



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## COVID-19 Recovery Committee

2nd Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Thursday 2 September 2021

### Scotland's strategic framework

#### **Scottish Government COVID strategies: brief overview**

This note summarises some of the key milestones in the development of strategic approaches by the Scottish Government in tackling the Covid pandemic. A more detailed timeline is available on this [SPICe Spotlight blog](#).

In **April 2020**, the Scottish Government published its [Framework for Decision making](#). At that time this set out six aspects of its approach, initially

- **suppressing** the virus,
- **caring** for those who need it and
- **supporting** people, business and organisations.

Thinking *further ahead* were

- measures to **recover** to a new normal,
- **protecting** against this and future pandemics and
- **renewing** the country.

The framework identified **principles** underlying its approach: being safe, lawful, evidence-based, clear, realistic, and collective. At this point it also identified **four harms from COVID-19**:

- Direct health impacts
- Indirect health impacts
- Social impacts
- Economic impacts

In **May 2020**, the government published a [route map through and out of the crisis](#), providing “an indication of the order in which we will carefully and gradually seek to change current restrictions”. This included a [five phased approach](#) to easing restrictions (from Lockdown to Phase 4), based on six criteria published by the World Health Organisation.

- The [Scottish Government announced](#) the move from Lockdown to Phase 1 on 28 May 2020
- The [Scottish Government announced](#) the move from Phase 1 to Phase 2 on 18 June 2020
- The [Scottish Government announced](#) the move from Phase 2 to Phase 3 on 9 July 2020
- The [Scottish Government announced](#) that Scotland was to remain in Phase 3 on 20 August 2020, and this was followed by increased restrictions in September and October, as set out in regular [updates to the Route Map](#)

**In October 2020**, the Scottish Government published a [new Strategic Framework](#). The overall strategic aim was

...to **suppress the virus to the lowest possible level** and keep it there, while we strive to return to a more normal life for as many people as possible

The strategy re-stated the four harms approach, and the actions to be taken in relation to each one. It also introduced the [Protection Levels approach](#), from November, which could be applied locally or nationally, and reviewed weekly. Level 0 was described as the Phase 3 baseline, with Levels 1 to 4 involving increasingly severe restrictions.

- The [Scottish Government announced](#) that from 5 January 2021, that mainland Scotland would go into lockdown

**In February 2021**, the Scottish Government published a [Strategic Framework update](#). The update retained the same strategic intent as previously, but also took account of two new developments

- new and highly infectious strains of the virus
- progress with the vaccination roll-out

The update also described the six tools being used in tackling the virus, and its effects:

1. [vaccination](#)
2. [testing and contact tracing](#) (Test and Protect)
3. [protective measures and the levels system](#)
4. [travel restrictions](#) to reduce the risk of new cases and strains coming into Scotland (importation measures)
5. [ensuring we all continue to follow the rules and guidance](#) (adherence to measures)
6. [support for people and businesses](#)

- The [Scottish Government published](#) a timetable for the easing of restrictions on 16 March 2021
- The [Scottish Government announced](#) (20 April 2021) that all parts of the country would move to Level 3 from Monday 26 April 2021
- The [Scottish Government announced](#) (11 May 2021) that most of mainland Scotland would move to Level 2 on 17 May 2021

In June 2021, the Scottish Government published [another Strategic Framework Update](#)

This included a **new statement of strategic intent**:

“Until now, our strategic intent has been about suppressing the virus to the lowest possible level while we seek to minimise the broader harms of the virus. Now that the direct health harms caused by the virus are reducing, the broader harms of the crisis grow relatively more important in our decision-making. Consequently, reflecting the success of the vaccination programme, we believe we are now at a stage of the pandemic where we can adjust our strategic intent from:

'to suppress the virus to the lowest possible level and keep it there, while we strive to return to a more normal life for as many people as possible'.

to one where we work:

'to suppress the virus to a level consistent with alleviating its harms while we recover and rebuild for a better future'.

The Strategic Framework Update also set out [progress and next steps against each of the six elements of the approach](#) to managing the epidemic. A brief selection of some of the measures highlighted by the government is included below:

	<b>Progress (examples)</b>	<b>What's next (examples)</b>
1. Vaccination programme	Progress described as “unprecedented”, but that “there are pockets within communities that remain to be vaccinated”	A continued roll out the vaccination programme in Scotland in line with advice from the JCVI, with advice expected from the JCVI about a COVID-19 booster campaign  Seasonal Flu Vaccination Programme begins in October 2021
2. Test and Protect system of testing, contact tracing and self-isolation	The government says it has “significantly increased access to testing” including through more regional, local and mobile test sites, free lateral flow home test kits, and roll out of further testing in manufacturing, distribution businesses, in healthcare, and in schools and childcare.	The government says its “testing regime will continue to be flexible and agile to respond to changing circumstances”, and that “people self-isolating will continue to have access to financial support through the Self-Isolation Assistance Service and practical support

	Progress (examples)	What's next (examples)
	<p>On surveillance, Public Health Scotland is working “to better understand the spread, nature and characteristics of COVID-19”, whilst the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), working in partnership with others, has formed a network to analyse wastewater samples for signs of COVID-19 from over 100 sites across Scotland.</p> <p>An enhanced Outbreak Management Toolkit was shared with partners in June, and the Scottish government says it is “working with the UK Government jointly on a number of areas” on statistics and analysis.</p>	<p>from the National Assistance Helpline and Local Self-Isolation Assistance Service”.</p> <p>On surveillance to “understand longer-term surveillance needs for respiratory pathogens, including COVID-19, we aim to develop and implement a syndromic surveillance approach that aligns with World Health Organisation and European Centre for Disease Control recommendations. This type of surveillance – which we expect to be up and running in Scotland by this winter”</p> <p>A programme to monitor wastewater is also being (rapidly) developed.</p>
3. Protective measures (rules and guidance)	Recent moves through the Levels (as set out above) are described	<p>It is proposed to transition through the Levels “as the data indicates it is safe to do so”, and to beyond Level 0 subject to the gateway condition that “all adults over 40 protected with 2 doses of the vaccine”</p> <p>Although the update states that “we expect that the role of restrictions in managing the epidemic in Scotland will be significantly reduced” it also says “. we must still ensure that sufficient measures are in place to manage the spread of the virus”.</p> <p>Some “baseline measures which are expected to be retained relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hand and surface hygiene</li> <li>• Ventilation</li> <li>• Face coverings</li> </ul>

	Progress (examples)	What's next (examples)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test and Protect</li> <li>• Outbreak management</li> <li>• Home working</li> </ul>
4. Measures to manage the risk of importation of the virus	<p>The government says that “measures remain in place to manage the risk of importation from other countries. Whilst we still strongly advise against international travel due to the risks involved, progress in tackling the virus has enabled us to introduce the traffic light system for international travel, enabling some non-essential travel to restart.”</p>	<p>The government says that work will continue on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testing for arrivals</li> <li>• Vaccine certification, and the development of an app</li> <li>• Aligning decisions “wherever possible” with the other governments in the Common Travel Area.</li> <li>• Targeted restrictions on overseas travel beyond Level 0 (and within the CTA “only when hotspots emerge”)</li> <li>• Longer term solutions for managed quarantine, and monitoring compliance of travellers</li> </ul>
5. Supporting individuals, businesses and organisations with adherence	<p>The government says that “self-reported understanding of measures and adherence to them remains relatively high”, and work has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 'Not Giving In' marketing campaign</li> <li>• Support for businesses to adhere to regulations and guidance</li> <li>• Work with Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) and Trading Standards Officers to ensure that they have appropriate powers to effectively enforce regulations</li> </ul>	<p>The government plans to continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitor public attitudes and behaviours using fortnightly polling</li> <li>• improve the Scottish Government website for public health guidance</li> <li>• work with business “to support ways to help employers to enhance employee and customer adherence to protective measures”</li> </ul>
6. and providing care and support to	<p>The government looks to mitigate the four harms. For example:</p>	<p>Amongst the measures the government is taking to tackle all four harms, are</p>

	Progress (examples)	What's next (examples)
mitigate the harms of the crisis.	<p>On the <b>direct health impacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NHS Scotland has been participating in work to evaluate the efficacy of potential therapies for COVID-19</li> <li>• On long covid, the government is “working with specialist clinicians to provide practical information for primary care teams on the identification, assessment and support of people with the condition”</li> <li>• And it says it continues to “protect and support people at highest clinical risk from COVID-19 over the past months”</li> </ul> <p>On the <b>broader health harms</b>, the government says for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It published a Mental Health - Transition and Recovery Plan, published in October</li> <li>• It previously published Re-mobilise, Recover, Re-design: The Framework for NHS Scotland in May 2020, to guide the resumption of paused services</li> <li>• <i>Open with Care – supporting meaningful contact in care homes</i><sup>[22]</sup> on was published on 24 February 2021 “to support services to safely resume indoor visiting”.</li> </ul> <p>In relation to <b>social harms</b> the government set out progress in a number of areas including for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• FE and HE</li> <li>• Social renewal</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Justice</li> </ul> <p>In relation to the <b>economic harms</b>, amongst other things, the government pointed out that “businesses in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing “to closely monitor all emerging evidence on the effectiveness of COVID-19 treatments and their clinical effectiveness in particular patient groups”,</li> <li>• Scottish-led research projects on the longer-term effects of COVID-19</li> <li>• Understanding how vaccination changes our definition of who is at highest risk</li> <li>• Commitments for investment in mental health services</li> <li>• The development of an NHS Recovery Plan</li> <li>• Establishment of a National care Service</li> <li>• Various measures on education, social renewal and housing</li> <li>• Funding to increase the capacity of the Scottish courts and Tribunals system</li> <li>• A 10-year national strategy for economic transformation</li> </ul>

	Progress (examples)	What's next (examples)
	Scotland have directly benefitted from £3.6bn in support from the Scottish Government”	

Subsequently **in August**, the government made a number of further announcements, and launched consultations, including the following

- The Scottish Government announced that [Scotland would move beyond Level 0 on 9 August](#), and that physical distancing restrictions would end, but other protective measures would remain in place
- On 17 August the Scottish Government launched a [covid recovery consultation](#), with a focus on legislative reform. The consultation covers “a range of proposals, including whether some beneficial temporary provisions made under Scottish and UK coronavirus legislation and due to expire in March 2022 should be maintained”. And specifically, the government says
 

25. In order to ensure the continuance of the provisions which enable the Scottish Ministers to make regulations for the purpose of preventing, protecting against, controlling or providing a public health response to the incidence or spread of infection or contamination which presents or could present significant harm to human health in Scotland, we are proposing to make permanent the provisions in schedule 19 of the UK Act.

[Schedule 19](#) includes this wide-ranging provision:

imposing or enabling the imposition of restrictions or requirements on or in relation to persons, things or premises in the event of, or in response to, a threat to public health.

The Scottish Government indicate that equivalent powers are already on the statute in England and Wales, and so these measures would bring Scotland to a similar position.

- On 19 August a [Future Pandemic Expert group](#) met for the first time, chaired by Professor Linda Bauld on an interim basis
- On 24 August, the Scottish Government announced a consultation on the [draft aims and principles](#) of a future public inquiry into the handling of the pandemic.

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**27 August 2021**