

Northern Ireland Office

Covid 19

Situation Report **14**

New information in **RED**

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17:30 on **30** March 2020

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Overview

NI Update

UK Position

Case Numbers (as of 30 March)

England 18,594 (16,487)

Wales 1451 (1241)

Scotland 1563 (1384)

Northern Ireland 533 (410)

TOTAL 22,141 (19,552)

Deaths (NI) 22 (21)

Deaths (UK) 1408 (1228)

Republic of Ireland cases: (2615)

Government Updates:

- Specialist units are operating to combat misinformation about coronavirus and five to ten incidents are being identified and tackled each day.
- Foreign Secretary announces new plan to fly home tens of thousands of Britons stranded abroad by the corona virus.

Update from NICS:

The focus of today's Executive meeting was on a strategy for the sourcing, distribution and prioritisation of PPE. Expert Testing Group has been set up and focusing on sourcing of tests and prioritisation. Today, Naomi Long announced the temporary release of certain prisoners with 3 months or less remaining to serve (around 200 individuals) in order to prevent the spread of C-19 in prison, and ease the resulting pressures on staff. There is not yet a confirmed case in NI prisons. There are reports of political tension in the Executive, with comment on Twitter that this crisis is laying bare divisions.

Update from Irish: Introduced stricter social distancing requirements eg can only exercise with 2K of home. Received shipment of PPE from China and doubled number of ventilators. Peak of cases now expected 11-15 April. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are taking place regarding forming a coalition Government possibly with independents.

UKG: There has been a step change in the C-19 PM Strategy meetings this week; whereas at the beginning of the week the focus was social distancing, this is increasingly pivoting towards NHS capacity. Going forward, in addition to the daily 9.15am PM Strategy meeting, there will be a 9.45 meeting which will consider NHS issues and likely track against key metrics (PPE supplies, ICU capacity). Lucy Smith is attending the 0915 and will be a useful conduit for us to land items on the agenda/key messages.

NI Economy: Serious impacts of COVID-19 continue across all sectors. A support package for the self employed, announced by the CX last week, has been broadly welcomed. Ferries, including freight, continue to operate with a reduced service. Reports from NICS that there may be a knock on effect to supply chains have not, as yet, been substantiated. In aviation, routes between Belfast City - London Heathrow and (for the time being) Derry to Southend have been reduced but remain in place. EasyJet have grounded all domestic flights, taking almost to the minimum tolerable service levels.

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Policy Challenges

International - While measures in Ireland have been strengthened (and so in some cases are now stronger than UK measures), this has not created any challenging disparities for NI so far. We have proposed a coordination meeting for tomorrow between SoSNI, FM, dFM and the Tánaiste. SoSNI and FM/dFM remain in regular contact. The Irish system remains under significant pressure as work is being stepped up to form a Government - as a result there is a pause in the trilateral (UKG/IG/NIE) engagement and in plans for a BIIGC/BIC while the Irish system is given space over the next few days. We are testing a revised agenda for the proposed trilateral meeting with the Irish system.

Preparedness - Today's GPSMIG focused on testing for priority workers and immigration removal centres. Testing continues on an upward trajectory in NI with capacity increased to 1000 tests per day at the weekend with a further increase to 1300 this week. A lack of testing for health workers is resulting in staff shortages in hospitals with a number of staff having to self isolate, including from their families, if they have coronavirus symptoms. A number of avenues to source testing equipment are being explored by the NI Executive. It is important that we consider a four nations approach to the supply of testing equipment including the requirement of NI. Today Naomi Long announced that the NIE will temporarily release some sentenced prisoners. She said she anticipates the release of fewer than 200 individuals and each will be assessed against criteria.

Health - Work is ongoing with CCS in CO to improve upon the NI data being reflected in the UK Dashboard to improve visibility as well as reflect NI healthcare supply requirements with focus on healthcare data including PPE and ventilators. First joint Irish Government and NI Executive flight to procure PPE from China returned to Dublin at the weekend. Healthcare MIG tomorrow focusing on volunteers and shielding will be England focuses therefore no requirement for DAs or TOs to attend. BMA has called for the testing of healthcare staff to be stepped up with tests beginning England over the weekend and commencement in NI today. Randox Laboratories, based in County Antrim, is working with the government on a new coronavirus testing programme for NHS staff.

Legislation - Two Statutory Rules were made by the Assembly over the weekend. The Statutory Sick Pay (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Waiting Days and General Amendment) Regulations makes amendments to ensure that Statutory Sick Pay is payable for the first three qualifying days in a period of entitlement. The Social Security (Coronavirus) (Further Measures) Regulations makes amendments to the minimum income floor (MIF) which applies to self-employed claimants, modifies the standard allowance and makes amendments to housing benefit, job seekers and carers criteria to assist during the outbreak. The regulations correspond to GB provisions and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions will keep the operation of these Regulations under review.

Comms - The NIO Comms Team are plugged into the central comms hub, with twice-daily calls and regular email updates. The Cabinet Office is compiling a bid for comms campaign funding relating to CV-19, and the NIO will input a top-line bid tomorrow, including for research and insight. DHSC is planning another phase of "Stay at Home" ads across the UK, which have been run past NICS. DoJ issued a press release announcing the temporary release of prisoners - we are considering a reactive line.

Economy - Assessment of the impact continues along with actions to address sectoral issues. Engagement with DfT continues to ensure a tolerable minimum connection between NI and GB is maintained at the height of disruption. Reports from NICS that supply chains may be impacted by reduced services on Ferries have not yet been substantiated - we are urgently working to establish the facts

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NIO

Resource	Critical Business
<p>NIO Figures for 20 March</p> <p>Working in the office / travelling 8 (6) Working at home 164 (148) Self Isolating - symptoms - still working 1 (2) Family Isolating - no symptoms - still working 11(11) Self Isolating - confirmed - still working 0 (0) Sick - Covid 1 (1) Sick- other 0 (1) Special Leave 1 (1) Other leave / NWD 8 (20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both sites remain open; Prime Minister's announcement last Monday evening reinforced need to work from home. Those working in office continue to be significantly reduced with corresponding rise in numbers working at home. Easter leave commitments will be reviewed to ensure critical business continues HR working on shift patterns and allowances as well as absence returns to Cabinet Office; C3 shifts are priority work-in-progress Ongoing work on new starter arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business Impact Assessment completed and has been submitted to PUS and SofS Process to move staff into priority areas has begun, with retraining taking place All DDs have completed an assessment of critical business, along with those tasks where office requirement remains First tranche of staff moves now complete Keyworker guidance issued in NI, and process underway SofS has now signed off prioritisation; this has been issued to DDs ERT full will continue to meet weekly alongside two BDG-specific sub meetings Network capacity will continue to be monitored with IT Assist to ensure business continuity; major work took place on w/e, with 5Gbps live on Tuesday evening NI Hub is live Covid-19 Hub is live on Intranet, with NIO Social page SSCL moving to email only service

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PM C-19 Strategy

Forward Look

- Tuesday 31st March: : PPE
- Wednesday 1st April:: [TBC] Update on randomised control trial and treatment regime, and availability of drugs being trialled [CMO and DHSC]
- Thursday 2nd April: : [TBC] Bed capacity in NHS hospitals, including regional breakdown and all beds: ventilation, oxygenation [NHS]
- Friday 3rd April: y: [TBC] Testing update: demand/supply, ramping up workers, wider population testing

C-19 Strategy (O) - CabSec chaired

- Tuesday 31st March: Cab Sec focus items: [TBC] Review of UK wide delivery risks
- Wednesday 1st April: Cab Sec focus items: [TBC] Schools / key workers (following GPSMIG item on 31/3) [DfE]; Resourcing of the frontline - Deep dive into resourcing of key public services (prison and probation, DWP, police) [MoJ, DWP, HO, etc]
- Thursday 2nd April: Cab Sec focus items: Death Management (following GPSMIG item on 1/4) [CCS]; Shielding update [DHSC]

International MIG:

- Tuesday 31st March:: Minister Walker is to attend tomorrow's meeting, on i) situation update - both ventilator procurement (DIT/FCO), and repatriation (FCO) ii) operationalising the international engagement script (FCO), iii) support to vulnerable countries (DfID), and iv) forward look for this week. No other TOs, or the DAs in attendance.
- Tuesday 31st March: FCO convening a meeting with DA ministers and TO SoS's to discuss i) Repatriation, ii) Ferries/ports, iii) Supply chain management and ventilators. Minister Walker will attend for the NIO. It is not yet confirmed which Minister will attend from the NIE.

Economic MIG:

- Tuesday: To discuss papers on i) **Construction and infrastructure** (Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) and Nick Smallwood (Chief Executive, Infrastructure and Projects Authority), and ii) **Principles for Government intervention** (Chief Secretary to the Treasury). TOs, as well as DAs, have been invited. Minister Diane Dodds (Department for the Economy) is due to attend.

Healthcare MIG:

- Tuesday: Volunteer workforce ; Shielding Update (No DAs)
- Thursday: Coordinating with Devolved Administrations; PPE prioritisation (DAs invited)

Public Services MIG

- Tuesday 31st March:: [Oral update] IR35 [HMT]; Borders planning and resilience [HO]; [TBC] Prisons [MoJ]
- Wednesday 1st April:: Children in care and vulnerable children [DfE, HO]; Update on school provision [DfE] **focuses on provision over Easter holiday**; Update on proposed package to support agriculture industry [DEFRA, HMT]
- Thursday 2nd April:: Update on Parliamentary Resilience [CO]; LA and LRF preparedness plans [MHCLG]; [TBC] Prioritisation of LA services [MHCLG]
- Friday 3rd April:: [TBC] Support for non-shielded socially and financially vulnerable people [MHCLG];
- Saturday 4th:: Forward look **core group only**
- Economic Summit UKG - DA Perm Sec (TBC) - Week commencing 30 March (DfE Perm.Sec Mike Brennan & HOCS will attend)]

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