

NI/ ROI CMO TELECONFERENCE TO DISCUSS APPROACHES TO COVID -19

22 APRIL 2020

Participants

NI

Dr Michael McBride
Dr Naresh Chada
Prof Ian Young
Lourda Geoghegan
Ms Liz Redmond
Ms Gillian Armstrong
[NR], minutes
Ms Jennifer Mooney, loggist

ROI

Dr Ronan Glynn
Dr Alan Smith
Dr Darina O'Flanagan
Prof Philip Nolan
Mr Colm O'Connaill
Ms Lorraine Doherty
Dr John Cuhiddy

Testing and contact tracing

1. It was noted that the approach to testing in NI had been similar to that in ROI until 12 March when there was a move to more targeted testing. As regards contact tracing, this had initially been fairly small-scale, but there were plans to resume it wef 27 April and to consider scaling up with use of digital options such as web-based platforms/proximity apps. The digital element is being led in NI by the Chief Digital Information Officer, Dan West, who was liaising with counterparts in GB and ROI.
2. The ROI approach to testing had been similar to NI's. This was recently extended to care homes, led by the Ambulance Service. It was confirmed that NI had initially been testing in 8 to 10 homes daily, but this had been extended at Easter to incorporate all care homes where there had been an outbreak.
3. Michael McBride outlined the position in GB regarding care homes and staff, and plans in NI to take action to prevent infections entering care homes, and to prevent cross infection between homes. **It was agreed to share further details of the sanctuary model being considered with ROI. It was agreed that it would be helpful to exchange information on other models which were being trialled with a view to sharing learning and finding a commonality of approach.**
4. As regards testing capacity, NI has increased its capacity with plans to use this for some community surveillance. Plans are in place to do up to 1,600 tests a day by the end of April. NI was also plugged in to the wider UK commercial testing arrangements.
5. Discussion took place on case definition, and it was considered that it would be preferable if a case definition was agreed across jurisdictions.

Surveillance and data analysis

6. Darina O'Flanagan advised that ROI was planning a prevalence study based on the WHO approach. Janice Bailie from HSC R&D in the PHA was on the steering group for this piece of work. ROI were also intending to carry out enhanced studies in those care homes with significant outbreaks to help assess controls/policy going forward. A prevalence study was also planned in NI and **it was agreed that it would be helpful to work closely on this to facilitate an all-island picture.**
7. **NI had also initiated a programme to get some information about prevalence in children - ROI were keen to learn more about this in due course.**
8. Ronan Glynn advised that a Health Technology Assessment that had been shared with NI was to be published later today.
9. There followed a broad discussion about media handling. **It was agreed that it would be important to have a communications strategy in place for the next wave of the pandemic.**

Modelling

10. It was noted that NI and ROI were adopting similar approaches to modelling and **Ian Young and Philip Nolan agreed to pick up the discussion on this separately.** Given the similarity in the pattern of the pandemic across the jurisdictions it was considered important to have all-island engagement on this issue.

Next Meeting

11. It was agreed that a further meeting would be arranged in approximately a week subject to availability.

Summary of actions

- Details of sanctuary model for care homes to be sent to ROI - **[actioned 22 April]**. ROI to share information in due course on the approaches they have taken in this area.

- All-island approach to prevalence study to be considered.
- NI study on prevalence in children – details to be shared with ROI in due course.
- Ian Young and Philip Nolan to engage separately on modelling.
- Communications strategy to be looked at for next phase of pandemic.