

COVID-19 Recovery Committee

2nd Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Thursday, 13 January 2021

SPICe: issues paper

This note highlights some issues Members may wish to take account of when the Cabinet Secretary speaks to the committee.

A timeline of recent activity

Some of the most recent key announcements and activities are set out below:

7 January - The Scottish Government [recommended](#) a temporary deferral of fertility treatment for patients who are not fully vaccinated against COVID.

11 January: Statement from First Minister and three-week review, included the following:

- 11 January - Scottish Government announce large outdoor events [can resume without physical distancing or capacity limits](#) from Monday 17 January
- Event organisers will now have to check the vaccine certification of at least 50% of attendees, rather than the current 20%, or at least 1,000 people - whichever figure is higher.
- the definition of "fully vaccinated" for the purpose of vaccine passports will include having a booster if the second dose was more than four months ago.

Future developments: the FM said

- the government will also continue to consider whether the vaccine passport scheme should be extended to more venues.

- “The Cabinet will next review the data at our meeting a week today. I hope that that will allow us to lift the other protective measures—limits on indoor live events, table service in hospitality and distancing in indoor public places—from 24 January. However, I will confirm that in my statement next week”.

The FM also spoke about a **forthcoming strategic framework** which is

“intended to set out how we might adapt, in the medium to longer term, to living with the virus in a way that still mitigates the harm that it does but without the kind of restrictive measures that we are all tired of and that we know do harm in other ways.... As we prepare the revised framework in the days to come, we will consult across Parliament and with business organisations and other partners across society. Our aim is to publish the revised strategic framework within the next few weeks”

12 January - [Joint statement issued from the finance Ministers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland](#), calling on the Treasury to guarantee that money allocated to support COVID-19 responses will be provided in full

January - Over 10,00 people have now died in Scotland after testing positive for Coronavirus (10,038 up to 13 January according to PHS)

Possible issues to discuss

- The Cabinet Secretary’s current assessment of the state of the pandemic – **at what point can we consider the virus to be endemic?**
- The Scottish Government’s **most recent understanding and modelling of the Omicron variant**, for example on transmission, health outcomes, vaccine effectiveness, and prevalence within Scotland and **implications of this** on hospital admissions, ICU admissions and deaths. And how this compares to projections from previous modelling
- **Variant surveillance** – how will the integrity of surveillance for new variants is being maintained given that PCR tests will not always be required following a positive LFD?
- **Test availability** – are there enough LFDs to support the change in testing regime? Any further discussions with UK government on charging for Lateral Flow Tests?
- **NHS and wider workforce pressures** – Scottish Government’s assessment of current and forthcoming pressures on public services, due to Covid related absences, including health, police, fire and education. (see separate stats paper for figures on workforce absences)
- **Vaccine rollout** - progress, including in previously under vaccinated groups and areas; and what is future strategy for further boosters?

- **Ventilation** – progress in rollout of £25 million funding to deliver ventilation in businesses, and rollout of £10 million funding to schools (and “additional £5m of capital funding”; and SG assessment of quality of ventilation in different sectors in Scotland (eg education); and what is next.
- **Vaccine certification** – the government’s thinking on the scheme, and possible next steps, including a formal review and evaluation? (PHS data shows that as of midnight 08 January 2022 the NHS Covid Status App has been downloaded 2,372,616 times)
- The rollout of **financial support to businesses culture and major events** most severely affected by restrictions and advice (to hospitality/leisure; wedding sector supply chain; wholesalers affected by hospitality cancellations; tourism; culture; events; public transport; taxis, and sport).
- Balance of decision making on restrictions - for example costs and benefits of continued **restrictions on non-professional indoor contact sports** (eg indoor athletics, five-a-side, boxing, squash)
- The government’s assessment of the **behavioural response** of the Scottish public – for example in avoiding non-priority contact with others, mask wearing, testing and reporting results, isolating following a positive test, or working from home where possible
- Government thinking on the **forthcoming strategic framework**, as signalled by the FM – how will this differ from previous versions? Plans for consultation and evidence base?
- **Transparency** - SG has published huge amounts of information, often at speed. However, are there areas where it could improve?
 - committee previously [requested information](#) on the evidence base relating to the vaccine certification scheme (September), [SG response](#) (October 2021), mostly described some of the data SG uses, rather than directly providing data or analysis.
 - Scotsman reports that the SG withheld information on its modelling of the 2nd wave, despite the “strength of the public interest” in disclosure, according to the Scottish Information Commissioner

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