

# Northern Ireland Office

## Covid 19

### Situation Report **10**

New information in **RED**

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

**1800** on **24** March 2020

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# Overview

## NI Update

### UK Position

Case Numbers (as at 13:00 24 March)

England **6843** (5585)

Wales **478** (418)

Scotland **584** (499)

Northern Ireland **172** (148)

**TOTAL 8077** (6650)

Deaths (NI) **3** (2)

Deaths (UK) **422** (335)

Republic of Ireland cases: **1125** (906)

#### Government Updates:

The PM announced yesterday (23 March) that people will only be allowed to leave their home for very limited purposes:

- shopping for basic necessities, as infrequently as possible
- one form of exercise a day - alone or with members of the household;
- any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person; and
- travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home.

The Government will also immediately:

- close all shops selling non-essential goods, including clothing and electronic stores and other premises including libraries, playgrounds and outdoor gyms, and places of worship;
- stop all gatherings of more than two people in public – excluding people who live together;
- stop all social events, including weddings, baptisms and other ceremonies, but excluding funerals.

#### Update from NICS:

As of 2pm on Monday 23 March, 2692 tests have been completed with 148 confirmed cases in NI. DoH through GPs will be writing this week to approximately 40,000 vulnerable advising them to shield themselves from the virus for 12 weeks in the first phase. Testing capacity will be expanded from 600 to 1,100 tests a day. NI adopting UKG approach on police-enforced restriction on movement outside - excluding buying food/medicine, exercise, or travelling to work if absolutely necessary. NICS will share their dashboard with NIO as of today.

**Update from Irish:** Taoiseach Leo Varadkar has announced further measures on social distancing including schools, Universities, childcare facilities to continue to close. Private hospitals are to act as part of the public hospital system. The existing and additional measures are extended until Sunday, 19 April 2020 and will be kept under continued review.

In addition the Irish Government has today announced a National Covid-19 Income Support Scheme to support to Irish workers and companies affected by the crisis, including a temporary wage subsidy. Workers who have lost their jobs due to the crisis - including self employed workers - will be eligible for an enhanced emergency Covid-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment of €350 per week and the Covid-19 illness payment will also be increased to €350 per week.

**UKG:** Cabinet Office announced a new structure is bedding in. We now have liaison officers in Cabinet Office - this link is working well and information flows are improving. CCS have said they are actively trying to ensure the dashboard is a UK wide picture, but some DAs are still working through the data requirements. We are following up with CCS and with NICS.

**NI Economy:** Impact of Covid-19 on the economy continues to rise. Some businesses are beginning to repurpose to provide essential services in key sectors, Bombardier have suspended operations until mid April. Guidance/information has been published via gov.uk tailored to NI businesses on the financial package announced last week. Stepping up business engagement to promote confidence in NI economy and improve economic outlook. UKG have announced a ban on evictions for commercial tenants unable to pay rent over the next 3 months. A critical freight task force has been established by DfT with GB-NI freight as a key priority.

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# Policy Challenges

**International** - SoS is speaking regularly to the the Tanaiste, both issued a joint statement on Friday evening. Work has been stepped up to coordinate our response with Ireland. PUS NIO is chairing the first meeting of the trilateral coordination group - where NICS, Irish Government and UKG are all represented, though the first meeting (24 March) has been postponed largely due to pressures on the Irish side. We are working with CO and FCO on a virtual BIC (which CDL has agreed to hold) followed by possibly a virtual BIIGC (which the FS agreed with Coveney).

**Economy** - Impact of Covid-19 on the economy continues to rise, however some businesses are beginning to repurpose to provide essential services in key sectors eg. O'Neills are making scrubs instead of sportswear. Lack of clarity on announcements has been mitigated by issuing guidance/information via gov.uk tailored to NI businesses. We are now stepping up business engagement to promote confidence in NI economy and identify further actions to improve economic outlook. A ban on evictions for commercial tenants, unable to pay rent over the next 3 months, was announced by UKG. A critical freight task force has been set up by DfT with the GB/NI freight route as priority. Aircraft manufacturer Bombardier, one of NIs largest employers with 3,330 staff in its NI operation, has suspended operations until April 20th.

**Preparedness** - Min Walker attended the General Public Sector Ministerial Implementation Group today which covered public order, free school meals and guidance on childcare for critical workers, where we briefed MW to encourage NIE to clarify areas where NI guidance differs from England. The team is developing a tracker to look ahead and across the range of preparedness issues for future meetings.

**Health** - There have been 2 further coronavirus related deaths in NI in the last 24 hours. The Mater Hospital is now designated as a Covid-19 hospital for the Belfast Trust. Minister Walker attended Healthcare Ministerial Implementation Group which focused on healthcare supplies and shielding in England. Testing in Northern Ireland will be expanded from 600 up to 1,100 per day whereas supply of PPE continues to be a pressing issue.

**Bill** - Bill progressing through 1st and 2nd reading in HoL, The Assembly debated and carried the LCM today. If the Lords table no amendments and ping pong is avoided Royal Assent may be secured on Wednesday. Lords committee stage due tomorrow.

**Comms** - The NIO Comms Team are plugged into the central comms hub, with twice-daily calls and regular email updates..The main comms issues dealt with by the hub today have been on self-distancing advice for workers in the construction industry, and on provision of support to the self-employed. A script has been circulated late today on these issues, as well as MHCLG's list of premises that can stay open.

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# NIO

Resource	Critical Business
<p><b>NIO Figures for 20 March</b></p> <p>Working in the office / travelling    5 (17)</p> <p>Working at home    159 (144)</p> <p>Self Isolating - symptoms - still working    6 (8)</p> <p>Family Isolating - no symptoms - still working    10 (9)</p> <p>Self Isolating - confirmed - still working    0 (0)</p> <p>Sick - Covid    0 (1)</p> <p>Sick- other    2 (2)</p> <p>Special Leave    0(0)</p> <p>Other leave / NWD    8 (13)</p> <p>Prime Minister's announcement yesterday 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>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>ERT full meeting tomorrow.</p> <p>SofS has now signed off prioritisation; this has been issued to DDs,</p>

# Forward Look

- Executive meeting to consider fiscal stimulus - date not yet known
- Bill update HoL 24 March (2nd reading) 25 March (committee).
- SoSNI NIAC **phonecall** - 25 March
- Public sector MIG: LA essential service delivery; PPE Demands for Wider Public Sector [TBC] - 25 March
- PM C-19 Strategy; Short Straits and freight continuity plan - 25 March
- **International MIG (SoSNI) - 25 March**
- Public sector MIG: Support for Vulnerable Groups; Schools - update on Critical Workers and Guidance **(SoSNI)** - 26 March
- Economy and Business response Ministerial sub-committee meeting - 26 March
- International MIG: Vaccines, including G20; wider Coordination of the International System; Funding - 26 March
- Healthcare MIG: System readiness - 26 March
- Public sector MIG: Tech Redundancy; DA coordination **(SoSNI)** - 27 March

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