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FROM: ANDY COLE **Copy Distribution List Below**

DATE: 18 OCTOBER 2020

TO: PS/MINISTERS

SUBJECT: COVID-19 2nd WAVE – ACTIVATION OF NICCMA & CCG (O)

Issue: Stand up of CCG COVID (O).

Timing: Immediate.

Fol implications An exemption provided under Section 35(1) (a) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 may be applicable.

Financial Implications: Departments meet the costs of volunteer staff for the NIHUB.

Cost for additional external support for the provision of data analytics for a full stand up of the NIHUB.

Legislative Implications: None.

Press Office Implications: The NIHUB provides a central coordination function for an NI Government response – and as such NIHUB products are classed as official sensitive and would not be released to the public.

Recommendations: It is recommended that Ministers:

- consider a model which includes CCG (M);
- note the intent to invoke NICCMA and for TEO to stand up CCG (O) with an initial rhythm of meeting weekly; and

- note the current resourcing risk to full stand up and escalation of the C3 structures.

Background

1. I wrote to you on 23 September outlining the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) and the CCG (NI) Protocol for the Escalation of Multi-Agency Response, together with the escalation model for any stand up of the NIHUB, which I have again attached at Annex A.
2. At the time of writing, I indicated that without a significant escalation or stress around hospitalisation and ICU capacity, or a wider concurrency, it would be difficult to see the requirement for an increase in the frequency of CCG (NI) and by definition, for an escalation to full activation of the NIHUB to HUB One or HUB Two status.
3. The NIHUB has remained on “Alert” status with staff being put on notice to activate and commence refresher training.

Invoking NICCMA

4. The data reflects a rapidly changing position and an increase in community transmission together with an increase in ICU COVID occupied beds, with CMO and CSA advising a doubling rate of infection and hospitalisation admissions of around 7 days. DOH have also in recent days, reactivated their Corporate Business Continuity Plan to ensure they have robust arrangements in place to manage a second surge and other pressures. All of this, coupled with the Executive introducing further restrictions through regulation, mean the impacts move beyond the health space with wider cross cutting impacts to be coordinated and monitored.
5. Accordingly, TEO intends to invoke the next stage of NICCMA and establish CCG (NI) to act as a focal point and provide strategic oversight for the emergency response. CCG (NI) will also collate and share information with key NI partners and seek input to inform collective next steps and decision making at CCG (NI) and the Executive.
6. The NIHUB will remain in the “Alert” phase and the core civil contingencies team will provide support to CCG (NI) and ensure reach back into Departments and across partners to coordinate information as necessary.

Rhythm & Format of CCG (NI)

7. It is extremely important that any stand-up of the structures within the civil contingencies space is both appropriate and proportionate and will add value. None of this is within the usual space of “emergency response” which is normally short and sharp in duration; this is a prolonged health crisis which will have ongoing health, economic and societal impact for months to come. A prolonged response around COVID-19, together with any concurrency with winter and D20 presents significant issues around both the availability and resilience of staff and it will be important to manage the risk of scaling any structures too quickly.

8. Initially therefore, a proportionate approach is very necessary, albeit it should still provide effective strategic oversight and be scaled if necessary. One aspect which Ministers may wish to consider is a model which includes CCG (M) which would provide a dedicated forum and focused briefing to Ministers from the Chair of CCG (Official) and act as a link to and inform considerations at the Executive. This can be explored further and further detail on this could be provided if helpful.
9. Initially, it is intended for CCG to meet in a CCG (O) format, on a weekly rhythm, commencing shortly. A weekly SitRep document will be prepared to monitor and track cross cutting impact and escalate issues for discussion and decision.
10. This approach also allows for a graduated stand up of the C3 structures and the frequency will remain under review and likewise, any full stand up of the C3 structures including DOCs and Liaison Officers. With NIHUB on the current Alert footing, DOCs will not stand up at this stage, but there is in place provision of formal reach back into each Department and partners through their C3 leads.

Resourcing the Stand Up of C3 Structures

11. As indicated above, any escalation or full stand up of the C3 structures will require an escalation of the NIHUB and will also require a stand up of DOCs across all Departments. With competing pressures across the system, the delivery risk of full stand up is presently “high”, with simply insufficient resource to staff the necessary structures.
12. TEO continues to work with colleagues across Departments to address the current risk, however Departments indicate that without clear prioritisation of current business as usual, it will be extremely difficult to properly resource DOCs and NIHUB.

Recommendations

13. It is recommended that Ministers:

- consider a model which includes CCG (M);
- note the intent to invoke NICCMA and for TEO to stand up CCG (O) with an initial rhythm of meeting weekly; and
- note the current resourcing risk to full stand up of the C3 structures.

Personal Data

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NI HUB ESCALATION AND DE-ESCALATION

LGD – Lead Government Department EPG – Emergency Preparedness Group TCG – Tactical Coordination Group
SCG – Strategic Coordination Group DOC – Departmental Operations Centre

