

Item 10 addendum: Update on Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic – Response and Recovery Plan

Purpose

To provide an up-to-date report about Covid given the significance of the national developments since publication on 7 December 2021, with further information being provided verbally at the meeting if required.

Introduction

1. Omicron Covid-19 cases continue to [increase nationally](#). In a recent [statement to the House of Commons](#), the Health and Social Care Secretary noted that Omicron cases are no longer just linked to travel, but believed to be in community transmission given the estimated high number of cases believed to be in circulation by the UKHSA. It is expected that Omicron will become the dominant variant in the UK – replacing the Delta variant – in the coming days.
2. Significantly, on Sunday 12 December, the UK Covid Alert Level has increased from Level Three (virus in general circulation with a gradual relaxation of restrictions) to Level Four (transmission is high or rising exponentially). The decision was made by the UK Chief Medical Officers and NHS England National Medical Director following advice from the UKHSA.
3. Crucially, on Sunday 12 December, the government announced that it was speeding up the booster programme for vaccinations to enable all those eligible to be offered a jab by the end of the year, bringing the deadline forward by four weeks. A related late Executive Board paper on the Vaccination Programme is also being published and contains more details of the expectations and implications.
4. An overview of the Omicron variant is detailed in the [published Coronavirus report to Executive Board](#) at paragraph six. The Health and Social Care Secretary also noted latest analysis points to Omicron cases doubling around two and half to three days (based on latest data). For Delta, it is believed to be around seven days. This is a cause for significant concern, running the risk of putting even more pressure on the NHS and care services. Further information about Omicron is being established each day.
5. Since publication, the Government has [introduced several new restrictions](#) – also known as Plan B – in response to the rising cases of the Omicron variant. These are broken down into different areas outlined below, with the latest available details now provided as these are being released by government.

Face coverings

6. Wearing face coverings is now legally mandated in [indoor public settings](#), unless individuals are medically exempt. A vote on this in parliament is due to take place on 14 December. Public settings include:
 - On public transport (aeroplanes, trains, trams and buses), taxis and private hire vehicles;
 - in shops and supermarkets and shopping centres;
 - in secondary schools for year seven students and above – particularly indoors in communal areas;
 - places of worship, crematoria and in chapels;
 - in post offices, banks, building societies, credit unions, and wider financial services and providers;
 - estate & letting agents;
 - theatres and cinemas;
 - businesses providing personal care and beauty treatments (barbers, hair salons, tattoo and piercing studios, nail salons, massage centres);
 - pharmacies;

- premises providing veterinary services;
 - retail travel agents;
 - any car, van or HGV, during a professional driving lesson, a formal driving test, or during one of the practical tests for giving driving instruction;
 - community centres; and
 - in takeaway premises without space for consumption of food or drink on premises.
7. You do not have to wear a face mask in places where food or drink is consumed or where exercise is being undertaken. A dedicated page to face coverings & where to wear them [can be found here](#). Meeting outdoors, fresh air, and well-ventilated rooms & spaces will help blow away coronavirus particles.

Vaccinations and booster jabs

8. A reminder that the time between the second and third jab has been reduced from six months to three months. As of 12 December, the Prime Minister announced a new Government-set deadline of offering everyone a third booster vaccinations by the end of 2021. A related paper on vaccinations covers this in more detail.
9. The communications activity about vaccinations will be a combination of national campaigns and local tailored activity, continuing to reflect the importance of getting vaccinated, myth-bust any misinformation to allow residents to make an informed decision and promote vaccines across the city in a targeted way to demographic groups with lower uptake.

Vaccination passes in certain settings

10. It was announced that [NHS Covid vaccination passes](#) would be introduced in certain settings from 15 December, if approved by parliament. A vaccination certificate can be obtained in two ways: after two doses of the vaccine (although this will be kept under review) and having taken a negative rapid lateral flow test and registering the result on the [Government website](#).
11. These settings include all nightclubs and large venues that are unseated and indoors with a capacity over 500; unseated outdoor venues with a capacity over 4,000; and all venues with a capacity of over 10,000. A verbal update will be provided at Executive Board after the parliamentary vote has taken place.

Self-isolation

12. Self-isolation rules have slightly changed with the Omicron variant transmission. You must self-isolate immediately if you, or someone you live with, or if you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has a suspected or confirmed case of the Omicron variant. This is regardless of vaccination. More widely, people who are fully vaccinated and identified as a contact of someone with the virus – whether Omicron or not – should now take a rapid lateral flow test every day for seven days. This is also being voted on in the House of Commons on Tuesday 14 December and so guidance is still to be published. The [NHS website](#) has full guidance on testing.
13. Self-isolation period is for ten days after being contacted or testing positive – whichever comes first. The situation remains dynamic and current Government guidance should always be checked first.

<i>When should someone self-isolate</i>	<i>Self-isolation and vaccination</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you test positive. - If you have contracted the Omicron variant or have been identified as a close 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you live with or have been in contact with someone with Covid-19, you will not need to self-isolate after testing negative via a PCR test and are fully vaccinated (14 days

<p>contact of someone with the Omicron variant. Regardless of vaccination status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If anyone has one of the common three symptoms: a high temperature, a new continues cough, a change in taste or smell. - Someone you live with has symptoms or tested positive and you are not fully vaccinated. 	<p>have passed since your final dose of a coronavirus vaccine given by the NHS).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those under 18 years, six months old. - Those taking part or have taken part in a vaccine trial. - Those not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons
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Working from home

14. [A working from home order](#) has come into effect as of 13 December. Anyone who can work from home and do their job effectively should do so. In response, we have held additional Organisation Impact Covid-19 Silver Group to identify any implications on service delivery and wellbeing impacts to staff, with extensive communications to managers and staff.

Going forward

15. Locally, we will continue the focus on delivering vaccinations. The vaccine is the best line of defence we have against all variants, and the evidence we have so far indicates all vaccines are effective against the Omicron variant – especially after a third booster dose.
16. Going forward, the key measures – **Hands, Face, Space, Fresh air. Isolate, Test and Trace** – will be key in managing outbreaks driving down infection rates and protecting us all. Regular testing is also crucially important, particularly in the run up to Christmas. It is a sensible idea to get tested before and after seeing friends and loved ones, and our communications will also reflect this effort. Lateral flow tests are just as effective in detecting the new variant as others especially when it is most infectious. The late Executive Board paper on the Vaccination Programme also being published will contain more details of the expectations and implications.
17. Given the fast-moving pace of developments, officers will continue to share information with Members via email updates once received, including any national changes. We are making representations regionally and nationally about the local impact of restrictions and guidance, including around the Contain Outbreak Management Funding (COMF).
18. Given the ongoing impact of the pandemic, we will continue to progress the response and recovery plan through 2022, as we expect the Winter pressures to be demanding, service recovery to be an ongoing challenge (especially if there is an ongoing staffing impact from Omicron), and the potential for further booster jabs throughout the year.
19. Votes in the House of Commons on these new restrictions on the evening of Tuesday 14 December are detailed below. An update will be included to Executive Board on the outcomes of these votes and what it means locally:
- I. Covid passes to be legally mandated in certain settings, as outlined above.
 - II. Face coverings to be legally mandated in certain settings, as outlined above.
 - III. Allowing fully-vaccinated people who have been exposed to a positive Covid case (not Omicron) to avoid self-isolation if they take daily lateral flow tests, and continue to receive a negative result. This is also outlined above.
 - IV. Frontline NHS and social care staff to be fully vaccinated from April 2022.