

## **SOSNI meeting with FMdFM and NI Health Minister**

Thursday 19 March 2020

Location TBC

You are meeting the First and deputy First Minister and the Health Minister to discuss Covid-19 Preparedness.

As of 18 March, there were 2182 total cases in the UK, of which 68 in Northern Ireland. There were 292 cases in the ROI. This morning BBC NI are reporting the first confirmed death in NI of Covid 19.

The Northern Ireland Department of Health is following UK Government advice around social distancing and reducing social contact, including encouraging home working.

### **PREPAREDNESS**

- Health services in Northern Ireland are likely to reach capacity sooner than in Great Britain and may require support.
- FM and dFM made a statement yesterday evening that schools are to close to pupils and teachers from Monday.
- Be mindful that the NI economy was already facing challenges before the COVID-19 outbreak (Ulster Bank's chief economist reports that NI is either in or entering a recession), which may exacerbate the economic situation further.
- An Executive meeting is taking place today to discuss the required decisions on the Covid-19 economic stimulus.
- TEO are considering setting up a 'helpline' service to offer a coordinated approach for Departments from citizens offering help, e.g. Chefs, kitchens, business premises for alternate use. They may use a comms campaign to deliver a message for all people of NI to help in the effort.

### **Steer**

- Recognise that the NI Executive and NI Civil Service face unique challenges within the areas they are responsible for given the highly integrated nature of daily life across the island of Ireland.
- Highlight that you raised the additional pressures on the NI health service at yesterday's CDL-chaired Preparedness meeting.
- You may want to encourage creative options such as those being considered in GB (i.e. university campus accommodation providing additional bed space) and query if those can be applied to NI)
- Following your call with the head of SOLCAE this morning, pass on local government offer of support (cleaning hospitals, alternate use of facilities)
- There is now over £900m available through Barnett consequential for the Executive to spend on Covid-19 related measures in NI.
- The NIO is assessing the performance of the NI economy, and the measures being taken by both the UK Government and the Executive to support the economy.
- Offer you and your officials support with linking jurisdictions to ensure a joined up approach to tackling the virus