

Northern Ireland Office

Covid 19

Situation Report **11**

New information in **RED**

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1730 on **25** March 2020

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Overview

NI Update

UK Position

Case Numbers (Case numbers correct as of 24/3, updated data is not yet available. 7 NI deaths reported on BBC news)

England	(6843)
Wales	(478)
Scotland	(584)
Northern Ireland	(172)
TOTAL	(8077)

Deaths (NI) 7 (3)
Deaths (UK) (422)

Republic of Ireland cases: (1125)

Government Updates:

- 405,000 people have volunteered to help the UKG covid-19 response.
- An announcement on help for self employed workers is expected tomorrow.
- The government has procured 3.5m antibody tests to see who has had the virus. These are going to be prioritised for NHS staff and other key workers.
- Companies to receive 3-month extension period to file accounts during COVID-19.

Update from NICS: The Executive are considering the provision of a temporary resting facility near Holywood on military owned estate. The decision is likely to attract some media attention.

Newly-established NI Hub has had three issues escalated to it from Departments as of SitRep on Tuesday 24th March - DfC have raised issue of NIHE needing access to non-standard B&B accommodation as existing B&Bs may close following Government statement. NIHE contractors will also need to have permission as 'key suppliers' to allow access to material supplies when their own suppliers have closed. DfE has confirmed COVID-19 testing needed for 3 SONI employees who work in control room - as of Tuesday 24th March, this has not yet been provided. NI DoH confirmed 172 confirmed cases in NI. There will be a daily report from NI DoH Health with more granular detail and NICS is now plugged into NI-focused modelling by Imperial College London on modelling of CV spread. NI DoH expects to be at over 1000 tests a week by next week.

Update from Irish: As per FCO SitRep on Wednesday 25th March, total number of cases in Ireland now 1329, total number of deaths 7. New rules have been introduced for Covid-19 testing - patients must have two symptoms and be in priority group. The Irish Government continues to advise against all non-essential travel overseas and now also advises against unnecessary travel within Ireland. FCO Ireland team are updating travel advice to reflect the latest Irish Government measures. Ryanair has grounded a number of planes from 24 March but operate daily or weekly flights from Dublin to a number of UK and European airports from Friday, March 27 to Thursday 2 April as well as Cork to London Stansted. The Embassy is working on working up a comms plan to project the positive action the UK is taking to tackle Covid -19 and underscore joint working with the Irish Government.

UKG: Cabinet Office will scale back the work of the Transition Taskforce for at least the next few weeks to pivot to C-19 work. There is a new daily union call to try and coordinate the DA messages and ensure they are landing and influencing agendas and decisions.

NI Economy: Serious impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt. A number of businesses across all sectors have announced that they will close temporarily. Support measures announced by HMG broadly welcomed, but pressure for additional support for the self-employed. Growing concern for aviation industry and routes due to low passenger numbers..

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Policy Challenges

International - SoS is speaking regularly to the the Tanaiste. Work has been stepped up to coordinate our response with Ireland. UKG/IE/NIE senior official trilateral had been proposed for this week, as had a virtual BIC followed by a later BIIGC. Irish have pushed back due to pressures at their end, eg need to pass any legislation by this weekend. They are content to reinstate the trilateral next week, followed by a BIC and then a BIIGC in due course (and in that order). We continue to pursue this with the Irish system without applying pressure to what is a very busy Irish system.

Economy - A series of business engagements are planned by SOS for tomorrow, including in those sectors most affected. Assessment of the impact continues along with actions to address sectoral issues. DfT have set up a critical freight task force: GB-NI freight is a priority for this group. Separately we are stepping up engagement with DfT, DfI and DfE(NI) to ensure an tolerable minimum connections will continue and that the maximum possible connectivity can be secured following travel restrictions.

Preparedness - Secretary of State attended the General Public Sector MIG today which covered public order, shielding, access to food for vulnerable groups, and essential service delivery by Local Authorities. CDL would like a sub-group on vulnerable people. DAERA Permanent Secretary noted industrial action today by staff at Moy Park (a poultry processor) alleging unsafe conditions. In Thursday's GPSPMIG on transport, it will be important for the NIO to emphasise importance of maintaining connectivity between NI and GB by air (esp. Belfast-London) and sea. There are currently London Heathrow - Belfast City/International flights in operation. We will want to maintain these and are monitoring closely.

Health - The number of cases and deaths in NI increase, including the first death of a care resident. We are working with DoH to gather more NI health data to feed into UK planning purposes; the PM has said personally that he feels blind to the situation in the DAs. As part of the campaign to recruit former health professionals, DoH is asking retired GPs to consider returning to work. A new Covid-19 assessment centre to assess people with suspected coronavirus will open in Derry/Londonderry. The Stormont Executive has launched an advertising campaign urging the public to follow health advice on coronavirus.

Bill - Bill achieved royal assent today after Lords Committee stages and final Commons stages. Focus will now move to effective and proportionate implementation, - in progress with TEO.

Comms - The NIO Comms Team are plugged into the central comms hub, with twice-daily calls and regular email updates. The UKG advertising campaign is about to enter phase 3, with new core messages on Staying at Home. The Executive has issued a press release launching their new advertising campaign, with aligned messaging. We expect HMT to make an announcement tomorrow on support for self-employed people.

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NIO

Resource	Critical Business
<p>NIO Figures for 20 March</p> <p>Working in the office / travelling 10 (5) Working at home 159 (159) Self Isolating - symptoms - still working 5 (6) Family Isolating - no symptoms - still working 12 (10) Self Isolating - confirmed - still working 0 (0) Sick - Covid 0 (0) Sick- other 2 (2) Special Leave 1(0) Other leave / NWD 3 (8)</p> <p>Prime Minister's announcement on Monday evening reinforced need to work from home.</p> <p>Those working in office continue to be significantly reduced with corresponding rise in numbers working at home.</p> <p>Easter leave commitments will be reviewed to ensure critical business continues</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> <p>All DDs have completed an assessment of critical business, along with those tasks where office requirement remains</p> <p>First tranche of staff moves now complete</p> <p>Keyworker guidance issued in NI, and process underway</p> <p>SofS has now signed off prioritisation; this has been issued to DDs</p> <p>ERT full meeting took place today and will continue to meet weekly</p> <p>Network capacity will continue to be monitored with IT Assist to ensure business continuity</p>

Forward Look

- Public sector MIG: **Transport resilience; excess death management** (SoSNI) - 26 March
- Economy and Business response Ministerial sub-committee meeting - 26 March
- **IMIG: Overseas Territories; International Organisation Coordination; Vaccines Envoy**
- Healthcare MIG: - 26 March **cancelled. We understand that this was due to cover system readiness (ICU beds, surge, triage) but PM Strategy has focused on these issues.**
- Public sector MIG: Redirecting people who lose jobs into key roles in agriculture [DWP, DEFRA]; Update on Prisons [MoJ]. coordination (SoSNI) - 27 March
- PM C19: Policy on testing NHS staff and other key workers [DHSC] - 27 March
- C19 (O): Upskilling at home [BEIS & DFE] - 27 March
- General Public MIG: Forward Look [CO/MoJ] **This is core group only** - 28 March
- **We understand that the rhythm of Economic MIGs from next week is likely to change to Tuesdays (rather than Mondays as previously) and Thursdays. CX still considering DA attendance but we understand that datasets being produced on efficiency of easement/funding pledges will include DAs.**

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