



Policy paper

A joint statement on coronavirus (COVID-19) from the UK Government, the Northern Ireland Executive, the Scottish Government, and the Welsh Government

Published 25 September 2020

(1) COVID-19 threatens lives, health, prosperity and our way of life. We have taken action to protect the health of our citizens, communities, and economies. However, the threat remains all too real.

(2) We are seeing the start of a second wave. The Chief Medical Officers have agreed the alert level should increase to 4. Cases are rising rapidly and we must take action to stop an exponential increase that could overwhelm our health services and aim to bring R back below 1 while minimising the impact on the economy and society.

(3) Following our meeting at COBR this week, we therefore reaffirm our shared commitment to suppressing the virus to the lowest possible level and keeping it there, while we strive to return life to as normal as possible for as many people as possible. We agree that our policy decisions should be consistent with this objective.

(4) In the months ahead, we will work determinedly, energetically and cooperatively to:

- make sure people are working and socialising safely, communicating clearly and effectively the steps we all need to take; provide tests to those with symptoms and trace their contacts; prevent new index cases through our approach to travel arrangements; respond quickly to contain any localised outbreaks, wherever they occur; prepare for the pressures we know the winter will bring; protect the most vulnerable in society from the effects of the virus; help the economy and society recover and renew; and reach a long-term solution to the threat of COVID-19 in the form of a treatment or vaccine as soon as possible.

(5) As we continue to work together, we are committed to:

- maintaining transparency and openness with the public, communicating clearly the measures each of us takes to suppress the virus;
- coordinating and cooperating as much as possible across these islands while respecting differences of approach and clarifying where measures apply;
- sharing and acting on the best data, research and science; ensuring our collective response delivers for all of the citizens we serve; and
- creating a sustainable legacy from our work on COVID-19, building back better and becoming more resilient in the face of future threats.

(6) The ongoing fight against COVID-19 will continue to require much from us all, wherever we live. We ask that everybody endeavours to adhere to the rules and advice designed for our safety, as this is the only way to keep the virus suppressed, and make further progress on the path back to normality. Failing to do so will put everyone else at risk. So in the weeks and months ahead we must carry on pulling together to protect and care for those most at risk, and keep the virus under control.

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