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

DATE: 29 SEPTEMBER 2020

TO: 1. CHRIS STEWART [Agreed 29/9/2020. In my view the situation gives rise to an unacceptable level of risk, requiring urgent intervention.]

2. DEPARTMENTAL BOARD

NIHUB ESCALATION: ALERT PHASE – RISK RE LACK OF STAFF RESOURCE

Issue: Insufficient volunteers to resource a future stand-up of the NIHUB.

Timescale: Urgent.

FOI Implications: An exemption provided under Section 35(1) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 may be applicable.

Legislative Implications: None.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Board:

- **note the risk around the Executive Office's capacity to stand up the NIHUB in the event of an escalating crisis in the coming weeks; and**
- **note the request to NICS Board for intervention.**

Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements

1. The Board will be aware of the civil contingencies response arrangements in place, known as NICCMA and led by the Civil Contingencies Group reporting to the Executive. One feature of the NICCMA arrangements is a central operations room to co-ordinate any cross cutting response; this operations room is known as the NIHUB and operates together with a suite of individual Departmental Operations Centres (DOCs) to facilitate the effective delivery of individual departmental contributions to the response.
2. Civil Contingencies has overall responsibility for the civil contingencies policy and architecture in Northern Ireland and as such, has responsibility to ensure readiness of the NIHUB in any escalating crisis. The NIHUB stood up between March and June 2020 in managing the response to COVID-19 and since then, a small team has been implementing recommendations from a lessons learned review across the C3 structures.
3. One of those lessons was to ensure a more managed escalation of the NIHUB and in August 2020 the NICS Board approved the revised principles for a graduated emergency response, consisting of a more proportionate and agile stand up process of the NIHUB across 5 stages, as reflected in the schematic attached. The Board also approved for me to correspond with those volunteers who had agreed to return to the NIHUB in any future stand up, to confirm their allocation to a team and to commence refresher and any induction training over the coming weeks.

Current Position

4. That process has now been completed and unfortunately a number of staff who had responded positively to a post HUB volunteer survey, have indicated they are now unable to assist in any future stand up of the NIHUB, citing either business reasons or line manager intervention. Correspondence issued to 30 people in total (enough to staff 2 teams with contingency), 7 of whom are TEO Civil Contingencies staff. Of the people approached and excluding TEO, only 6 across the remainder of NICS have confirmed their availability.
5. At the current rate of returning volunteers, it would therefore currently only be possible to resource one team in the NIHUB operating the pattern of a normal working week, with any escalation of the response to address concurrency or reporting demands from Cabinet Office not possible at this time.
6. This presents a significant risk to NICS preparedness coming into winter, alongside the end of the EU transition period. It may also mean that NI will not be able to contribute to any UK wide response mechanism that may be triggered by Whitehall.

NIHUB Alert Status

7. With the recent increase in the spread of COVID-19 and the increasing restrictions introduced by the Executive, together with volunteers starting to populate into teams and the necessary lead in for refresher/induction training, NIHUB is now on a **HUB Alert** footing from the escalation model.

8. Whilst this does not reflect an intent to call CCG (NI) or to escalate any stand-up of the NIHUB at this time, it does signal across the C3 structures, a definite need for readiness. This will also require Departments to ensure DOCs are ready to respond in the event of any future escalation. Early soundings are that resourcing of DOCs is equally challenging.

Mitigating the Risk

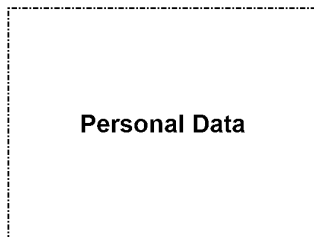
9. Additional staff resource will need to be identified if an NIHUB is required. I have written to NICS Board to escalate the risk and request that 4-5 people at DP-EO2 grade are urgently identified from each Department, to populate the teams in the event of a stand up. These are likely to be fresh volunteers which also requires a lead in for induction and role training in advance of being deployed to any team.

Recommendation

10. The Department Board is asked:

- to note the risk around the Executive Office's capacity to stand up the NIHUB in the event of an escalating crisis in the coming weeks; and
- to note the request to NICS Board for intervention.

11. I will continue to monitor closely over the coming days and weeks.



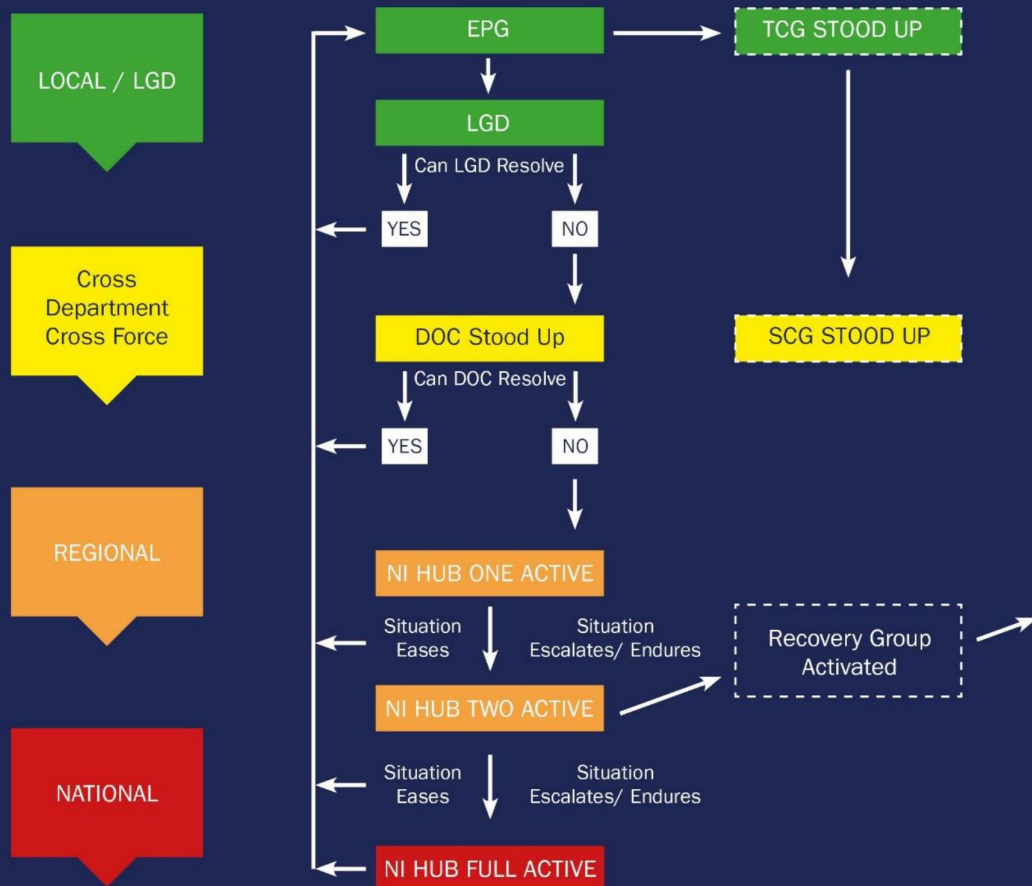
ANDY COLE

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Neelia Lloyd
Name Redacted
Peter Toogood
Alison Clydesdale
Mark McGuicken

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



NI HUB STEADY
 CCG (NI) Meeting routinely
 Normal Business

NI HUB ALERT
 CCG (NI) Meeting more Frequently
 Core Hub and Specialisms (as required) put on Notice to Activate
 Start Training & Induction

NI HUB ONE ACTIVE
 CCG (NI) Meeting Weekly
 One Shift Mon-Frid 09:00 to 17:00
 Other Shifts on Training & Induction Cycle & Notice

NI HUB TWO ACTIVE
 CCG (NI) Meeting Twice Weekly
 Two Shifts Mon-Frid 07:00 to 19:00
 Two Locations
 Remaining Shifts on Training & Induction Cycle & Notice

NI HUB FULL ACTIVE
 CCG (NI) Meeting Daily
 24/7 MANNING
 Two/Three Locations