 impacts, beyond necessary public health advice; nor proposals for reintroducing physical distancing in home settings, where the emphasis will be on testing before meeting. The position on these matters remains, however, under daily review.
9. A draft of the Cabinet paper (including proposed measures) will be circulated tomorrow morning, to support further refinement of the proposed measures over the course of the day.
10. The First Minister supported Ms Forbes' request that all portfolios support cross-government work to support the hospitality sector and its suppliers, given the impact on that sector of recent developments. This is likely to involve securing resources for financial support (work led by Finance colleagues) and practical support including in finding alternative uses for perishable stock (work led by Reuben Aitken and David McPhee in DG Economy).
11. Work is also under way across SG and with delivery partners to mobilise teams and resources:
 - a. to support acceleration of the vaccination programme;
 - b. to strengthen resilience in key sectors and services against the impacts of an Omicron wave of infections;
 - c. to ensure resilience in SG teams leading and co-ordinating this work; and
 - d. where necessary in support of the above, to reprioritising resources from other activities.

Conclusion

12. I invite you to note this update.

K

Actions from "Gold", 16:00, 12/12/2021

1. **Action:** confirm / tweet out portal openings for boosters, asap: Vaccine team
2. **Action:** Comms lines for 20:01 (responding to PM's pre-record): CMcA with Comms and FMO
3. **Info:** no media briefing Monday; statement to Parliament Tuesday, PS/MfPB aware
4. **Action:** confirm bids / clips on Monday's COVID data, FM and/or clinicians: Andy Denholm with Comms and FMO
5. **Action:** seek TV facility for Tuesday evening: CMcA with Comms and FMO
6. **Action:** monitor SGTF and Omicron-related data, Scotland, rUK and South Africa and brief Ministers: CMO / [Redacted Section 26(a)]
7. **Action:** confirm actions needed to get run-rate to 70k/day: Vaccine team

8. **Action:** FM programme for Monday: postpone Aberdeen, create touchpoints with COVID Co-ordination team
9. **Info:** Cabinet: confirmed, will meet Tuesday; no Monday meeting
10. **Action:** paper for Cabinet: COVID Co-ordination; scope tbc asap, responding to FM's points earlier. Parameters: within existing budgets; holding existing COVID certification scheme in place; no PD in homes; no mandatory closures. Specifics: increasing the gravity of advice; regulatory option on WFH; action on crowding / PD in retail; guidance on number of households for meetings etc.; confirmation of action irt institutional settings including hospital and care-home settings. Alan Johnston to co-ordinate
11. **Action:** Cross-govt support for Economy work to support & work with hospitality sector, including financial support and creative use of surplus stock: Reuben Aitken, David McPhee
12. **Awareness:** DFM speaking to Greens 7 pm Sunday
13. **Action:** confirm timing and agenda for COBR meeting proposed for Monday: Penelope Cooper
14. **Action:** (for later) FMO to confirm possible FM / PO discussion
15. **Action:** further update and confirmation of actions in hand by close Sunday: KT

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 20

Note of meeting of 19 December 2021

PS/FM –

This note captures actions from tonight's call with the Ministerial Group on COVID.

1. Provide an assessment of the practicality, timescale, costs and benefits of re-establishing the NHS Louisa Jordan facility (John Burns)
2. Set out a package of Test & Protect changes designed for coherence and communicability, including to inform FM's statement to Parliament on 21 December (Christine McLaughlin)
3. Set out issues in relation to general vaccination for 5-11s, to support engagement with stakeholders (Stephen Gallagher)
4. Confirm plans across all Four Nations or vaccination on 25 and 26 December (Stephen Gallagher)
5. Continue to report on progress against vaccination targets and management of availability and demand (Stephen Gallagher)
6. Confirm the availability of new spend from the further £220m offered by the Chief Secretary in COBR (Jackie McAllister)
7. Set out for FM options for reprioritisation to release additional funds from within SG programmes (Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Economy, CFO)
8. Set out for FM and DFM by Monday afternoon options for applying funding thus available to support further measures to suppress transmission, drawing on those set out in [Redacted Section 38(1)(b)] advice, adding options on large events, maintaining the advisory approach to in-home socialising and giving options for strengthening that guidance from after Christmas ([Redacted Section 38(1)(b)])
9. Set out in the Cabinet paper the full costs and requirements for a 4-week "circuit breaker", to make it clear that lack of agreement from the UKG is preventing Scottish Ministers considering that option, despite modelling showing that only stringent measures would suppress R to below 1 for a period should that be necessary, justified and proportionate (for example to complete the booster programme, assess the severity of Omicron, prepare an extended COVID certification scheme and delay the expected peak of hospital pressures) (Alan Johnston)
10. Include in the draft Cabinet Paper a commission for a further edition of the *Strategic Framework* early in 2022 (Alan Johnston)

K

Ken Thomson | Director General, Constitution & External Affairs, Scottish Government

Document 21

Note of meeting of 4 January 2022

Good afternoon

Further to the meeting with FM I noted a number of actions, please shout if I have missed anything

FM was looking for the following information urgently to include in her statement

- Request for further detail on false positive LFDs – this may be fully covered by Niamh note, which she hadn't read yet – Christine/Niamh
- A narrative to explain the changes in testing, focusing on why it's the right thing to do at this stage of the pandemic rather than on testing capacity - Christine
- Details of who we are now saying should get a PCR test - Christine
- A paragraph on new covid care pathways in communities and at home – John

Other actions to be taken forward were

- A request for advice on whether the changes to testing should apply in care homes (she was keen that there should still be a PCR for admission for was more balanced to where a care home outbreak should be managed with PCR or LFD) – Caroline/Christine
- Comms to promote better reporting of LFDs – Christine/Niamh
- A meeting with LAs to discuss prioritisation of resources to social care – DFM taking forward
- An update on what LAs are doing in response to CO2 assessments – [Redacted Section 26(a)]/Andy
- A note to cover how LAs are planning to manage staff absences in education settings – [Redacted Section 26(a)]/Andy
- Further engagement with businesses to be clear that they need to do more (she mentioned a specific concern around large retail again) – Reuben/David

I will type up a short note of the meeting which I will circulate shortly, however I wanted to get actions out first.

Richard I appreciate you will have to turn a lot of this around for tomorrow so if you want to call me for a verbal read out before the note is circulated please do

I hope this is helpful

[Redacted Section 38(1)(b)]

[Redacted Section 38(1)(b)]

Deputy Director International and Domestic COVID Measures