

Message

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Sent: 17/02/2020 7:27:30 PM
To: TEO HOCS (DS) [teo-hocsds@nigov.net]
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Subject: Update on NI Coronavirus - NI Preparedness and Response

OFF-SEN

David

The purpose of this short update is to advise you of preparations for the new Coronavirus where the associated disease has been named Covid-19.

DOH remains in the lead and has staffed up their DOC (Health Gold) however there is a need now to make preparations for a wider response involving Departments and other key stakeholders like the emergency services and local government. This wider preparedness and response falls to TEO. We, along with the other DAs, are liaising closely with Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office who are leading the national level preparedness work; this is moving at pace with a heavy weekly rhythm of CCS-led working groups and commissions.

In line with this wider focus on preparedness we are convening a meeting of CCG (Covid -19) scheduled for this Thursday morning which Chris has agreed to Chair (it has a smaller membership than the large 'all risks' CCG(NI) that you Chair). This will provide an opportunity for DOH to update members on the current situation and prognosis and for us to commission work around business continuity / critical service provision. Planning for loss of staff is vital given the RWCS for 50% of the population to become infected and for an absentee rate of 17-20% at the peak (these figures are not for general circulation).

The timeline for when we might see sustained spread of the virus in the community here is not known but DOH has tentatively suggested that it is likely from April with the peak in May and the outbreak continuing to June; there is low confidence in this assessment at present. We are moving to plan the NI response (NCOV C3) which will be C3 scaled down to need and which will dovetail into the wider UK response. This will mean scaled activation of the NI Hub as the NI co-ordination centre supporting CCG(NI) as the strategic decision making body. As always, we will activate at such times as it makes sense in NI to do so based on the circumstances on the ground and on the basis of expert scientific advice. The aim would be to operate on a standard day with out of hours cover however it is pragmatic that we plan for longer days and weekend working in case that is required. We may need to engage with Departments and C3 volunteers on this.

We are planning to update Ministers on these preparations following CCG (Covid-19) and will of course keep you fully updated.

We would be happy to answer any further queries you may have.

Many thanks

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