



Box Note

‘Box Notes’ are short briefings included in a Minister’s red box, to bring them up to speed on a developing issue. This is the first example for CPF Members, from CPF Chairman John Penrose MP

Dear Member,

I wanted to make sure you are briefed about the latest CPF report, on the Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic, which is published today. There’s a summary available on this website and, as usual with all our reports, a longer and more detailed version has gone to #10 Downing Street too. I think it matters for several reasons:

New Process

1. It’s the first entirely-virtual CPF report ever produced. Members met digitally through platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meets, rather than physically in homes, church halls or pubs, to produce their policy proposals as usual. And even for the technologically less-savvy of us, it worked pretty – even surprisingly – well, so we will do more of this kind of thing in future. There’s now a developing programme of CPF webinars and policy discussions which you can join for free – details on the website - although I strongly suspect that pubs will always be important CPF meeting places once the lockdown is over too!
2. We have sent weekly updates of the emerging recommendations to #10 Downing Street, and to individual cabinet Ministers too. We wouldn’t normally do this but, because the Covid-19 crisis is so fast-paced, we thought our proposals would be more useful if they gave Ministers a real-time perspective instead. Getting feedback has been harder than usual because everyone is working flat out, but it’s been positive whenever we’ve been able to grab some.

Key Proposals

1. The strongest and most widely-held conclusion in the entire report, by far, is that Conservative Policy Forum members want the Prime Minister to lift the lockdown as soon as it’s safe. It isn’t just the damage which lockdown is inflicting on jobs, the economy and government borrowing, although they’re bad enough; it’s the effects on mental health, loneliness and domestic abuse as well.
2. The report shows the high value that Conservative Policy Forum members put on what communities all around the country have done, spontaneously and unprompted, for their



neighbours and for good causes from the very first day the crisis began. Clearly, we all believe that there *is* such a thing as society, and that it matters a lot.

3. There's a medium term thread of concern about the damage to future life chances of pupils and students who have fallen behind in their studies while learning from home. Conservative Policy Forum members see education as a key route out of poverty, particularly for pupils and students who are vulnerable or who start with less, and want to get schools reopened and learning restarted safely as soon as possible. The report contains some really practical, sensible ideas for Ministers and school leaders to consider, like letting schools open during August to help students make up the gaps in learning which the lockdown has caused. We can't leave an entire generation missing vital skills which they're going to need for a successful future.

Finally, a huge thank-you from me and the rest of the CPF team for all your hard-thinking and contributions to this report, and for not letting the lockdown beat us. We will send more details of feedback from #10 and from Ministers as it comes in.

Best wishes & stay safe

John

John Penrose MP
Conservative Policy Forum Chair