

**Civil Contingency Group (COVID-19 Response) Meeting
Wednesday 26 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
Andrew McCormick – 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
Alan Todd - PSNI
Michael Graham - 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
Name Redacted NI Hub
Andy Cole – NI Hub
Lesley Hogg - NI Assembly
Name Redacted EO
Name Redacted – TEO – Note taker

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. COVID-19 - CURRENT SITUATION AND PROGNOSIS

- Richard Pengelly gave a brief update on the current situation - 209 confirmed cases at present. Hoping that additional information from Imperial College modelling on the spread and pathway in NI will be available by close tomorrow.

PPE

- On PPE Richard said that stocks are holding up at present and that there is good coordination with CPD colleagues from DoF on procuring more urgently. DoH is ensuring there are sufficient supplies available across the care sector.
- There has been anxiety among staff and DoH have been communicating that we are following the WHO guidelines.
- Sue Gray said that CPD have a dedicated team working with DoH to procure more PPE, ventilators and hand sanitiser.
- PSNI said the situation was improving with supplies beginning to come in via DoF, but still remained a concern for them and a matter of anxiety for front line staff.
- NIAS said they were linked into the arrangements with DoH and the situation was improving, although like PSNI it still remained a concern for staff.
- NIFRS said they had concern about the supply of appropriate face masks. Was decided that NIFRS should be linked into the ongoing coordination between DoF and DoH.

Action DoF: Ensure NIFRS are linked into ongoing DoH/CPD discussions on PPE.

- DFM asked whether a Judicial Review had been lodged on PPE. Neither DoH nor DSO aware of any Judicial Review on this matter at present.
- DFM said that it was important that staff concerns be addressed to build their confidence.
- Richard said that Air Lingus have switched to cargo flights from China for PPE etc. DoH and DoF have been working on securing a portion of the material imported.

Testing

- Good progress is being made, with testing now increased to 600 per day and hoping to raise this to 1,100 daily by early next week.
- Public Health England ratifying locally produced testing kits, hope this work will be completed in next 48 hours. This kits can then be procured as part of the agreed 4 nations approach.
- Clinical led group working on the prioritisation of testing across the health and care sector.
- A piece of work was required to coordinate the need for testing across departments and emergency services. DoF agreed to undertake this work.

Action DoF: DoF to coordinate the need for testing across departments and the emergency services in conjunction with the NI Hub.

3. ACTIONS REVIEW

- Anthony Harbinson said that the action log was a work in progress and would issue to all members in advance of each meeting. He took the meeting through the actions arising at the meeting of 25 March.

Construction Sector

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| NR |
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 CPD and DoH have been working closely on this issue.

Builders Merchants

- DoF have been in contact with construction sector about the opening of Builders merchants.

Actions Log

- Work on this is progressing.

PPE China

- NR gave an update on the PPE secured from China. Working well with both the British and Irish embassies in Beijing to secure more.

Off Licenses

- Chris Stewart has actioned.

Social distancing

- Will be covered under the Legislation Update.

Priority of Legislation

- Neill Jackson is actioning.

B and B's – Hospitality Sector

- Meetings taking place and work ongoing to ensure the sector is fully aware of the rules.
- To be aware it may be necessary to house NHS staff in hotels close to hospitals – liaison with hospitality sector ongoing.

Ferries

- DfI liaising directly with ferry companies on a daily basis.

NI Direct

- Will be addressed under Communications Strategy update.

SITREP UPDATE

- Anthony Harbinson took the meeting through the main issues arising from the most recent Sitrep.

Priority Access for Healthcare workers

- It may be necessary to consider the issue of priority access for food and fuel for key health workers. To be kept under review.

Agri-food sector walkouts

- Had been some walk out by staff at a small no. of agri-food companies – e.g. Moy Park, over social distancing concerns.
- Mike Brennan said that revamped social distancing guidance had been sent to FM/DFM, this could be put into comms plan via NI Direct.

Pay as you go Energy cards

- A problem has arisen over pay as you go energy cards. Electricity cards can be updated by mobile – but gas cards must be purchased in a shop. DfE speaking to gas companies.

Budgetary Matters

- Some public companies are experiencing a lack of income which will lead to budgetary pressures, e.g. NI Water and Translink.

Action NI Hub: Sitrep update to be added to the agenda for future CCG meetings.

4. LEGISLATION OVERVIEW

- Chris Stewart gave an update on the Coronavirus Act which has now passed through Parliament. Focus now switches to putting subordinate legislation in place to provide clarity on enforcement etc.
- Very strong regulations have been drafted in England on powers to enforce closures and enforce social distancing. How best to put these in place in NI is being considered by TEO and DoH.

5. MEMBER UPDATES

DE

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

NIAS

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

DfE

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

PSNI

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.
- PSNI will be putting upgraded command and control structures in place next week.

DfI

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

DoF

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.
- Some employers have been identified as not properly implementing government packages for employees – these are being called in and spoken to individually.

NIFRS

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

NI Assembly

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG, but would like to hear about any new proposed regulations as soon as possible.

FSA

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.
- They are working with DAERA on putting a protocol into place for staff of food companies, as well as visiting DAERA staff.

NIO

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

DoJ

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

Local Government

- Concern was raised about pressure on waste services – referred to recent announcement by Belfast to reduce services.

Action DAERA/Local Government/NI Hub: DAERA/local government/NI Hub to meet to discuss waste services.

TEO

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

DAERA

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

DfC

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.
- Meeting to be aware that volumes of benefit claims are still very high.

DSO

- No issues requiring escalation to CCG.

6. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- Public information campaign was launched yesterday.
- EIS held an audit of all press releases and an audit of NI Direct to ensure that all gaps had been identified.

7. AOB AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The First Minister and Deputy First Minister recorded their thanks to all those involved in helping to deal with the current crisis.

Date of next meeting

- 08:30, 27 March 2020, Block B Conference Room, Castle Buildings.