

NI COVID 19 Modelling Group Conference Call – 5 January 2021

Attendees

Ian Young DoH (Chairperson)
Paul McWilliams SIB
Adele Marshall QUB
Frank Kee QUB
Janice Bailie PHA
Stephen Bergin PHA
Declan Bradley PHA
Paul Montgomery DoH

Key issues discussed

Update

- Ian indicated that the 7 day average number of new cases had tripled over Christmas period with an increase in both the number of tests being conducted and the % of tests that recorded a positive result for Covid-19. However, there was some evidence in the most recent data that the trend in case numbers and the positivity rate was starting to level off. The increase in case numbers had been observed across all Local Government Districts.
- The number of Covid-19 positive hospital admissions each day has continued to increase and is now higher than in the Wave 2 peak with the expectation that it will continue rising over the next week. This is now being reflected in an increase in the number of hospital inpatients and ICU patients with Covid-19, as well as in hospital deaths.
- The group agreed that the latest estimate of the R number is between 1.5-1.9 for cases (1.4-1.8 last week). The R number based on hospital admissions was agreed as 1.2-1.4 (1.0-1.2 last week).
- Applying this week's agreed R number for cases (in advance of current restrictions) would be expected to result in the number of hospital inpatients with Covid-19 rising to at least 700, but potentially over 2,000, by mid to late January. Similarly, the number of Covid-19 patient in ICU could rise from around 40 currently to at least 60-70. The measures being considered by the NI Executive today would not be expected to have a significant impact on the peak level of hospital occupancy during the current wave but could result in a steeper subsequent reduction in demand.
- In response to a query from Frank Kee on the implications of the vaccination programme, Ian indicated that the scale of the impact of the recent vaccination of care home residents was unclear due to data issues in respect of the number of hospital admissions from care homes. As the vaccination programme is rolled

out to the over 70s, by the middle of March there would be expected to be a significant impact, particularly on hospital admissions.

AOB

- Janice Bailie advised that the latest results from the Covid Infection Survey did not indicate a rapid increase in the number of people in NI with Covid-19. However, this only covered the period to 18 December with the next cycle of the survey expected to reflect the trend in case numbers.
- Adele Marshall informed the group that, following the increase in the alert level to Level 5, the Joint Biosecurity Centre was considering the metrics for recommending when the alert level could be reduced again. These included ICU staffing composition and ICU occupancy as a % of capacity.