

Council of Minister's Emergency Advisory Group ("EAG")

Advice Note – June 2021

1. Communications

The Emergency Advisory Group (EAG) has considered further issues in relation to the proposed changes to the border restrictions on 28 June 2021. In particular, the group wishes to offer comment and advice in respect of the communications and messaging of the new borders policy and its operation. The group also wishes to offer its observations on the communications in respect of the vaccination programme.

A. Borders

The EAG believes that the current communications surrounding the opening of the borders and the information provided to assist people in determining whether they are eligible to travel is currently insufficient. The group believes that without swift action, these issues may pose a risk to the smooth implementation of the new policy.

For example, there is a great deal of detail provided on the 'Visit Isle of Man website' on a downloadable file, but the Government's own Covid information site does not appear to provide this information, or it is not easy to find. This may lead to confusion. The group discussed the different permutations of people who may wish to travel to the Island and felt that information in this regard was difficult to find or unclear. In particular, the Council of Ministers should consider ensuring the following groups are provided with clear advice on their eligibility, or otherwise to travel:

- **Non-IOM resident parents with 2+2 vaccination status travelling with children** - do the children need to be tested on arrival or can they choose to isolate. Can the parents leave their accommodation during this time?
- **IOM Residents with 2+2 vaccination status** – if this group has left the Island, what actions do they need to undertake to return
- **Non-vaccinated, non-residents** - can this group visit the Island if they isolate?

The group also wished to highlight that while many people can easily access information online, there is a large proportion of the population which may not be able to get online, particularly older people. The group urges the Council of Ministers to ensure clear and easily accessible information is available from other sources to ensure everyone can get access to up to date information about travelling to and from the Isle of Man.

The group noted that while the Government was promoting the use of the UK's NHS app to provide validation of vaccination status, this system does not appear to be fully operational for Manx residents. The group also highlighted again the importance of ensuring an alternative approach for those people who are unable to get online and, importantly, that the alternative approach is well signposted and clearly described.

B. Mitigations

The group discussed the increased risk to the population from the new borders policy, as identified in Advice Paper 1. The group's advice to the Council of Ministers is to consider greater promotion of clear public health messaging on infection control. This includes

targeted messages for different cohorts of people on the benefits of 'hands, face, space and good ventilation.'

C. Misinformation

The group notes with concern that there is a significant amount of misinformation, particularly on social media, in respect of both the Covid-19 virus and vaccination. The group considers that a pro-active approach to addressing misinformation would be of benefit. In a study¹ conducted across 1,600 US adults, there was good evidence to suggest that a simple 'accuracy nudge' which reminded people to consider the accuracy of what they were sharing, improved choices about what they shared. The group feels that an investment in local resource to undertake some of this work would be of benefit in encouraging vaccine uptake and improving the information shared on how to best reduce the risk of infection from Covid-19.

D. Vaccination programme

The Emergency Advisory Group has considered the Council of Ministers' most recent exit plan and the key elements which comprise it. The group notes the role that vaccinations will play in enabling the free movement of people to and from the Island. While the vaccination programme has been extremely successful to date, the EAG feels that further work is required in respect of driving vaccine take-up.

The group has considered the most recent Public Health England vaccine surveillance report² and bases its assumptions on the vaccine efficacy levels described therein. The relevant table is reproduced below for clarity:

¹ <https://psyarxiv.com/uwbk9/>

²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/992741/Vaccine_surveillance_report_-_week_23.pdf

Table 2. Summary of evidence on vaccine effectiveness against different outcomes

Outcome	Vaccine effectiveness			
	Pfizer-BioNTech		Oxford-AstraZeneca	
	1 dose	2 doses	1 dose	2 doses
Symptomatic disease	55-70%	85-90%	55-70%	65-90%
Hospitalisation	75-85%	90-95%	75-85%	No data
Mortality	75-80%	95-99%	75-80%	No data
Infection	55-70%	70-90%	60-70%	No data
Transmission (secondary cases)*	45-50%	No data	35-50%	No data

High Confidence	Evidence from multiple studies which is consistent and comprehensive
Medium Confidence	Evidence is emerging from a limited number of studies or with a moderately level of uncertainty
Low Confidence	Little evidence is available at present and results are inconclusive

* effectiveness in reducing symptomatic secondary cases in households of a symptomatic index case

The EAG believes that a revised and sustained drive to encourage vaccine take-up amongst the younger age cohort in particular, is now required. The data from the Isle of Man Government Covid-19 vaccination dashboard as at 16/06/21 shows the following vaccination data in respect of those under the age of 40:

Age	Total in cohort	First dose	Second dose	2nd dose booked	% of cohort with at least first dose
18-19	1668	989	2	983	59%
20-24	3413	2444	2	2433	71.5%
25-29	3763	2726	0	2714	72.4%
30-34	4037	2825	4	2801	69.8%
35-39	4197	3066	8	3049	73.05%

It is clear that there needs to be a concerted and targeted approach to increasing vaccination numbers amongst this cohort of people to ensure that they have maximum protection against Covid-19 and that they are able to benefit from unrestricted travel to and from the Island.

The EAG's view is that a plan is required to drive uptake which includes a diverse and sustained communications and marketing campaign to ensure uptake is increased.

E. Vaccine availability

The group notes that, possibly linked to the above, many people under 40 are now being informed that the next available opportunity for a first dose vaccine is now October. The group is unsure whether this is a supply or resourcing issue. The group urges Council to consider re-opening the vaccine programme to permit those who have not yet registered for a first dose to come forward. The group notes the initiatives in the UK for 'drop-in' sessions and advises Council to consider implementing such an approach.

If the limiting factor for continued vaccination of harder to reach cohorts is related to supply, the group would urge the Council of Ministers to consider alternative supply chains. The group feels that the changes to the border entry requirements mean that more people will now come forward for vaccinations. If the Government is unable to offer vaccination for these groups until October, the group feels this may cause concerns from the public.

The Group has discussed the imminent changes to the borders framework and the increased risk it brings to seeding community transmission in the Isle of Man. As there are still large cohorts of unvaccinated people, the group considers it would be prudent to ensure those people working in critical services, particularly the emergency services and those related to critical national infrastructure, who have not been vaccinated receive priority status.

Appended Note

Notes on communicating the messages re: the Exit/ opening of the borders

1. Agree key messages (clear, brief, easy-to-understand).
2. Signpost more detailed information backing up the brief messages.
3. Use social marketing techniques
4. Market segmentation
5. Assess timeliness, cost and deliverability of the options.

The key messages may be different for different groups, therefore need to target the message to the specific audience.

Identify the different groups, there is overlap, that is not a problem, hearing a message in a specific context is helpful.

- older people (OP), including those with no digital access
- middle-aged to older people, digitally-connected,
- affluent, keen to travel
- parents of school aged children
- parents of pre-school children
- people with family “across”
- teenagers and 20- somethings
- school-aged children
- the business community, hospitality

Medium / Target Group	Newspaper (which ones?)	Door-to door leaflet	TV (? which station)	Manx radio, other radio?	Facebook (which pages?)	Instagram? (which accounts?)	Websites	etc (Young person media?)
Older, no digital access	***	***	***	***	N	N		
Middle-aged /older	***	***	***	***	Y, which?	*	***	
Affluent (traveller)	***	***	**	**	Y, which?	*	***	
Parents – school	**	***	**	**	Y, which?	**	***	
Parents – pre-school	**	***	**	**	Y, which?	**	***	
Family “across”			?	?	Y, which?	*	***	
Young adults		**	*		Y, which?	***		
Teenagers		*	*		?	***	?	?
School children		*	*		?	*?	?	?
Visitors					Y, which?		***	
Employers	**	**	**	Ads?	Y, which?	?	***	
Hospitality industry	**	**	**	Ads?	Y, which?	?	***	
Healthcare staff	**	**	**	**	Y, which?	?	***	

... others								

Practicalities

Cost and deliverability of the options – which partners are on board? e.g. will newspapers and radio publish / present information given to them? As soon as they receive it? Free?

Generate content to be shared on websites on businesses. What is the distribution mechanism? e.g. Chamber of Commerce type organisation.

If a door-to-door leaflet is agreed, will it cost anything to the government to post it out or will it be done by postal service?

How quickly can 40,000 leaflets be printed?

Need young people to work out how to get the messages out to young people (e.g. which social media do they use?). Need young people to generate content.

Key themes

As the island opens up to people, it opens up to the virus.

The virus will come to the island, repeatedly.

Manx residents must adapt to living in a world where the virus is present.

The best way to avoid contact with the virus is to avoid breathing in the same air as other people – so outdoor venues, outdoor drinking, al fresco dining.

Ventilation of indoor spaces.

Stand further apart from people (than you are used to doing).

Mask or face-coverings catch your droplets as you breathe out.

Masks or face-coverings are for other people’s benefit.

Important to remain aware of the symptoms and get tested if you experience them, even if you are fully vaccinated.

Isolating if you test positive is still very important, you can still spread the disease even if you have been vaccinated.

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