

PERMANENT SECRETARIES STAKEHOLDER GROUP– FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2020

AIDE MEMOIRE ON NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

The following aide memoire is provided in case you wish to raise this at PSS or if colleagues initiate discussion. This note covers:

- Update on coronavirus
- Sector resilience
- Draft UK-wide Pandemic Influenza Emergency Bill

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

- Number of confirmed Coronavirus cases 28,277 number of deaths 563 UK have 3 confirmed cases to date (latest figures at 2.00pm, 06 Feb)
- Third positive case in southern England announced on 6 February, very little detail known although there appears to be a travel link to east Asia, outside China.
- COBR are now leading on a UK wide basis chaired by Matt Hancock.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared this a Public Health Emergency of International concern and in response the UK has raised the risk level to 'moderate' to allow governments to plan for a range of eventualities.
- A third UK case was confirmed on the 6th February as a consequence of transmission outside of China. . Because of the volume of air travel from affected areas, understanding of other travel routes and number of reported cases on scientific advice the UK CMOs have extended their advice to returning traveller to the UK from a number of other countries in SE Asia. This will be kept under review.
- DoH activated 'Health Gold' on the 27 January and is working with the relevant authorities and public health organisations across the UK as the outbreak in China develops.
- Given the potential health and social consequences of a major epidemic, we are now planning and preparing for the reasonable worst case scenario.
- Letter issued from our Emergency Operations Centre lead to Chris Stewart TEO yesterday (06 February) regarding sector resilience and also asking for a letter from CMO to be sent out through CCGNI contacts. The CMO letter

provides information to enable Departments (and public authorities) to respond to the coronavirus outbreak appropriately and efficiently.

- DFID has confirmed that they are working with WHO to pre-position supplies to respond to likely requests to form partner governments but this may take a number of weeks and they do not intend to procure large amounts of PPE. They are not recommending that individual organisations pursue requests to purchase PPE on an individual basis as this would conflict with national arrangements for provision of pandemic influenza stock.

SECTOR RESILIENCE

- Urgent consideration is needed across Executive Departments on sector resilience in the face of a growing threat from novel coronavirus. The number of cases reported worldwide is growing daily with the potential to spread and cause economy-wide impacts, as is currently being seen in China.
- I anticipate that the demand for information, guidance and co-ordination is highly likely to increase significantly in coming weeks. This raises issues around both sector resilience and wider strategic coordination across civil contingencies arrangements.
- I do not consider it necessary to activate NI Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) at this time, however, this is an evolving situation and preparedness across NI is critical.
- Departments will need to review business continuity arrangements to assess resilience preparedness, capacity and capabilities to assess the likely impact on the delivery of essential services.
- It may be prudent for TEO to consider convening a multi-agency meeting to assess sector resilience and preparedness.

DRAFT UK WIDE PANDEMIC INFLUENZA EMERGENCY BILL

Pandemic Influenza (Emergency) NI Provisions

- An extremely pressing element for NI is completion of work on the draft '*Pandemic Influenza (Emergency) NI Provisions*'. The *Provisions* will be incorporated into the UK Wide Pandemic Influenza Bill.
- COBR (M) is insistent that work on the draft Bill is finalised as a priority.
- Information about the Bill including expectations for NI was communicated to all Permanent Secretaries by the Department on the 10 July 2018. (*UK Government and Devolved Administrations (DAs) work programme to develop a range of options for relaxing legislative requirements to enable a swifter and more effective response to a severe influenza pandemic*).
- Recognise that a significant amount of work has already been done. However some work remains outstanding.

- Commitment from Permanent Secretaries that this work which will be coordinated by TEO will be given the highest priority. Departments working on the Bill are Health, Education and Justice
- Departments will be asked in the next few days (through DoH Emergency Planning Branch), as a matter of urgency, to:
 - proceed, where required, with finalising draft clauses, in collaboration with DSO and OLC, including explanatory notes - **to be completed by 14 February;**
 - Ensure Ministers are briefed on NI contribution to the UK Wide Pandemic Influenza Emergency Bill.