

Emergency Advisory Group

Advice note

22nd October 2021

Ventilation, CO₂ Monitoring, testing, Variants of Concern

The Emergency Advisory Group is pleased to be able to provide this first advice note to the Council of Ministers and looks forward to constructive engagement with the new government.

Ventilation and CO₂ monitors

The EAG urges clearer communications as to the benefits of good ventilation in confined spaces and to promote the use of HEPA filters, particularly in crowded areas such as pubs and restaurants.

The EAG does not believe there is sufficient promotion of the benefits of the use of CO₂ monitors as a way of identifying where transmission of Covid-19 in indoor spaces is a risk.

CO₂ monitors in Education

The EAG notes the use of increased numbers of CO₂ monitoring devices by the Department for Education, Sport and Culture and would urge the Council of Ministers to consider the following areas in relation to the use of CO₂ monitors:

- How is the output captured and monitored, and by whom.
- Consider sharing the output publicly to allow parents to make informed decisions
- Ensure there is a plan for maintenance and updates for the devices to ensure they remain active

Pathology lab and testing

- The EAG is concerned that the pressure on the pathology laboratory is going to become unsustainable over the winter months as Covid-19 cases continue to increase.
- In order to relieve such pressure, the EAG is of the opinion that the local genotyping work testing only part of the relevant spike protein is irrelevant and should be stopped.
- The EAG believes that continued use of the Public Health testing facility at Colindale is vital to ensure continued vigilance in respect of local development of variants of concern.
- The EAG believes the Isle of Man's current testing positivity rate should be taken into account by the Council of Ministers as a priority, when determining whether it should re-introduce mitigation measures. For context, the World Health Organization recommended in May that the percent positive rate should remain below 5% for at least two weeks before governments consider reopening.
- The EAG believes there is still a large proportion of people testing positive with a Lateral Flow Device test, but who do not report this result and who do not seek a

PCR confirmatory test. The EAG believes this is, in part, due to a lack of effective support for those on low incomes who test positive.

Variants of Concern

- The EAG still believes that there are risks from the establishment of a Variant of Concern in the Island due to a number of factors. The EAG urges Council to ensure there are plans in place to respond to this event.

Key points

The EAG considered the current case rates and anecdotal observations in respect of public compliance with mitigation measures.

The EAG wishes to strongly restate its advice that the Council of Ministers consider the following fundamental matters which will help to reduce the numbers of positive cases and protect vulnerable people:

Improve ventilation, ventilation monitoring and reiterate the need for mask wearing in confined spaces, including public buildings and transport as well as private businesses. Council should consider making this mandatory, as there is good evidence to support non-pharmaceutical intervention in reducing transmission rates.

Communications is still not reaching the right people with the right message. The EAG once again advises CoMIN to develop a clear communications plan underpinned by a segmentation framework, eg messages for businesses, for schools, for the elderly, the young etc.

About the Emergency Advisory Group

The Emergency Advisory Group is a committee, appointed by the Council of Ministers, consisting of a range of people from across the community with a broad range of skills and expertise. Its primary role is to consider matters referred to it by CoMIN and provide independent advice and analysis. All its members are unpaid volunteers.

The current membership is:

Hon Jane Poole-Wilson, MHK	Minister for Justice and Home Affairs (Vice Chair)
Mr Rob Mercer, MLC	Tynwald representative
Mrs Jacqueline Bridson	
Mr Steven Christian	
Mr Peter Davidson	
Professor Peter Edge	
Dr Rachel Glover	
Ms Julie Hotchkiss	
Mr John Spellman	Chair
Mr Jonathan Wild	