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DATE: 27 July 2020 **Copy Distribution List Below**

TO: Robin Swann, MLA

PRE RELEASE ACCESS: EXCESS DEATHS AND COVID-19 RELATED DEATHS MARCH – JUNE 2020

Issue: Pre-release access to 'Excess mortality and COVID-19 related deaths in Northern Ireland: March-June 2020'

Timing: Urgent. The statistics will be published tomorrow, Tuesday 28th, at 9.30am.

Presentational Issues: The report includes information on excess mortality and COVID-19 related deaths during March to June 2020 based on death registration data. The figures and accompanying Statistical Press Notice are likely to attract significant media attention. The relevant officials in NISRA will handle any statistical queries that may arise.

Freedom of Information: This submission is fully disclosable.

Legislation Implications: None.

Recommendation: You are invited to note the key findings of the statistical report, a copy of which is attached for information.

Background

1. The new NISRA publication planned for release at 9.30am on 28th July, provides an analysis of excess deaths and COVID-19 related deaths occurring in Northern Ireland between 1st March and 30th June 2020. Excess mortality is the difference between actual deaths from all causes in a period minus the expected number of deaths, which are based on the average number of deaths in the same period (March-June) in the previous five years. The analysis includes a breakdown by age, sex, place of death, Local Government District, deprivation, and urban/rural areas.
2. The analysis is based on death registration information collected by the General Register Office and therefore includes all deaths occurring where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate by the doctor who certified the death, whether or not COVID-19 was the underlying cause of death. The figures include cases where the doctor noted that there was suspected or probable coronavirus infection involved in the death.
3. COVID-19 related deaths are not automatically considered to be excess deaths in this analysis. Thus in some populations, such as age groups or Districts, or certain time periods, the number of excess deaths may be smaller than the number of COVID-19 related deaths.
4. The NISRA Statistics Press Notice is attached at Annex A. Main points of interest outlined in the report include:
 - There were 885 excess deaths from 1st March to 30th June 2020, 17.4% above expected levels (average deaths for the same period over the last five years). In the same period, there were 837 COVID-19 related deaths.
 - The number of excess deaths for females (474) is higher than that for males (411). The vast majority of excess deaths (78.4%) and COVID-19 related deaths (79.8%) are accounted for by those aged 75 and over.
 - The number of deaths in hospitals was slightly lower than expected levels, despite 434 COVID 19 related deaths occurring in hospitals. In contrast, the majority of excess deaths (556 or 62.8%) did occur at home, while 44 COVID-19 related deaths occurred at home.
 - Belfast LGD has the largest number of excess deaths (218), accounting for a quarter (24.6%) of the total number of excess deaths. However, Antrim & Newtownabbey LGD had the highest excess deaths as a proportion above expected levels (28.4%), while Mid Ulster LGD had the lowest (7.0%).
5. Recipients are reminded that these are Official Statistics to which you have received pre-release access under the Pre-Release access to Official Statistics (NI) Order 2009. Recipients of pre-release statistics are cautioned:
 - to ensure that the statistics, or any information based on them, or any indication of the content is not made available to others;
 - not to seek changes to release dates; and
 - to make the statistician responsible for the statistics aware of any accidental release of the information to others immediately.

OFFICIAL – SENSITIVE: Official Statistics embargoed until 9.30am on 28th July 2020. For named Individuals only.

Wrongful release includes indications of the content, including descriptions such as "favourable" or "unfavourable". Please prevent inappropriate use by treating this information as restricted. Recipients should note that a list of those who receive privileged early access is publicly available on the NISRA website.

Recommendation: You are invited to note the key findings of the statistical report 'Excess mortality and COVID-19 related deaths in Northern Ireland: March-June 2020.

NR



I&S

cc: Richard Pengelly (Permanent Secretary, DoH)
David Gordon (Head of Communications, DoH)
Eugene Mooney (Senior Principal Statistician, DOH)
NR (DoH Press Office)
Mark McLaughlin (Head of Communications, DoF)

Annex A

**STATISTICS PRESS NOTICE –
Excess deaths and COVID-19
related deaths in Northern Ireland:
March-June 2020**



9:30am Tuesday 28th July 2020

Excess deaths and COVID-19 related deaths: March – June 2020

Latest figures published today by NISRA show that there were 885 excess deaths from 1st March to 30th June 2020, 17.4% above expected levels (average deaths for the same period over the last five years). In the same period, there were 837 COVID-19 related deaths.

The number of excess deaths for females (474) is higher than that for males (411), whilst the number of COVID-19 related deaths is slightly higher (421 compared to 416).

The vast majority of excess deaths (78.4%) and COVID-19 related deaths (79.8%) are accounted for by those aged 75 and over. In this age group, excess deaths were 21.3% above expected levels, compared to 17.4% for all ages. For both males and females aged 55 to 64 (older working age), excess deaths as a proportion of expected levels, were higher than the equivalent proportions for those aged 65 to 74 (younger pensionable age).

The number of deaths in hospitals was slightly lower than expected levels, despite 434 COVID-19 related deaths occurring in hospitals. Care homes had similar levels of excess deaths (336) and COVID-19 related deaths (346). In contrast, the majority of excess deaths (556 or 62.8%) occurred at home, while 44 COVID-19 related deaths occurred at home.

Belfast LGD had the largest number of excess deaths (218), accounting for a quarter (24.6%) of the total number of excess deaths in Northern Ireland. However, Antrim & Newtownabbey LGD had the highest excess deaths as a proportion above expected levels (28.4%), while Mid Ulster LGD had the lowest (7.0%).

Excess deaths were highest in the least deprived areas, with just over a 20% increase in deaths compared to expected levels. Excess deaths were lower in rural areas at 14.3% above expected levels, compared to 18.7% in urban areas. Excess deaths were associated with proximity of area of main residence to Belfast, with decreasing proportions of excess deaths with increasing travel times to Belfast, from 23.3% within 20 minute drive-time to 8.8% for a drive-time between 45 and 60 minutes.

NISRA

July 2020

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Statistics on weekly deaths registered in Northern Ireland can be found at:
<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/weekly-deaths>
2. All media queries to Department of Finance Press Office at dof.pressoffice@finance-ni.gov.uk or on Tel: **I&S** Out of office hours please contact the Duty Press Officer or **I&S** **I&S** and your call will be returned.
3. These provisional statistics are based on death registration information collected by the General Register Office. The occurrence based statistics (to end June 2020) take into account registrations up to 15th July 2020, to allow for delays in death registrations.
4. Excess mortality can be used to measure of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as it does not rely on the availability or interpretation of the (primary and secondary) causes of death. It captures deaths from all causes, which may be related to a range of factors associated with the pandemic, for example, changes in the availability or uptake of health care services including screening and diagnosing, or the impact of 'lock-down' on people's mental health. Some of these effects may take months or years to be fully understood.
5. Excess mortality is the difference between actual deaths from all causes in a period minus the expected number of deaths, which is based on the number of deaths in the previous five years.
6. COVID-19 related deaths are all deaths where COVID-19 was mentioned on the death certificate by the doctor who certified the death, whether or not COVID-19 was the primary underlying cause of death. The figures include cases where the doctor noted that there was suspected or probable coronavirus infection involved in the death.
7. The identification of the underlying or main cause of death (coding) of deaths occurring from March to June 2020 has not been completed yet. Such information for deaths registered up to 30th June 2020 is due to be published on 17th September 2020.
8. Further information on the statistics provided in this publication can be obtained from NISRA Customer Services at:

Telephone:

I&S

E-mail:

demography@nisra.gov.uk

Responsible Statistician:

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