

Civil Contingency Group (COVID-19 Response) Meeting

Friday 10 April 2020

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Note of Meeting

Attendees

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

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. COVID-19 - CURRENT SITUATION AND PROGNOSIS

- Richard Pengelly (DoH) updated the meeting:
 - To date there had been 1,477 confirmed cases in NI and 82 deaths.
 - It was important to hammer home the messages on compliance over the Easter holidays.
 - Work continued on the management of PPE.

- Expert Testing Working Group had met to discuss how to deploy growing capacity and to consider key areas outside of the Health Service which would benefit from access to COVID-19 testing.
- Peter May (DoJ) advised that a number of groups have already been identified for testing, including PSNI and NIPS. He reminded colleagues that a list of people who were in essential roles outside the public service and who could benefit from access to testing was due for return by 1pm today. He advised that 200 tests will be available over the weekend.

Action: Testing for non HCS Workers initiated. CCG Members to liaise with Peter May to identify essential workers who require test, 1pm 10 April 2020.

3. ACTIONS REVIEW

David Sterling progressed through the actions from the meeting of 9 April 2020.

PPE and Testing for residential care homes

Richard Pengelly (DoH) advised that:

- Traditionally independent care providers had been responsible for the supply of their own PPE but in the current circumstances it was being provided to them for free;
- Each Trust had now established a single point of contact (SPOC) for care providers and the SPOC contact details had been made available to providers;
- To date there had been 54 reported cases of flu-like symptoms reported in care homes, with 27 of those confirmed as COVID-19. The Chief Social Worker has written to providers to advise how they could access testing;
- PHA Health Protection Branch had updated relevant procedures for GPs on when they should contact PHA, on risk assessments for care settings and on the PHA being available for advice and guidance on managing potential outbreaks;
- The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) had established a dedicated service for providing advice to independent care homes on a range of issues.
- JM Kearney advised that he had heard of inconsistencies around the service across different Trust areas. He noted that there was a significant sense of fear among care home staff and particular concern around residents returning to care homes after being discharged from hospital without being tested for COVID-19. He asked whether DoH had an assessment of what the independent providers needed in terms of PPE; what they held currently and what they were releasing to staff.

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Action: Richard Pengelly (DoH) to update CCG on Monday 13 April 2020 on the details of PPE within independent health and social care sector and to recommend any actions required to get PPE to front line staff.

Prioritised Testing for non-health service testing

- Discussed above under Agenda Item 2.

Fly Tipping

- Denis McMahon (DAERA) confirmed his Department was working closely with Local Councils in collecting data to build a detailed picture of the issue and to provide a comparison with this time last year.

Action: Denis McMahon to provide an update on fly tipping to CCG for Wednesday 15 April 2020.

PPE for Funeral Directors

- Peter May (DoJ) confirmed this issue had now been resolved. He thanked colleagues in DoH for their assistance.

Haulage Industry

- Mike Brennan (DfE) confirmed that there had been significant engagement on the issue. The Transport Secretary had written to the Chancellor yesterday with UK wide proposals. DfT recognised that those proposals were not enough to address the NI issue and were seeking to secure Treasury agreement to the potential of injecting funding directly to companies if they could show clear evidence of financial distress as a consequence of the current situation.

Travelling for exercise

- Alan Todd (PSNI) advised that PSNI had confirmed its authority to move to an enforcement phase. Officers would continue to be reasonable in its application but legal advice was that the necessity of travel test in regulation 5(2) supported decisions on enforcement. Chris Stewart reported unanimity among the legal profession on this point.
- ACC Todd confirmed that the ANPR data was not yet available for 9 April but there appeared to be an increase in the volume of traffic on the roads.
- Michael Bloomfield (NIAS) asked if health workers would be required to produce work passes if stopped by PSNI. ACC Todd said there was no legal requirement but carrying work ID was likely to be helpful in speeding up the checking process.
- The dFM noted that anecdotally there appears to be an increase in the number of people out and about and she considered it important that the

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message about staying at home over Easter should continue to be heard from front line services.

Park Closures

- Stephen Reid (Local Government) advised that town parks are partially open with councils continuing to discourage people travelling to them. All forest and country parks were closed. A concern for the weekend was around local beauty spots including beaches. Councils have closed car parks close to these venues where possible.
- Increased activity had been reported at some caravan parks. Local councils were responsible for licensing caravan parks and were engaging with the trade association for caravan parks, to reinforce the stay away messaging, and with the PSNI.

Tourist attractions over Easter

- Mike Brennan (DfE) confirmed that Tourism NI was using its website to get the message out about not travelling to tourist attractions over Easter.

Enforcement under Health Regulations

- Chris Stewart (TEO) advised that enforcement authority was provided for under the current Health regulations. Advice on this issue will be going to Ministers for decision later today.

Governance of PPE

- Richard Pengelly (DoH) and Sue Gray (DoF) advised that given the complexity of the moving parts associated with the consumption and availability of PPE stocks, they proposed to produce a weekly update to the Executive rather than a daily tally. The FM, dFM and HOCS agreed that this would be sufficient. HOCS confirmed that issue was now closed.

PR around PPE supply

- Sue Gray (DoF) confirmed that she was working with DoH colleagues and this work should be completed in the early part of next week

Fly Tipping

- Discussed under Agenda Item 2

Policy Issues Paper

- Chris Stewart (TEO) advised that in order to address some outstanding detail, his planned submission to the Executive would now be provided for the Monday meeting.

Action: Chris Stewart (TEO) to submit a Policy Issues Paper to the Executive for Monday 13 April 2020. The policy issues are in relation to the emergency legislative provision to support the COVID-19 response.

Messaging strategy for panic buying

- Chris McNabb (EIS) advised that it was vital to be clear on the content and timing of any messaging around this point in order to avoid inadvertently fuelling panic rather than calming it. Denis McMahon (DAERA) confirmed he was engaging directly with the supermarkets on issues of food supply and emphasised the care and subtlety that was needed in order to avoid small issues having large impacts.

CCG rhythm over Easter

- HOCS advised that he will confirm the Easter rhythm later today. This could include a later start to the CCG meeting on Monday if there was demand.

Action: CCG Members to report back to NI HUB today (10 April 2020) their preference regarding the timing of the CCG meeting currently scheduled for Monday 13 April 2020.

4. SIT-REP UPDATE

Anthony Harbinson took the meeting through the main issues arising from yesterday's Sit-Rep as follows:

- All BA flights between Belfast City Airport and Heathrow to cease from 12 April. Aer Lingus to service route – one flight per day.
- Ulster Farmers Union calling on government to take immediate action to counter pending drop in NI farm gate milk prices.
- Translink – Executive agreed that the financial needs of the company will be addressed.
- Projections by academics from UU indicate output could fall by 9.6% in 2020 with around 235k workers temporarily laid-off or furloughed.
- DfC confirmed that 3,000 volunteers have registered with Volunteer Now but Health Trusts advise they do not require additional volunteers. Volunteer Now considering whether to close to new registrations.
- 40,000 people in NI had been asked to shield themselves by GP and so are unable to go to supermarket. Tracy Meharg (DfC) explained that unlike in GB there was no single system available in NI for verification

of recipients. DfC was working the supermarkets and aim to have a solution in place for next week.

- DE confirmed sufficient volunteers to keep schools open over Easter.
- BBC are reporting PSNI has indicated there will be increased patrolling over Easter, including cars being stopped, with on-the-spot fines for breaking lockdown rules now likely.

5. LEGISLATION UPDATE

- Chris Stewart (TEO) noted that the paper regarding amendments to emergency legislative provision to support the COVID-19 response was taking longer than expected, due to the complexity of the issues.

6. MEMBER UPDATES

- Mike Brennan (DfE) advised that a paper from the Engagement Forum will be going to the Executive later today.
- Denis McMahon (DAERA) advised that there is widespread concern across the industry around falling prices. His Minister was meeting beef producers today to discuss this issue.

7. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- Chris McNabb (EIS) advised that the key message across all networks today was to 'Stay at Home for Easter'

8. AOB AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- HOCS, FM and dFM praised the significant amount of work being carried out by the public sector over the past few weeks and wished everyone a Happy Easter.

Date of next meeting

- 08:30, 13 April 2020,

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