

PPE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

FOR ACTION	
ISSUE: PPE in Northern Ireland	
<p>PRIVATE OFFICE COMMENTS: This submission outlines the current PPE situation in NI and seeks your agreement on the NIO's role.</p> <p>Officials have taken on board suggestions from Isabel and Robin - both who wanted us to ensure that we are pushing as much as possible to ensure that UKG is supporting NI's PPE needs and limiting NI's need to look abroad/to Ireland. Officials are also picking up Robin's comments about speaking with NI DoJ about their short term needs.</p> <p>The recommendation is straight forward:</p> <p>"We will work to ensure that the UK government meets as much of Northern Ireland's PPE needs as it can and that Northern Ireland isn't overly reliant on supply of PPE from abroad. Do you agree that we should continue to monitor the situation closely, using the four-nation approach to ensure the UK government provides as much support as it can to Northern Ireland?"</p>	
<div>NR</div>	
<p>SECRETARY OF STATE COMMENTS:</p> <p>Agreed and happy for RW to lead on.</p> <p>We also need to chase health team re the Derry Uni project sign off</p>	

To: Secretary of State

Date: 24 April 2020

Deadline: 30 April 2020

PPE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

ISSUE:

Ensuring sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the response to Covid-19 has been a priority for UKG with significant public interest. While public and media scrutiny has been less in Northern Ireland, similar risks and challenges, in particular outside of the health sector, have been faced. Agreement on the NIO's role moving forward is sought.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you agree that officials should continue to closely monitor the situation and ensure in Whitehall discussions that Northern Ireland receives its fair share of any PPE stocks that UKG acquires.

MINISTER OF STATE COMMENTS: Agree with the recommendation and the point made by SpAds, the more the UK can be seen to be making a positive contribution to the PPE situation in NI the better.

We should look closely at the requirement from the NI DOJ and see whether there is anything in the short to medium term we can do to address it.

SPECIAL ADVISER COMMENTS: Changes incorporated.

NEXT STEPS. Officials will continue to engage with the Northern Ireland Executive and to monitor their PPE stocks and needs. We will also continue to engage with the Department of Health and Social Care to advocate for the four nations approach to PPE.

BACKGROUND

1. Given the global pressures on sourcing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the UK Government is taking a four-nations and evidence-based approach to ensure workers in higher risk areas (health and social care sectors) are prioritised with fair and equitable distribution around the whole of the UK. A weekly PPE supply forum has been established, attended by all of the DAs. NHS England is leading on procurement on behalf of all Government departments and the Devolved Administrations, coordinating demand and reducing the risk of competition over limited supplies. Guidance has been published by UKG and the devolved administrations on appropriate PPE for those sectors believed to have a clinical need for PPE:
 - a. Health and social care workers (written and reviewed by all four UK public health bodies and informed by NHS infection prevention control experts);
 - b. Those cleaning non-health care settings;
 - c. Those working in the management and care of deceased;
 - d. Those working in prisons and other prescribed places of detention; and
 - e. First responders.

DETAIL

2. In Northern Ireland, the approach to PPE is split between the Department of Health, responsible for supply in the health and social care sector, and the Department of Finance, responsible for coordinating supplies in the wider public sector. These structures have taken time to bed in. Requests for a consolidated view of the PPE demand for public sector organisations have been limited to the health and social care sector. Officials have lent in and helped the Department of Finance dock into these channels.
3. The supply to meet current demand is sufficient. Northern Ireland's PPE Stock levels reported to CCS on 14 April were 1m FFP3 masks, 5.6m aprons, 3.9m face masks IIR, 0.3m gowns, 1.8m eye protectors and 19m gloves. As part of the four nations approach, Northern Ireland has received 5.5m items of PPE from the UK government. Northern Ireland has been able to send 250,000 gowns to England. The Minister for Health has reported that Northern Ireland has sufficient PPE supply to meet current demand and keep all those who work in health and social care settings safe. Work is ongoing to ensure modelling assumptions reflect usage and demand. The Department of Finance has not been able to provide a breakdown of the PPE stock held by the wider public sector in Northern Ireland.
4. Looking ahead to future demand in the medium and long-term, focus is on building up PPE stockpiles for the post surge period and the expected second surge. In addition to the health and social care sectors, the following parts of the wider public sector need

PPE: the Department of Justice (i.e. funeral directors), the police service, the prisons service, local councils, the Education Authority, the Department for Infrastructure, the Housing Executive, and agriculture. Of these, the Department of Justice (funeral directors), the police service, and the prisons service are the most likely to suffer a shortage in PPE. It is estimated that over the next three months the following PPE will be required by this part of the public sector: 1,200,000 aprons; 1,500 body bags; 27,000 eye protectors (glasses); 1,180,080 face masks (FFP3); 440,000 face mask IIR; 200,000 gloves; and 445,00 units of hand hygiene.

5. The intention is that this requirement will be met by a bulk international order to be placed over the next few days. In the interim the Executive has been procuring PPE from local suppliers in whatever quantities are available, bedding in lines of communication between Health and Finance to ensure all parts of the system are aware of wider requirements.
6. Concerns have been raised about whether there was a shortage of PPE for funeral directors. While there have been no reports of funeral directors being unable to carry out their functions due to a shortage of PPE there is a risk. The Department of Justice ordered additional PPE supplies in preparation for the COVID crisis. Funeral directors have now started requesting some of these supplies but are doing so at a faster rate than was expected. This is because the companies that usually supply PPE to funeral directors are now focusing their supplies on the NHS meaning that funeral directors are having to ask the Department of Justice for equipment to handle the bodies of people who have not died as a result of covid as well as those who have.
7. There are currently supplies of all of the PPE that funeral directors require other than gowns and FFP3/2 masks. Additional supplies of the gowns are expected to arrive in mid-May and masks in mid to late May.
8. The Department of Justice's other main concern is body bags and future supply should the resource run out, a concern also shared in GB. 1,500 body bags were ordered in preparation for the Covid crisis but as with other PPE items demand for them has been higher than expected - 90 were supplied to funeral directors in just one day on Friday.
9. There is currently a very limited supply of body bags across the UK. The Public Health England guidance for funeral directors does not advise that body bags are used in cases of death from suspected or confirmed cases of Covid, however the guidance in NI does advise that body bags are used.

NEXT

STEPS

10. While there are currently sufficient supplies of PPE in Northern Ireland, the Executive are reliant on incoming deliveries from abroad which are subject to delay.
11. As set out in the Government's PPE plan, it is vital that we work as four united nations and that supplies of PPE are distributed equitably across the four nations. We will work to ensure that the UK government meets as much of Northern Ireland's PPE needs as it can and that Northern Ireland isn't overly reliant on supply of PPE from abroad. **Do you agree that we should continue to monitor the situation closely, using the four-nation approach to ensure the UK government provides as much support as it can to Northern Ireland?**

COPY LIST: Minister Walker; Special Advisers; PUS; Director General; Directors; Covid-19; Covid Health; Covid Preparedness Team; Comms