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By email

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Request for exceptional pre-release access to the ONS statistics 'Winter Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Study, England and Scotland'

Rationale for the request

The impacts of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses during the Winter season continues to be one of the highest priorities for the Cabinet Office and wider Government. The Cabinet Office runs a weekly briefing for senior officials at Number 10 and other senior health officials to update on the latest data on respiratory illnesses and wider NHS pressures to inform collective decision making. Exceptional pre-release access to the Coronavirus Infection Study will enable the Cabinet Office to feed the outputs of the study directly into its briefings that are prepared in the 24 hours before the statistics are published.

It is important that the briefings are consistent with other publications and that they include the most recent data, in order to allow a full understanding of the current situation and for senior officials to reach the right conclusions. This will help protect members of the public from the impact of COVID-19 on our health services.

Therefore, the Cabinet Office is requesting pre-release access, on the grounds of exceptional circumstances, to the Winter Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Study, England and Scotland, from 2pm on the day prior to publication, throughout the duration of the study. We do, of course, wholly support the principles of equitable access for official statistics and we will review our requirement for pre-release access over this period.

Yours sincerely,

Alexander Wilson
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