Northern Ireland
Covid19
Decision Making: Command, Control and Coordination

Briefing

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Strategic intent

The **Northern Ireland Executive** has set out its strategy for dealing with the Covid19 Crisis. This is based around three key themes:

- *Health and well being of our citizens*
- *Our economic well being*
- *Societal and community well being*

All activities undertaken by departments and decisions taken by Permanent Secretaries and Ministers are to take account of this overarching strategy.

This crisis is a <u>national emergency</u> requiring a collective and cross-departmental response.

In delivering the Strategic intent of the Executive, the NICS and its partners must work as a single coherent unit.

•Command, Control and Coordination (C3) systems are necessary where multiple teams and organisations come together to work across traditional boundaries in order to **prepare** for, **respond** to and **recover** from emergencies and disruptive challenges. In these arrangements, teams and organisations remain under the usual **Command**, but may temporarily come under the **Control** of another part of the system. This allows for a response to be managed in a **co-ordinated** way across the system.

•Our response will focus on managing both the immediate, short, medium and longer term impacts of the Covid19 crisis. Whilst the immediate priority is felt in the health sector, the impacts stretch across almost every part of NI government and all public services. The challenges are unprecedented. Our response is based on:

* **Clarity** of roles, responsibilities, and an understanding of levels of delegation/authority
* **Subsidiarity** – decisions are taken at the lowest possible level, with escalation from departments and cross cutting working groups and up to CCG(NI), EXecutive and UK COBR structures as necessary.
* **Collaboration** – where an issue crosses traditional boundaries, departments will work together and with partners, enabling
* **Timely decision making & escalation -** informed by a common understanding of assumptions and requirements , and providing
* **An evidence based approach** through the collection, sharing and dissemination of a common data set
* **Clarity and coherence** in our messaging

Our efforts will be coordinated through an NI Hub, but is a whole systems approach

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Overarching Principles

In all we do:

- C3 will reflect agreed contingency management principles of preparedness, continuity, subsidiarity, direction, integration, communication, cooperation and anticipation,

- C3 arrangements will be scalable, using existing NI resilience structures/arrangements, with the ability scale up/down in response to a changing situation,

- C3 arrangements, roles and responsibilities will be simple and clear, whilst also maintaining shared situational awareness,

- Form will follow function; C3 structures will be 'risk agnostic' (i.e. designed to meet the full range of possible impacts) but with a focus on meeting the functional requirements of the RWCS,

- Decisions will be delegated to the lowest appropriate level, with clear thresholds for escalation,

- C3 will be tailored to the unique circumstances in NI, and

- NICS will maintain the capability to concurrently manage C19 impacts and civil contingencies.

C3 as a joined up system

The C3 system only works where all parts are joined and working to the same goal, rhythm and operating procedures. Communication and consistency between every part of the system is critical. A seemingly positive change made unilaterally in one part may have an unintended and negative impact elsewhere. The system is tried and tested and works well when it works together. The CONOPS (para 33) provides more information on the respective role of each part, but in summary:
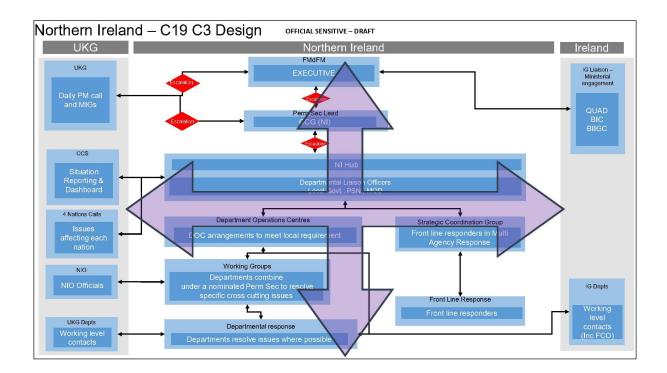
Departmental Ops Centres (DOCs) manage departmental risks and contingency plans, coordinating with other NICS and Whitehall departments over departmental plans and dependencies, to ensure that C19 and civil contingency impacts are mitigated. DOCs **report** to CCG(NI) via the NI Hub. DOCs **escalate** decisions to the NI Hub when they cannot be resolved within or between departments, or if they affect a Cumulative Impact. DOCs provide a daily Situation report (SITREP) to the NI Hub. How a DOC operates is within the gift of the relevant Permanent Secretary, but all DOCs must be capable of making a full contribution to the C3 system, both in terms of quality of material, and hours of working.
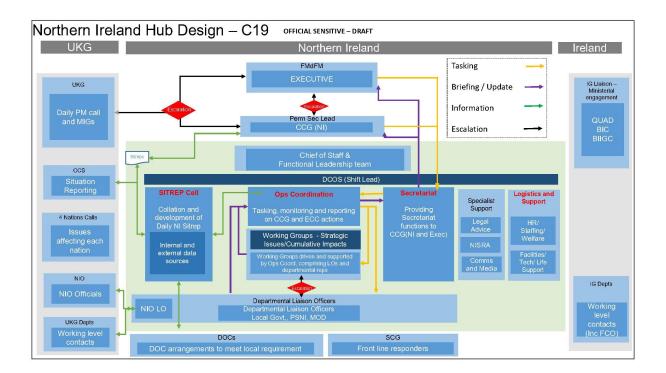
Departmental Liaison Officers are the representative of DOCs in the NI HUB. They are responsible for ensuring that the DOC is aware of all relevant issues across the system, and for keeping the Hub updated on all DOC and departmental related activities. They are far more than a post box, and perhaps the single most critical element of the whole system. They play a vital role in **challenging and testing information coming from a DOC**, and in adding departmental context. **They must suitably empowered to take decisions** on behalf of the department, and in many cases will be part of the DOC leadership team..

Northern Ireland Hub
The NI Hub is the standing Operation Room for the CCG(NI). Whilst it has no direct decision-making authority it exists to inform decision-making and coordinate the overall response set by the Executive and delivered by CCG.

- **The Hub Secretariat** provides all briefing going into CCG and the Executive (on COVID19 issues). Departments must route anything for escalation or information through the secretariat in order to avoid a disjointed approach to decision making. The secretariat also provides the only central and authoritative record of CCG and (in the context of C19) Executive Meetings.

- The **Hub Sitrep cell** provides the single source of truth – the daily NI Sitrep. It takes information provide by DOCs and from elsewhere and provides the information used by CCG and others to make decisions

- The **Hub Ops Coordination** cell is responsible for ensuring the actions from CCG, the Executive and elsewhere are recorded, assigned, progressed and reported. They ae the 'engine room' of te C3 system, and drive the whole C3 system forward. It drives the daily NI Hub rhythm and working groups, facilitates cross-branch coordination, and drives the information management processes. This section also contains the responsibility for the team of DOC Liaison Officers.

Northern Ireland – C19 C3 Design

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE – DRAFT

UKG	Northern Ireland	Ireland

UKG

Daily PM call and MIGs

FMdFM

EXECUTIVE

IG Liaison – Ministerial engagement

QUAD
BIC
BIIGC

Escalation

Perm Sec Lead
CCG (NI)

Escalation

CCS

Situation Reporting & Dashboard

Escalation

NI Hub

Departmental Liaison Officers
Local Govt., PSNI, MOD

4 Nations Calls

Issues affecting each nation

Department Operations Centres

DOC arrangements to meet local requirement

Strategic Coordination Group

Front line responders in Multi Agency Response

NIO

NIO Officials

Working Groups

Departments combine under a nominated Perm Sec to resolve specific cross cutting issues

Front Line Response

Front line responders

IG Depts

Working level contacts (Inc FCO)

UKG Depts

Working level contacts

Departmental response

Departments resolve issues where possible

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Northern Ireland Hub Design – C19   OFFICIAL SENSITIVE – DRAFT

UKG | **Northern Ireland** | **Ireland**

Legend:
- Tasking
- Briefing / Update
- Information
- Escalation

UKG
- Daily PM call and MIGs

CCS
- Situation Reporting

4 Nations Calls
- Issues affecting each nation

NIO
- NIO Officials

UKG Depts
- Working level contacts

FMdFM
- EXECUTIVE

Escalation

Perm Sec Lead
- CCG (NI)

Chief of Staff & Functional Leadership team

DCOS (Shift Lead)

SITREP Cell
- Collation and development of Daily NI Sitrep
- Internal and external data sources

Sitreps

Ops Coordination
- Tasking, monitoring and reporting on CCG and ECC actions
- Working Groups - Strategic Issues/Cumulative Impacts
- Working Groups driven and supported by Ops Coord, comprising LOs and departmental reps

Secretariat
- Providing Secretariat functions to CCG(NI and Exec)

Specialist Support
- Legal Advice
- NISRA
- Comms and Media

Logistics and Support
- HR/ Staffing/ Welfare
- Facilities/ Tech/ Life Support

Escalation

NIO LO

Departmental Liaison Officers
Departmental Liaison Officers
Local Govt., PSNI, MOD

DOCs
- DOC arrangements to meet local requirement

SCG
- Front line responders

IG Liaison – Ministerial engagement
- QUAD
- BIC
- BIIGC

IG Depts
- Working level contacts (Inc FCO)

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Roles and Purpose – progressing issues and making decisions

Group	Membership	Purpose	Agenda and Input
ECCMC / Executive	**FMdFM** Ministers	Strategic Oversight, taking decisions escalated by CCG, and representing NI in UKG ministerial meetings.	Standing Agenda • Review of Strategy • Issues for decision and escalation • Clear actions
CCG	**HOCS** Perm Secs NIO Police and partners	To provide coherent operational leadership to the crisis, monitoring and managing risk, and taking collective decisions escalated by departments and working groups. Review of SITREP, progress of thematic work, collective decision making at Official level	Standing agenda: • Sitrep • Working Group updates • Emerging issues • Clear actions
Working Groups	**Nominated Perm Sec** Departmental reps as required. Ministerial decisions taken between relevant ministers as required.	Progression of cross cutting issues. Resolution of issues and escalation to CCG(NI) if required. These are time limited groups which exist for only as long as necessary.	As required – clear agenda, outcomes, deadlines . Regular updates provided back to the Hub for including in the daily Sitrep.
Departmental decision making	**Perm Sec led** Ministerial decisions within departmental boundaries	Management of routine BAU matters, and all matters that have no material impact on another department	BAU, but with clear links in to the NI Sitrep. A requirement to share information and data, creating linkage on cross cutting issues, and flagging high profile or potentially contentious decisions and issues
Strategic Coordination Group (SCG)	When stood up, chaired by lead Agency GOLD, with representation from key response partners	To manage immediate threat to life and similarly urgent operational matters where a coordinated approach between partners is required	As required, depending on the nature of the critical incident

- In all cases, decisions are taken at the lowest possible level, taking account of departmental responsibility and capability. All decisions must take account of the overall strategy, and cannot be taken in isolation

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Managing emerging issues

The situation is dynamic, and in some cases fast moving. Issues must be addressed as they arise, and escalated appropriately. If necessary, do not wait for a SITREP deadline.

Rating	Notes
BLACK	**Definition**: Immediate and tangible Threat to Life, Limb or National Security which requiring IMMEDIATE ACTION **Option**: Escalate Immediately to Top Level - **normal Sitrep reporting timelines do not apply.**
RED	**Definition**: Significant impact or risk that will not improve without significant intervention (for example a Sector is unable to function at a practical level) An issue that require immediate action to resolve. **Options**: Escalate – Requires Top Level intervention. Report through Sitrep and ad hoc reporting
AMBER	**Definition**: Issue, Impact or Sector experiencing moderate impacts. Services reduced but functioning; or impacts are being felt but the wider consequences are not yet fully understood; or issues have been identified within the sector that could create major impacts. Action is required to mitigate the worst of the impacts or to find a resolution in the short term. **Options**: Treat, Tolerate or Collaborate – must be articulated in the Sitrep.
GREEN	**Definition**: Sector is functioning as normal and/or within acceptable limits. Minor impacts are being experienced but these are understood. Lower level Operations are functioning within own set tolerances. **Options** – reporting as required for information only

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Northern Ireland Daily Rhythm

Throughout the day DCOs and DAs must be ready to provide updates and support meetings at short notice.

Identify and resolve issues through the day

Healthcare / General Public Sector / Economic and Business / International Committee Meetings **COBR convened if req'd**

07:00 Shift start

07:30 Check In – Welfare and daily rhythm

08:00 Design Check in

08:15 No 10 Cab Sec chaired officials prep Mtg

08:15 COS CCG Brief

08:30 CCG

09:00 NI Hub Stand up – CCG Readout

09:15 PM Daily Meeting

10:15 Functional Leads Mtg

10:30 Morning info email (X-WH update)

12:00 ECCMC Mtg NI Hub Sec (Mon, Wed & Fri)

Ad hoc mtgs throughout the day

14:00 Exec Readout – Urgent Actions

15:00 DOC Sitrep deadline

16:00 Afternoon info email (X-WH update)

17:00 NIO/NI C daily catchup

17:00 NI Sitrep published for HOCS

17:15 HOCS Briefing for CabSec

17:30 Cabinet Secretary Meeting

17:30 CabSec mtg (HOCS)

18:00 Final Sitrep issued

18:00 CCG Agenda issued for following day

18:30 CO Data Submitted

18:30 Shift Handover prepared

19:00 Shift End

22:00 Daily Dashboard issued & evening email issued (X-WH Update)

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