

Civil Contingency Group (COVID-19 Response) Meeting
Monday 6 April 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
Declan Kearney - 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
Simon Byrne - PSNI
Mark Hamilton – PSNI
Alan Todd - PSNI
Michael Graham – NIFRS
Alan Wamsley - NIFRS
Michael Bloomfield - NIAS
Joan McCaffrey – Local Government
Stephen Reid – Local Government
Maria Jennings – Food Standards Agency
Mark Larmour – NIO
Chris McNabb – EIS TEO
Hugh Widdis – DSO
NR – TEO
Lesley Hood - NI Assembly
NR – NIO LO
Donal Moran – NI Hub
NR – NI Hub
NR – NI Hub
NR – NI Hub – Note taker

1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**
2. **COVID-19 - CURRENT SITUATION AND PROGNOSIS**

Richard Pengelly updated the meeting:

- to date there were 1,089 confirmed cases in NI and 63 deaths and NI had entered the anticipated surge period
- The SSE Arena testing centre had opened on Saturday 4 April. It was a pilot run focussed on NHS staff and in the first days numbers were deliberately limited in order to test operational processes. Numbers of tests will increase over the coming days.
- A shipment of PPE was due to arrive in NI this morning (6 April 2020) as part of the order for the whole of the UK. Mark Larmour confirmed it was expected at 7am this morning.
- The Testing Strategy paper will be submitted to the Executive later today (6 April 2020).
- **Action: DoH Minister to update the Executive today (6 April 2020) regarding Testing Strategy.**

3. **ACTIONS REVIEW**

David Sterling progressed through the actions from the meeting of 3 April 2020.

Testing Strategy

- This was covered under the Health update at agenda item 2.

Prioritisation of Testing

- A paper on the prioritisation of testing to be sent to HOCS today

PPE Graphics for Sit-Rep

- DoF and DoH are considering further and will report back to CCG early this week. HOCS advised that a slide summarising the demand and supply levels for PPE would be helpful for the information of Ministers.

Action: DoF and DoH to update CCG early this week (by Wednesday 8 April 2020) in relation to the following action point from the previous CCG meeting (Friday 3 April 2020), "DoF and DoH to consider the inclusion of graphics in the Sitrep to show burn rate of consumption of PPE, orders made for additional kit and expected delivery times and to report back to CCG."

Tracking of compliance with social distancing

- An objective assessment around compliance was considered to be particularly critical to inform future decisions on social distancing.
- PSNI advised that the vast majority of people were complying, though initial analysis pointed to some worrying indicators in terms of an increase in drink driving arrests and ANPR data suggesting a 15%-16% increase in vehicle volumes over the same period last week.
- PSNI was considering the potential to move to enforcement measures around social distancing.

Future media activity

- Information to the Sit-Rep team has improved.

4. SIT-REP UPDATE

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

- Food distribution scheme to the vulnerable was launched by DFC on 5 April;
- Agri-food sector was focussing activity on its main outputs. 20%-30% of output was destined for the NI market with the remainder exported. Denis McMahon noted the potential risks both to export of product and food supply related to the ongoing concerns around ferries, freight and ports;
- NIHE to introduce a rent freeze for clients later;
- Vehicular activity had reduced over the past week but data suggested it was trending upward over the weekend;
- The monitoring of hospitals beds continuing with the position on critical care beds stable;
- Measures taken to reduce pressures on pharmacies including interventions to improve cashflow;
- Work to increase oxygen storage capacity has commenced across HSC sites;
- Critical Freight Taskforce paper to be considered today and Minister Mallon was scheduled to meet the Secretary of State for Transport;
- New tables on comparisons in testing and numbers of deaths across UK and Ireland and with key European countries were now included in the Sit-Rep. Richard Pengelly cautioned on the risk that presenting un-

nuanced comparative data based on a point in time could be misinterpreted and could give rise to complacency.

5. LEGISLATION UPDATE

- Chris Stewart was considering new regulations from England and from Wales. The regulations focused on clarification and verification of earlier regulations but indicated potential divergence between jurisdictions.
- The regulations also suggested some potential relaxation of some social distancing measures around the opening of burial grounds. The Welsh were also considering potential relaxation of rules around holiday accommodation - where it was on the Airbnb model with on-line booking and remote key access.
- PSNI was invited to provide feedback in relation to current regulations in place for NI.
- The First Minister asked that consideration be given to making provision around the access to churches for individuals and for visiting graveyards, other than to attend funerals. Chris felt those could be accommodated without undermining the social distancing provisions

Action: When reviewing legislation, TEO to consider relaxing restrictions on access to burial grounds and individuals going into churches.

6. MEMBER UPDATES

No members reported any issues requiring escalation to CCG.

In addition:

- PSNI advised that a change in the national guidance around PPE has increased PSNI demand for supplies. They already have issues regarding residual supplies.
- PSNI asked if there was a possibility of other blue light workers being tested at the SSE Testing site. DoH advised the primary focus of the site was NHS staff; testing of other services would be considered in the Testing Strategy.
- Sue Gray advised that, following a busy weekend of engagement, there was to be a call later with the Secretary of State for Transport to discuss the airports issue.
- FM raised an issue around illegal dumping and fly-tipping. The issue arose from a combination of the closure of Household Recycling Centres and a reduction in enforcement capacity. The issue will be discussed between Local Government and DAERA at the regular Wednesday meeting and Denis McMahon will report back to CCG on Thursday.

Action: DAERA to update CCG on Thursday 9 April 2020 on the management of increased fly-tipping.

- DfM indicated that the PPE delivery represented a public confidence building opportunity which merited media coverage. HOCS asked for a brief update for the Executive for Wednesday on what was included in the consignment and where it was being distributed.

Action: DoF to send an update, specifically on the PPE delivery that arrived in Belfast today, to the Executive before they meet at 12 noon today (6 April 2020).

7. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- Chris McNabb reported that the NI Direct portal was performing well.
- Public Information campaign to continue with more focus on businesses.
- Use of other channels for the campaign being considered including Ulster Rugby, IFA and GAA etc.
- The main items in the media at present are:
 - Testing;
 - PPE; and
 - Divisions among the Executive.
- dFM thought that the CMO should be more regularly involved in the Daily Update.

8. AOB AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Date of next meeting

- 08:30, 7 April 2020, 5th Floor Conference Room, Block B, Castle Buildings.