

**Civil Contingency Group (COVID-19 Response) Meeting
Tuesday 31 March 2020
Block B Level 5 Conference Room Castle Buildings**

Note of Meeting

Attendees

David Sterling (Chair)
Arlene Foster – FM
Michelle O'Neill - DFM
Gordon Lyons – JM
Anthony Harbinson - TEO
Chris Stewart – TEO
Karen Pearson – TEO
Katrina Godfrey - DfI
Richard Pengelly – DoH
Mike Brennan - DfE
Dennis McMahon - DAERA
Peter May - DOJ
Sue Gray - DOF
Jill Minne – NICSHR
Derek Baker - DE
Tracy Meharg- DfC
Mark Hamilton – PSNI
Mark Deeney - NIFRS
Michael Bloomfield - NIAS
Joan McCaffrey – Local Government
Stephen Reid – Local Government
Maria Jennings – Food Standards Agency
Mark Larmour – NIO
Chris McNabb – EIS
Hugh Widdis – DSO
Donal Moran – NI Hub
NR – NI Hub
NR – NI Hub
NR – NI Hub
Lesley Hogg - NI Assembly
NR – NI Hub – Note taker

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. COVID-19 - CURRENT SITUATION AND PROGNOSIS

- Richard Pengelly gave a brief update to the meeting. The latest figures were 533 cases with 22 deaths.
- 513 tests had been conducted over the past 24 hours.

Modelling

- DoH meeting today to look at the modelling to determine the possible requirement of a field hospital within NI. They are also looking at increasing critical care capacity within the NI Hospitals. FM and dFM to be kept updated on this issue.
- Construction industry actively engaging in these discussions. Potential constraints around construction supply chain and medical gas supplies.

Action 1: DoH to update FM & DFM on critical care capacity work.

Testing

- Randox has been awarded the UK COVID19 Testing contract. Issue around the use of testing equipment from Universities. Discussions ongoing to resolve this issue.

3. ACTIONS REVIEW

- Anthony Harbinson gave an update on the outstanding actions from 27 March.

Additional PPE requirement

- All PPE requirements should be sent to Sue Gray.

Construction Employers Forum

- DoF working closely with construction industry; CPD are fully supporting the work in this area.
- Public Sector should continue to pay on all regular contracts to keep people in employment and ensure the system continues to work.

Clarity on Furloughed Workers

- Meeting was held with Treasury Officials yesterday, 30th March, DfE to provide feedback on these issues later today.

Financial difficulties for ferry companies

- Serious financial difficulties across ferry companies, ports and haulage companies. This is not a devolved matter and therefore needs to be dealt at UK level. A briefing to be prepared for FM and dFM to raise with SoS. NIO to raise issues with UKG.

Action 2: Junior Ministers to raise the issue around financial difficulties for ferries/haulage/ports at COBRA

Action 3: DfE to produce urgent briefing for ministers engaging with HMG Ministers today. Share with DfE/DoF/DAERA/TEO/DFI ministers

Risk to chemical supply chain

- DfE not aware of any problems with chemical supplies

- If anyone is aware of chemical supply issues they should raise them.

Social distancing for non-EEA fishing crews

- This issue is still being looked at and hopefully will be completed tomorrow, 1 April 2020.

Engagement Forum readout

- The readout from the meeting is still to issue. A further meeting has been arranged for tomorrow with key issues still best practice in relation to social distancing and essential business.

Assessment of Testing Needs

- Assessment of testing needs to be sent DoF with input from DoJ. A meeting to determine prioritisation of testing has been arranged with CPD.

GPS (General Purpose Sector) Readout

- Relevant Departments have been notified

Interpretation of Restrictive Powers

- TEO and DfC met with Local Government and a paper on Restrictive Powers will be completed today. Primary decision is that Local Government responsible for enforcement across business sector with PSNI responsible for citizens.

FSA Invite to Engagement Forum

- FSA invited – completed

Future legislation requirements

- Legislation to be provided to Health Committee but this is likely to be after the Easter Recess.
- NIO continues to monitor issues in GB.

4. SIT-REP UPDATE

- Anthony Harbinson took the meeting through the main issues arising from yesterday's Sit-rep.
- He also advised that the Sit-Rep had been updated to include more relevant metrics. The Sit-Rep would continue to evolve and further and more relevant information becomes available.

Action 4: CCG members to send any suggestions or proposals for Sit-Rep to NI-Hub today

Action 5: Secretariat to advise Sit-Rep Cell that DfC leading on food supplies for vulnerable people shielding

5. MEMBER UPDATES

No members reported any issuing requiring escalation to CCG.

In addition:

- Mark Hamilton (PSNI) asked that PSNI be kept informed of any issues in respect of supply chains. Was concerned around the exploitation of the vulnerable and other negative effects this may have on the community.
- Michael Bloomfield (NIAS) advised that NIAS had currently about 20% of staff off ill. NIAS now using voluntary sector organisation to help meet need.
- FSA asked to be kept informed of any issues around supply change.
- Local Government confirmed that Funeral Director Guidance had issued by DoH.
- Derek Baker (DE) advised that the number of children using schools had declined with only around 700 using the schools yesterday; it was around 1,400 last week. Schools are likely to remain open over the Easter Holidays.
- Mark Larmour (NIO) indicated that there were concerns around the availability of NI Data to the Cabinet Office. COS indicate that the data should be addressed from today. NI departments continuing to work with UKG in respect procurement of emergency kit. NIO to raise with SoS later today.
- Dennis McMahon (DAERA) raised concerns around the 12% vacancy in the workforce which would require additional actions and its potential impact on exports.

6. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- Chris McNabb said that there was media interest in respect of meeting between SoS, FM, dFM and Tánaiste.

7. AOB AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting

- 08:30, 1 April 2020, 5th Floor Conference Room, Castle Buildings.