

**FROM: Robin Swann
Minister for Health**

DATE: 15 February 2020

TO: First and deputy First Ministers

**SUB-1095-2020: NI CLAUSES FOR SUBMISSION TO THE UK-WIDE DRAFT
CORONAVIRUS BILL– URGENT DECISION REQUEST**

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to seek the agreement of the Executive:

- a. to the extension to Northern Ireland of powers to make provision (including provision modifying legislation) in connection with an outbreak of pandemic Coronavirus (COVID-19) as set out at **Appendix 1**; and
 - b. that the necessary legislative provision will be provided for in a UK wide Coronavirus Bill;
1. The Bill will be brought forward on a time-limited basis. The powers being sought are proportionate to the challenges we will face in responding to a severe pandemic and will only be enacted for the duration of the pandemic after which it would be withdrawn through a 'Sun-Setting' process.
2. While this is a cross-cutting issue, I as Health Minister am taking the lead however I can confirm that the other relevant Ministers, i.e. the Minister for Education, Minister of Finance, and Minister for Justice have confirmed to me that they are content with the clauses as drafted which pertain to their area of responsibility. An explanation for each clause as drafted for Northern Ireland is set out in the Explanatory Memorandum at **Appendix 2**.

COVID-19

3. The Department of Health, as Lead Government Department, in collaboration with other Executive Departments is responding to the rapidly evolving situation regarding the novel COVID-19. My Department continue to work closely with the relevant authorities and public health organisations across the UK as the outbreak develops, to ensure we are ready to deal with the health and social care consequences of any outbreak here.
4. On 30 January, the World Health Organisation declared the COVID-19 as a global public health emergency of international concern. The four UK Chief Medical Officers agreed that, given the potential health and social consequences of a major epidemic, it was appropriate to plan and prepare for the **reasonable worst case scenario (RWCS) of COVID-19 pandemic moderate severity, without a vaccine**. Existing pandemic flu guidance was therefore used to plan for the potential impact on health and society while The Cabinet Office collated information in order to devise a RWCS for the 2019-nCoV outbreak.
5. As of the 13 February at 2.00 pm, Public Health England reported **60373** confirmed cases worldwide, UK have **9** confirmed cases to date. There have been **1369** fatalities. To date NI has no confirmed case.
6. The UK-wide response is being led by COBR, chaired by Matt Hancock Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. The directive from COBR was for Devolved Administrations to prepare their contingency arrangements based around reasonable worst case scenario planning for pandemic influenza.

Background

Timing

7. Under normal circumstances where the UK Government proposes new primary legislation that will legislate for NI on devolved matters, the Minister responsible, after consultation with the relevant Assembly Statutory Committee and agreement by the Executive, brings forward a legislative consent motion which seeks the agreement of the Assembly to the UK Parliament considering that Bill