

Northern Ireland Office

Covid 19

Situation Report **4**

New information in **RED**

Contact: **Covid-19@nio.gov.uk**

Information correct as of **1900** on **16** March 2020

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Overview

UK Position (as of 16 March)

NI Update

Case Numbers:

| | |
|------------------|------|
| England | 1196 |
| Wales | 124 |
| Scotland | 171 |
| Northern Ireland | 52 |
| TOTAL | 1543 |
| Deaths | 55 |

Republic of Ireland cases: 169

COBR (M) Update:

- COBR approved further policies: whole house isolation for 14 days, and stopping non essential contact where possible, including non essential travel and working from home where possible,
- Territorial Offices were not invited to today's COBR meeting, DA's continue to be invited.

Update from NICS: They do not believe that the public differences of opinion on school closure issue between FM and dFM on covid virus handling will bring instability to the Executive. They recognised the consistent comms issues and the political issues for parties. We continue to offer support including potentially comms support.

Some sectors taking decisions not in line with UKG policy.

Update from Irish: the IG up for more East-West contact inc PM/T call and messaging out. BIC also considered. Clear that this is a political issue being pressed by MLM. Key outcome was the suggestion that we do a PM/T call with the key message that we need a collective approach to tackling disease.

UKG: Cabinet Office announced a new structure, PM leading COBR plus 4 sub committees: health, economy, international and preparedness. We will need to think about our structures in light of this. More on that tomorrow.

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Policy Challenges

Divergence in policy between NI and Ireland - SoS is speaking regularly to the the Tanaiste. We are open to options of more formal dialogue on Covid-19. Some sectors taking decisions not in line with UKG policy. Queen's Uni, 10 special needs schools and a primary school have decided to close at various points this week, as well as some restaurants. Danske Bank reaches out to firms with cash flow issues and all NI Banks were meeting DfE Minister this afternoon. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has opened a fund for charities who are supporting isolated older people at this time.

Working with NIE and IG - NIO is establishing links with NICS to work on planning assumptions and cumulative impacts. TEO are proposing setting up a 'NI Hub' to manage impacts from Coronavirus, on a similar model to the Brexit C3 structures. Role for NIO to be determined. A meeting took place with TEO on Friday and progress has been made. TEO expect to issue a call for NICS volunteers early this week. They assume working on 7-7 shift pattern, 7 days a week. Full NIO scope/involvement to be agreed. **Call for NIO volunteers is live.**

Bill - DHSC and colleagues in the DAs continue to work on a further draft of the Bill. Cabinet Office are bringing forward provisions to delay elections for a year. SOSNI was consulted on, and agreed to the inclusion of those clauses. A further draft of the Bill circulated and is being considered, submission to PBL expected tomorrow with the final draft expected on Wednesday. Timeline remains: introduction 19th March, Lords 25th, Royal Assent 31st. DoH are making preparations for the bill to be debated in the Assembly on 24th. A submission detailing the content of the Bill and seeking SOSNIs support for the Legislative Consent Motion is being prepared.

Comms - The NIO Comms Team are plugged into the central comms hub, with twice-daily calls and regular email updates. There are also ad hoc cross-govt calls on specific issues, including today internal comms. The Coronavirus Hub have been working with press offices and SpAds across all Government departments to pull together an up-to-date master Q&A.

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NIO

| Resource | Critical Business |
|--|---|
| <p>Successful tests of the Everbridge system carried out. 13/3</p> <p>All Staff briefing was held to update on departmental planning. 13/3, and a further briefing will be held on 17/3 in light of revised advice.</p> <p>Rhythm of internal meetings increased and formalised</p> <p>Small (<5) numbers of staff self isolating. All available for work</p> | <p>Business Impact Assessment completed and has been submitted to PUS and SofS</p> <p>Process to move staff into priority areas has begun, with retraining taking place</p> |

Forward Look

- There is a COBR each day, unclear if tomorrow is an official or ministerial meeting.
- Cabinet tomorrow discussing health, economic and international response to Covid-19. We are emphasising in the briefing the need for communication and alignment between UKG and Irish Government, to help ease political tension in Executive's response.
- PBL Committee on Wednesday discussing Covid-19 bill.

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