

Northern Ireland Office

Covid 19

Situation Report **13**

New information in **RED**

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Overview

NI Update

UK Position

Case Numbers (as of 27 March)

England 12,288 (9782)

Wales 921 (741)

Scotland 1059 (894)

Northern Ireland 275 (241)

TOTAL 14,543 (11,658)

Deaths (NI) 13 (10)

Deaths (UK) 759 (578)

Republic of Ireland cases: 1819 (1564)

Government Updates:

- Government to suspend competition law to support Isle of Wight ferry routes

Update from NICS: Department for Finance are putting in an order for more PPE in conjunction with the Irish government who are putting in an order to China. There are currently 139 mechanical ventilators available in Northern Ireland. 40 additional mechanical ventilators (30 adult units and 10 paediatric units) have been ordered bringing the total available in Northern Ireland to 179 by the end of March. Capacity will be increased to 1000 tests per day by the weekend with a further increase to 1300 during next week.

Update from Irish: Increasing testing and more widely testing healthcare staff is being pushed up the agenda for the Irish Gov. Complex voting is currently taking place for the Upper House, the Seanad. Without a Government or Taoiseach to nominate Senators, legislation cannot be passed. This is causing understandable anxiety regarding the inability to pass legislation however talks between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are taking place regarding forming a coalition Government possibly with independents.

UKG: There has been a step change in the C-19 PM Strategy meetings this week; whereas at the beginning of the week the focus was social distancing, this is increasingly pivoting towards NHS capacity. Going forward, in addition to the daily 9.15am PM Strategy meeting, there will be a 9.45 meeting which will consider NHS issues and likely track against key metrics (PPE supplies, ICU capacity)

NI Economy: Serious impacts of COVID-19 continue across all sectors. A support package for the self employed, announced by the XST yesterday, has been broadly welcomed. On Ferry transport, Stena Line have reduced capacity levels in line with social distancing. Freight will continue to operate. In aviation, some routes have been temporarily suspended due to low passenger demand but critical routes remain in place (Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and London). DfTs advanced warning system will alert us to any change in this regard.

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Policy Challenges

International - SoS is speaking regularly to the the Tanaiste, he will engage with the FM, dFM and Tanaiste jointly early next week, and met with the dFM and FM trilaterally today. These meetings will continue twice weekly from now. Topics raised included conflicting advice for workers, PPE and ventilator procurement and an NI/Ire health MoU that Robin Swann has said was ready to be agreed. Work has been stepped up to coordinate our response with Ireland. The Irish system, however, is under significant pressure as work is being stepped up to form a Government - as a result there is a pause in the trilateral engagement and plans for a BIIGC/BIC while the Irish system is given space over the next few days. We are developing a lighter-touch trilateral agenda and testing that with the Irish system.

Preparedness - Today's GPSMIG focused labour shortfall in the agriculture sector. The specialist and bespoke nature of farming activities in Northern Ireland (and livestock farming in particular) means that any redeployment of unemployed or underemployed individuals from a non-farming background is unrealistic. Focus should also be on any labour shortages in food processing and agricultural supply sectors, the effect of which could pose further problems for agriculture. Approach will need to consider the whole supply line - meat processing plants; delivery of feed; collection of milk from farms.

Health - Work is ongoing with CCS in CO to improve upon the NI data being reflected in the UK Dashboard to improve visibility as well as reflect NI healthcare supply requirements. DHSC reporting that the rate of infection in UK has been doubling every three to four days. In NI, GP letters to 40000 vulnerable people are due to land today with patients. Prioritisation of PPE supply will be managed through the NI Hub. Three million items of personal protective equipment (PPE) are being made available to healthcare staff.. Further action is also being taken on PPE guidance to all frontline staff. Irish Government have offered to add NI Executive requirements to an order of PPE from China - NICS are collating requirements today. There are currently 88 adult ICU beds in NI (50 occupied with 14 Covid-19 patients). NI has 139 mechanical ventilators with orders in place for this to increase to 179 by the end of March. A further 650 ventilators are currently being procured. Testing capacity will be increased to 1000 tests per day by the weekend with a further increase to 1300 during next week. There have been requests by GPs for a "complete lockdown" to limit the spread of the virus.

Legislation - Focus has shifted to consider what subordinate legislation is required.

Comms - The NIO Comms Team are plugged into the central comms hub, with twice-daily calls and regular email updates. The Treasury are due to announce measures to support self-employed people through the crisis - NIO will support with a SoSNI quote, an op ed for the NI edition of The Sun and will contact business stakeholders directly with details of the announcement. Our page of business advice on gov.uk will also be updated. The Home Office have set up a cross-govt comms group to deal with reports of scams and fraud, on which NIO Comms is represented. The intranet has been updated to provide staff with a more effective resource with work and wellbeing advice.

Economy - SOS business engagements yesterday were well received. Assessment of the impact continues along with actions to address sectoral issues. Engagement with NI Department of the Economy is being ramped up to inform DFTs risk analysis of GB-NI flights and to ensure we maintain a tolerable minimum connection between NI and GB at the height of disruption.

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Resource	Critical Business
<p>NIO Figures for 20 March</p> <p>Working in the office / travelling 6(9) Working at home 148 (152) Self Isolating - symptoms - still working 2 (2) Family Isolating - no symptoms - still working 11(13) Self Isolating - confirmed - still working 0 (0) Sick - Covid 1(0) Sick- other 1 (2) Special Leave 1 (1) Other leave / NWD 20 (10)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister’s announcement on Monday evening reinforced need to work from home. • Those working in office continue to be significantly reduced with corresponding rise in numbers working at home. • Easter leave commitments will be reviewed to ensure critical business continues • HR working on shift patterns and allowances as well as absence returns to Cabinet Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Impact Assessment completed and has been submitted to PUS and SofS • Process to move staff into priority areas has begun, with retraining taking place • All DDs have completed an assessment of critical business, along with those tasks where office requirement remains • First tranche of staff moves now complete • Keyworker guidance issued in NI, and process underway • SofS has now signed off prioritisation; this has been issued to DDs • ERT full will continue to meet weekly alongside two BDG-specific sub meetings • Network capacity will continue to be monitored with IT Assist to ensure business continuity • NI Hub is now live

Forward Look

- C-19 PM Strat - Ventilators programme [NHS]; [TBC] PPE and other supply - 30 March
- C-19 PM Strat - Update on RCT and treatment regime [CMO] - 31 March
- C-19 PM Strat -Prison resilience - 1 April
- C-19 Strat (O) - Upcoming PM decisions: Prisons resilience [MoJ]; Cab Sec focus items - 31 March
- C-19 Strat (O) - Cab Sec focus items: [TBC] Schools / key workers (following GPSMIG meeting on 31/3) [DfE] - 1 April
- Healthcare MIG - small chance of an HMIG, though Matt Hancock still not cleared the agenda so seems unlikely. Our Cabinet Liaisons will keep us posted. - 29 March
- Healthcare MIG - Social care resilience and the impact from rapid NHS discharge [DHSC] - 31 March
- Healthcare MIG - DA coordination - DAs invited - 1 April
- IIMG - 1) Operationalising the international engagement script 2) Vaccines: CEPI funding targets, envoy and global accord 3) Repatriation. - 30 March
- IIMG (O) -: 1) Economic Response. - 30 March
- IIMG - 1) Economic response 2) EU and NATO collaboration - 31 March
- IIMG (O) 1) Forward look - two weeks ahead 2) International Organisations paper for following week 3) Healthcare Supply Chains and Food Security - 1 April
- IIMG - 1)) 1-3 month strategic forward look and international comparators 2) Main topic: 1-3 month strategic forward look and international comparators. - 2 April
- Economic MIG - construction, 'hot topics' (TBC). - 31 March
- GPS MIG - Forward look. - 29 March
- GPS MIG - Update on Parliamentary Resilience [CO]; Prisons [TBC] [MoJ]. - 30 March
- GPS MIG - [Oral update] IR35 [HMT]; Borders planning and resilience [HO]; Update on school provision [DfE] - 31 March

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