Briefing 20-55   May 2020

Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making - Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in Scotland
For information only to England, Northern Ireland and Wales

Key Issues
The purpose of this briefing is to advise APSE members that on 21 May, Scottish Government released its route map through and out of the COVID-19 crisis. The briefing will also provide a summary of the information contained within the publication.

Link to the full publication:
https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-framework-decision-making-scotlands-route-map-through-out-crisis/

1.0   Introduction

On Thursday 21 May 2020 Scottish Government released its publication regarding COVID-19 "Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis". This route map is to provide an indication of the order in which Scottish Government will aim to carefully and gradually change the current restrictions. There is a recognition that although the document will look to set out the steps to help everyone get back to some sort of normality, it does not provide all of the answers or exact timescales for each step as everyone is still learning about the virus. This means that the small, gradual changes will need to be matched by careful monitoring of the virus and at times Scottish Government have confirmed that there may be a requirement to "hit the brakes" at certain times in relation to the easing of restrictions but equally it may also mean that they could be eased at a faster pace than initially suggested. As Scotland moves through the different phases to ease restrictions, Scottish Government has confirmed that it will issue clear guidance on what each change will mean as well as providing time for all to prepare for the change to take effect. This includes publishing guidance for key sectors of the economy as well as on travel and public transport. The document highlights that "the biggest single factor in all of this will be how well we continue to observe advice designed to control the virus. Continued hand washing, cough hygiene and physical distancing will be essential – so too will compliance with our test, trace, isolate and support system (Test & Protect)".

2.0   Current Position

When the UK was put into lockdown the R number (rate of reproduction) in Scotland was thought to be between 4 and 6 but following the extensive restrictions which have been imposed it is currently estimated to be between 0.7 and 1. However, in order to ensure that the R number does not increase above 1 (this would show that the virus is once more spreading) and the number of infectious cases continue to fall, all changes will be required to be small and gradual.

Scottish Government have confirmed that they will continue to monitor the evidence closely and on an ongoing basis. It is hoped that as more evidence of a downward trend in the virus is recorded, Scottish Government will be able to consider further changes as set out in the route map but the document highlights that this will be on a "very careful and gradual basis".

Scottish Government confirms it will continue to learn from international partners in terms of understanding the virus and the response to it. The report notes that other countries have started to lift physical distancing measures but that Scottish Government is mindful that there will be a delay between the lifting and any impact of this change. It also highlights that each countries experience is different and therefore Scottish Government will need to consider Scotland's population and characteristics as they look to apply lessons.

The document also highlights that the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020 was brought into force on 26 March to allow enforcement of the restriction measures, in recognition of the threat posed to public health from coronavirus. The Regulations, unless amended, will expire six months after the date in which they came into force. In addition, Scottish Ministers have provided for a statutory review of the need for restrictions and requirements contained in the Regulations, with a review required to take place at least once every 21 days (following release of this document the next two reviews will take place on the 28 May then the 18 June).

3.0   Test and Protect (test, trace, isolate and support system)

The document confirms that Scottish Government wants to have their Test and Protect (test, trace, isolate and support) system in place before significantly easing restrictions and highlights that the system is already being trialled. The document confirms that this system will play a vital tool in controlling the virus, as well as playing an important part in Scottish Government's integrated strategy. The document highlights that the system is central to controlling the infection, shielding and protecting shielders, as well as looking at particular issues such as the re-opening of schools.

The route map confirms that Scottish Government will test people in the community who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19. As well as this they will also: -
- use contact tracing in order identify the close contacts of those cases, who may have had the disease transmitted to them.
- ask those who test positive and their close contacts to self-isolate protecting themselves and others from transmitting the virus further.
- provide information to the public about increases in transmission and significant clusters of cases.
- make sure that support is available to help people isolate effectively.

The document stresses that Test and Protect will be most effective when the level of infection is lower than current figures and remains low. As restrictions are lifted, Scottish Government will put in place public health measures to prevent cases escalating to an uncontrolled peak which would mean another lockdown would be required.

4.0   Framework for decision making

Within the framework for decision making section, the document highlights that although the restrictions have been necessary to fight this public health crisis and save lives, the measures have also caused harm to some people in society. For example, the effect of increased isolation on older people, people living alone or those requiring support and the impact on the economy which can affect families on the lowest income or those already experiencing inequalities the hardest. It makes clear that Scottish Government aims to protect those most at risk and protect human rights with its approach to the virus. In order to consider changes to the restrictions, Scottish Government will aim to consider: -

- the scale of impact, in terms of the numbers of people and businesses likely to benefit
- whether the approaches will protect and support the groups and individuals in society most in need of support, their impact on protected characteristics, and the extent to which they would help to reduce inequalities in outcomes
- evidence about the impacts of the current measures and any relevant wider evidence from other countries and scientific research.

The document also provides some examples of how Scottish Government have been making these decisions including: -

- prioritising measures such as provision of school-based education, early learning and childcare, youth work and adult learning in order minimise the negative effect school closures are having on many aspects of children's progress and development, including their wellbeing
- making plans to restart housebuilding which the document highlights is essential if Scotland is to meet Scottish Government aspirations around reducing homelessness. As well as energy efficiency schemes to tackle fuel poverty

As part of the decision making process, Scottish Government will ensure that it draws on data and expertise from a variety of sources including the Poverty & Inequality Commission, Human Rights Commission and academic research on the issues arising from COVID-19 as well as engaging with those affected in order to understand their experiences.

5.0   Phased approach to restrictions

The route map provides information on how Scottish Government will look to undertake a phased approach to easing the current restrictions. The route map highlights four key phases moving forward from lockdown and although there are no exact dates for the different phases to be introduced the document highlights that this will only take place if particular criteria (including those set by the World Health Organisation WHO) are met. As outlined earlier, there will be regular three weekly

reviews which will seek to evaluate all of the information and assess whether certain areas can be progressed quicker or alternatively in some cases where a slowing of particular areas may be required. It may also mean that a particular phase will extend across more than one review period depending on the circumstances.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) outline six key criteria for easing restrictions, these are:-
1. Evidence shows that COVID-19 transmission is controlled
2. Sufficient public health and health system capacities are in place to identify, isolate, test and treat all cases, and to trace and quarantine contacts
3. Outbreak risks are minimized in high vulnerability settings, such as long-term care facilities (i.e. nursing homes, rehabilitative and mental health centres) and congregate settings
4. Preventive measures are established in workplaces, with physical distancing, handwashing facilities and respiratory etiquette in place, and potentially thermal monitoring
5. Manage the risk of exporting and importing cases from communities with high-risks of transmission
6. Communities have a voice, are informed, engaged and participatory in the transition

The tables below are taken from the Annex of the Route map highlighting the stages as well as examples of what these will include and the criteria required to be reached before progression is made to the next phase (click here to access all tables from the Annex):-

Scottish Government COVID-19 Routemap

	Lockdown	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	Lockdown restrictions:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:
Epidemic Status	High transmission of the virus. Risk of overwhelming NHS capacity without significant restrictions in place.	High risk the virus is not yet contained. Continued risk of overwhelming NHS capacity without some restrictions in place.	Virus is controlled but risk of spreading remains. Focus is on containing outbreaks.	Virus has been suppressed. Continued focus on containing sporadic outbreaks.	Virus remains suppressed to very low levels and is no longer considered a significant threat to public health.
Criteria/ Conditions	R is near or above 1 and there are a high number of infectious cases.	R is below 1 for at least 3 weeks and the number of infectious cases is starting to decline. Evidence of transmission being controlled also includes a sustained fall in supplementary measures including new infections, hospital admissions, ICU admissions, deaths of at least 3 weeks.	R is consistently below 1 and the number of infectious cases is showing a sustained decline. WHO six criteria for easing restrictions must be met. Any signs of resurgence are closely monitored as part of enhanced community surveillance.	R is consistently low and there is a further sustained decline in infectious cases. WHO six criteria for easing restrictions must continue to be met. Any signs of resurgence are closely monitored as part of enhanced community surveillance.	Virus is no longer considered a significant threat to public health.

Scottish Government COVID-19 Routemap

	Lockdown	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	Lockdown restrictions:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:
Protections advised in each phase	Physical distancing requirements in place. Frequent handwashing and hygiene measures for all. Cough etiquette is maintained. Face coverings in enclosed public spaces, including public transport. **Shielding:** We know how hard people at the highest clinical risk are finding the advice to shield, and that you are concerned about what will follow the initial 12 week shielding period. We will be updating the advice to people who are shielding in the course of the coming weeks. We will base that advice on what you are telling us about what matters to you, as well as on the evidence, in order to improve your quality of life while keeping your risks as low as possible.	Physical distancing requirements in place. Frequent handwashing and hygiene measures for all. Cough etiquette is maintained. Face coverings in enclosed public spaces, including public transport.	Physical distancing requirements in place. Frequent handwashing and hygiene measures for all. Cough etiquette is maintained. Face coverings in enclosed public spaces, including public transport.	Physical distancing requirements in place. Frequent handwashing and hygiene measures for all. Cough etiquette is maintained. Face coverings in enclosed public spaces, including public transport.	Physical distancing requirements to be updated on scientific advice. Frequent handwashing and hygiene measures for all. Cough etiquette is maintained. Face coverings may be advised in enclosed public spaces, including public transport.

Notes: Above examples are illustrations, and are not intended to be comprehensive. Each phase description should be viewed as a general description rather than precise definitions of permitted activities.

All decisions on phasing will be kept under review as the research evidence base on the impact of the virus and the effectiveness of different interventions builds.

The Annex outlines nine different areas and the changes which will be made as the different phases are reached throughout time. These areas include: -

- Seeing family and friends
- Getting around
- Schools, childcare and other educational settings
- Working or running a business
- Shopping, eating and drinking out
- Sports, culture and leisure activities
- Community and public services
- Gatherings and occasions
- Health and social care

The tables below from the document's Annex provides information on two of the areas (Schools, childcare and other educational settings and Community and public services): -

Scottish Government COVID-19 Routemap

Scottish Government / Riaghaltas na h-Alba / gov.scot

	Lockdown	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	Lockdown restrictions:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:
Schools, childcare and other educational settings	Schools and childcare services closed. Measures in place to support home learning and to provide outreach services to vulnerable children. Critical childcare provision for key workers and vulnerable children provided through hubs, nurseries and childminding services. Universities and colleges closed – remote learning and research.	School staff return to schools. Increased number of children accessing critical childcare provision. Re-opening of child minding services and fully outdoor nursery provision. Transition support available to pupils starting P1 and S1 where possible.	On campus university lab research restarted subject to physical distancing.	Children return to school under a blended model of part-time in-school teaching and part-time in-home learning. Public health measures (including physical distancing) in place. Subject to the progress of the scientific evidence, schools are expected to open on this basis on 11 August. All childcare providers reopen subject to public health measures, with available capacity prioritised to support key worker childcare, early learning and childcare (ELC) entitlement and children in need. Universities and colleges phased return with blended model of remote learning and limited on campus learning where priority. Public health measures (including physical distancing) in place.	Schools and childcare provision, operating with any necessary precautions. College and university campuses open – including key student services with any necessary precautions.

Scottish Government COVID-19 Routemap

Scottish Government / Riaghaltas na h-Alba / gov.scot

	Lockdown	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
	Lockdown restrictions:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:	As with previous phase but with the following changes:
Community and public services	Limited number of courts open and business limited. All jury business halted. Other services restricted where necessary in line with public health advice.	Gradual resumption of key support services at the community level with physical distancing and hygiene measures. Restarting face-to-face Children's Hearings with physical distancing. Greater direct contact for social work and support services with at-risk groups and families with physical distancing and hygiene measures. Access to respite/day care to support unpaid carers and for families with a disabled family member. Household Waste Recycling Centres open. Re-opening of court and tribunal buildings, with limited business and public access.	Further scaling up of public services from Phase 1 where it is safe to do so.	Further resumption of justice system processes and services.	Public services operating fully, in line with public health advice, with modifications and changes to service design, including increasing use of digital services where appropriate.

It should be noted that these sections provide a summary and therefore will not contain every aspect of the restrictions. As well as this, the document confirms that all of the rules from the previous phase will continue to apply unless other wise stated and areas may evolve as evidence is gathered and assessed going forward.

The document highlights that everyone will require time to prepare including businesses, public services, the third sector as well as communities and individuals. Therefore, it states that it is important that these changes to be made gradually and carefully. For public services for example, discussions with Trade Unions and the preparations of rick assessments and safe working practices will need to be undertaken.

Within the phased approach section it also notes that Scottish Government are "keeping an open mind on the potential for regional variation as we move through the phases of the route map, if that best meets the particular circumstances and needs of the geographies concerned". However, before making any geographically different changes they have confirmed they would ensure engagement with local communities.

It is also highlighted within the document that the document itself is intended to be live document therefore online updates to the version will be made as and when required and therefore the online version will be the most up to date. Scottish Government have confirmed they will consult and engage with stakeholders to ensure that their views on the route map are considered e.g. should it be felt that a particular section of the route map does not look right, consideration of this will be given before determining whether changes to the plans are required.

6.0 Partnership approach

This section highlights Scottish Governments commitment to the WHO's sixth criterion which states "Communities have a voice, are informed, engaged and participatory in the transition". The document outlines some of the ways in which Scottish Government have and will continue to engage and consult with all stakeholders including online platforms for ideas and comments and the two-way communication regarding the route map which has been mentioned above.

The document also highlights a number of key partners involved in the lead up to and also post publication of the route map. These include: -
- Local authorities
- Police Scotland
- Teachers Unions
- National Parents' organisations
- Employers
- Trade Unions
- Regulators including the Health & Safety Executive
- Third sector organisations
- Public and wider stakeholder groups
- Governments (UK, Welsh & Northern Ireland) – all of which have published their own plans
- Scottish Parliament (including a new COVID-19 committee)

7.0 APSE Comment

APSE welcomes Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis and hopes that the supporting guidance noted within the document will provide clear direction in order for local authorities to utilise

as part of their ongoing recovery plans. From APSE's remobilisation meetings, which have involved local authorities from across the UK, our members are already working on these plans and considering the many important elements including risk assessments and safe working practices ensuring the safety of their staff and communities are at the heart. Throughout the pandemic local authorities have shown their passion and commitment for providing public services to all in their local areas.

As Scotland navigates its way to the "new normal" it is clear that this virus will be with us for some time to come and therefore it is important that the route map remains dynamic and that Scottish Government continues to engage with all throughout each small step.

Reminder: APSE has set up a COVID-19 Information Hub to deal with frontline service issues as they arise, ensuring greater resilience and learning between each other during this difficult time. You can access this hub by clicking here and you can also join our WhatsApp Support Network by clicking here.

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