

Northern Ireland Office

Covid 19

Situation Report 1

New information in **RED**

Contact:

Information correct as of 17.00 on 12 March 2020

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NIO00000204
INQ000083097_0001

Overview

UK Position (as of 11 March)

Case Numbers:

England	491
Wales	19
Scotland	60
Northern Ireland	20
TOTAL	590
Deaths	10

Republic of Ireland cases: 43

COBR (M) today took the decision to move from Contain to Delay. In practice this initially means a change the advice to those suffering mild symptoms to not phone 111, to self isolate at home for 7 days. This was communicated today. Further measures on whole house isolation and protecting elderly and vulnerable people are under review in the coming weeks.

ROI announcement

The Irish Government today announced measures that are in place from 6pm today until March 29th, these include:

- Schools, colleges and childcare facilities close, all indoor mass gatherings of 100 people and outdoor over 500 cancelled.
- Cultural institutions closed.
- Continue to work if you can, work from home where possible, meetings remotely or by phone, stagger break times
- Public transport to continue to operate, shops stay open and ensured supply chains remain operational
- Businesses to use sensible approach
- Restaurants and cafes stay open but implement advice on social distancing
- Cabinet meeting later today, counterparts in Northern Ireland and Britain will be briefed
- Will use all resource to tackle this but resources not unlimited
- Economy will suffer but will bounce back.

Policy Challenges

Impact of Irish announcement - NIO and NIE are reacting to the announcement, after very little notice. The FM and dFM presented a united message at COBR, not specifically siding with UKG or ROI and encouraging resolution between the two positions. David Sterling chaired an emergency meeting of the Perm Secs this afternoon at 330. From this meeting there is a view that all NIE Ministers, including FM and dFM, are relying heavily on CMO and SAGE advice as their guidance for decisions - hence no major push for alignment with the Republic of Ireland. At this meeting the DfE Perm Sec informed the group that 70% of NI businesses do not have insurance, and this may be critical. DfE are working with HMT on what the impacts and financial measures required for business may be, and NIO will plug into this through TEO.

Working with NIE and IG - TEO are proposing setting up a 'NI Hub' to manage impacts from Coronavirus, on a similar model to the Brexit C3 structures. Role for NIO to be determined and meetings between NIO and TEO to follow. We are due to meet tomorrow for a substantive discussion and we have been making some inroads today.

We are fully linked into the Embassy who are helping us reach into the Irish system. NIE and IG Health Ministers are due to meet on Saturday in Armagh. Coveney is attending. We are considering offering whether it will be useful for UKG to attend. Or if there may be strand 2 issues.

Bill - The clauses to be contained in the Bill were agreed at COBR yesterday. DHSC are working to produce a final draft of the Bill which is expected to be circulated along with explanatory memos and other associated documents by Monday 16th. Timeline remains: submission to PBL early next week, introduction 19th March Royal. Lords 25th, Royal Assent 31st. DoH are making preparations for the bill to be debated in the Assembly on 24th

Comms - DHSC announced the emergency Bill at 1600 today, ahead of the daily press conference - the DAs were involved in the planning of this announcement.

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NIO

Resource	Critical Business
<p data-bbox="233 456 951 521">Successful test of the Everbridge system carried out. 13/3</p> <p data-bbox="233 565 884 634">All Staff briefing held to update on departmental planning. 13/3</p> <p data-bbox="233 675 968 708">Rhythm of internal meetings increased and formalised</p> <p data-bbox="233 748 1003 818">Small (<5) numbers of staff self isolating. All available for work</p>	<p data-bbox="1037 418 1906 488">Business Impact Assessment completed and will be shared with SofS 16/3 subject to PUS approval</p> <p data-bbox="1037 529 1801 599">Process to move staff into priority areas has begun, with retraining taking place</p>

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Forward Look

The current proposal, subject to change is:

- A COBR (O) tomorrow. We haven't received a calling notice but there has been a Director chaired COBR (O) each Friday, and on days following a COBR (M).
- A COBR (M) on Monday 16 March.
- A proposed North/South Ministerial council meeting between the NI and RoI Health Ministers on Saturday in Armagh.
- Discussion between NIO and TEO on Friday 12th March on joining up our approaches.

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