

Northern Ireland Office

Covid 19

Situation Report **41**

New information in **RED**

Contact: Covid-19@nio.gov.uk

All emails relating to Covid-19 should be copied to this address.

17:30 on 7 May 2020

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KEY ISSUES

Issue	Owner
Social Distancing: We're expecting a UKG announcement on Sunday, following a COBR. FM mentioned on the NIE press conference engagement with PM on Sunday. The Executive has considered their own approach today and agreed not to lift current restrictions. A light touch press release is anticipated with further announcements, as required, after the PM's approach is clear. Advice on this has been submitted to SoSNI this afternoon.	<u>Preparedness / International</u>
Test and Trace: A meeting took place yesterday with DAs, DHSC and NHSX, chaired by Cabinet Office, which outlined the approach being taken by each administration and surfaced some outstanding issues. Dialogue will continue on interoperability of the UK-wide contact tracing app. Preparedness represented the NIO.	<u>Preparedness</u>
Border Measures: HO has shared paper on two border measures (providing contact details & onward travel details; and self-isolate/quarantine for 14 days). The measures outlined are broadly in line with those announced by Ireland last week. Small group meeting yesterday agreed a CTA exemption - due to be signed off by GPS MIG and Cabinet today.	<u>International (Central Team to collate)</u>

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Overview

GB, NI & Ireland Updates

Daily Covid-19 figures (as of 7 May unless otherwise stated)

Case Numbers

England 131,932 (129,799)
Wales 10,851 (10,764)
Scotland 12,924 (12,706)
Northern Ireland 3984 (3,934)
TOTAL UK 206,715 (201,101)

Republic of Ireland cases: 22,248 (21,983) as of 6 May

Deaths

NI hospital 422 (418)
NI care home (161) - as of 24 April
TOTAL UK 30,615 (30,076)

Government Announcements:

- A new dedicated app for the adult social care workforce in England has been launched to support staff through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- A revaluation of business rates will no longer take place in 2021 to help reduce uncertainty for firms affected by the impacts of coronavirus.
- A new biological reagent is now available to labs around the UK and the world that will help them to set up and develop accurate diagnostic tests for coronavirus (COVID-19).
- A new fund will enable eligible dairy farmers in England to access up to £10,000 each to help them overcome the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.
- Over 1 million boxes of essential food have now been delivered to those at highest risk across England.
- The Foreign & Commonwealth Office has announced 5 further flights to bring stranded British travellers home from India.

UKG: COBR on Sunday to review social distancing measures with announcement on next steps the same day. Also possible Cabinet meeting on Sunday. UK Governance Group has prepared a paper on alignment/differences between the four nations in respect of social distancing measures and shared with No.10. Track and Trace pilot ongoing (Isle of Wight), and UK border announcement scheduled for the weekend. Possible announcement on education in the coming days (unconfirmed).

Update from NICS: At the NIE Press Conference today it confirmed that the Covid-19 Regulations would remain with no alterations; with medical and scientific evidence still being proportional and relevant. Next week it will consider a number of minor amendments. NIE has agreed that in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not possible, the wearing of home-made 'face coverings' (i.e. not medical PPE face masks) can be considered. It is hoped that the NIE will agree a strategic roadmap to move from response to recovery and that this is to be published in the next few days. Stephen Nolan (BBC) is reporting [leaked] numbers of positive covid cases from within Nursing Home settings. The Northern Ireland Graduate Entry Medical School will be taken forward and follows a recent announcement by the NIE to match-fund the UKG's City Deal and Inclusive Future Fund for the region. NI Executive meetings have been reduced to twice weekly (Monday and Thursday) moving forward.

Economy: Update on Executive grant schemes: 19,000 payments of £10,000 grants have now been issued to small businesses (a total £190m); a further 3,000 applications made under the Tourism, Hospitality, Retail and Leisure scheme, with over 800 grants of £25,000 issued so far. Details on the design of a new grant scheme for micro-businesses will be issued by the Department next week.

Ireland: Issues of interoperability between the Ireland and the UK Track and Trace app, particularly in relation to the cross-border aspect, continues to be looked at. Ireland's health service (HSE) aims to release a prototype of its track and tracing app 'by the end of the month'. Discussions continue with teachers' unions as to whether the Leaving Certificate exams (A-level equivalent) can go ahead on 29 July as announced in the government roadmap or whether there will be a move towards using predictive grades. On testing for the virus there have been further revisions to the testing criteria as testing capacity has increased. Coalition talks ongoing with the Green Party.

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Policy Challenges

International - Linkup between NIE, ROI and UKG is critical as announcements on social distancing take place including the management of any divergence next week. The cautious pace at which Ireland is lifting measures is coming under greater scrutiny and challenge with suggestions that measures could be accelerated in the summer, if the current progress at tackling the spread of the virus is maintained though the Irish CMO Tony Holohan has doubled down on his advice to maintain the country's restrictive measures until 18 May. CDL is chairing a 'small Ministerial group' meeting today on public health at the borders which SoSNI will be attending.

Preparedness - Advice was submitted ahead of UKG's review of social distancing measures. The NIE reviewed its own approach today, and agreed not to release the current measures. This is consistent with the expected announcement by the PM on Sunday.

Health: - Healthcare MIG meeting today will discuss PPE and shielding. A total of 110 confirmed and suspected outbreaks of Covid-19 in care homes are currently being managed by the Public Health Agency. Officials from the agency told the Stormont Health Committee that of those, 75 are confirmed cases, while 35 are suspected. dFM stated the R0 figure for NI is 0.8-0.9. The majority of confirmed Covid-19 cases have been in the Belfast area where there have now been 1,190 positive cases. DoH has launched a library of apps for to help people's "health and social wellbeing" during the current crisis. which have been reviewed by health professionals. FM stated that there is enough evidence to support the use of cloth face masks/face coverings in the community for short periods in enclosed spaces where social distancing isn't possible.

Comms- The NIO Comms team is working closely with the central hub, relevant departments and the NIE on the major announcements expected over the weekend on social distancing, health checks at the border and safer working measures.

Economy: Kansas based Spirit Aerospace says the firm still intends to complete the purchase of Bombardier's NI operations. Spirit agreed to the deal in October last year but, since then, the COVID-19 crisis has thrown the aerospace industry into chaos. Chief Executive Tom Gentile said he continued to see "the long-term strategic value" of the deal, which would help secure Bombardier's Belfast operations (a total of 3,600 staff, and being a significant supply chain customer). Whilst this is welcome news, any sustained decline in the aviation sector (and associated sectors) may put this at risk. Belfast Chamber of Commerce has said only a third of the city's firms are eligible for either the Executive's £10,000 or £25,000 grant schemes and 83% are furloughing workers. The city's relatively high rateable value has left some businesses ineligible for official support aimed at small operations.

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Resource	Critical Business
<p>NIO Figures for 7 May</p> <p>Working in the office / travelling 5(5) Working at home 172(176) Self Isolating - symptoms - still working 0(0) Family Isolating - no symptoms - still working 0(0) Self Isolating - confirmed - still working 0(0) Sick - Covid 0(0) Sick- other 3(4) Special Leave 2(1) Other leave / NWD 10(8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised new starter arrangements are now in place Vetting process is being restricted to business critical staff; staff are able to have existing clearance extended 1 year. Essential cases are being progressed - please engage early with security colleagues Email to staff has requested colleagues speak to their line manager or DD if they think they have symptoms (or if a householder has symptoms) and need to be tested Testing is now offered to all Civil Servants 	<p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HR has received CSHR guidance on Covid-19 Business Impact Assessment completed and prioritisation underway. Process to move staff into priority areas is continuing, All DDs have completed an assessment of critical business, along with those tasks where office requirement remains Keyworker guidance issued in NI, and process underway Homeworking DSE assessment link sent out by Estates w/c 13/4 Home working L&D Hub has been launched <p>IT/Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network capacity will continue to be monitored with IT Assist to ensure business continuity; network capacity has increased fivefold to 5Gbps IT kit continues to be rolled out to households, high demand on suppliers, next tranche released on 20/4 Guidance has been prepared for use of Zoom VTC /Hangouts; advice remains to use Hangouts as default <p>Emergency Response Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ERT full will continue to meet weekly alongside two BDG-specific sub meetings <p>Estates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HG is closing one entrance; guidance on building access now on intranet Guidance on other departments using SH is now on NIO Intranet Home-working e-learning has been released as of w/c 20/4 Staff have been asked for requests for chairs as on 23/4

Forward Look

COBR and Cabinet Meeting

Sunday TBC.

PM C-19 Strategy

Currently, the PM is only taking his 0915 meeting, and deep dives are being covered by FSS or postponed.

In the 0915 meeting today we understand that there was a discussion on what UKG's next target should be on testing; it was agreed that it would be 200k per day by the end of May and 500k by the end of June and DHSC took away an action to plan towards both of these targets. We understand that there were errors in the update on the use of face coverings in the wider economy which caused issues in the meeting but that No.10 comms will go ahead with publishing guidance on the use of PPE in schools and clarity to employers on the use of face masks.

FSS deep dive on international comparators on test, track, trace programmes will now take place tomorrow.

We have not seen a cleared forward look for next week, however, we expect the following items:

- > Monday - PPE deep dive (based on updated papers from that of Monday 4 May to include information on demand and supply, domestic manufacturing, procurement and manufacturing strategy for face masks)
- > Tuesday - test, track, trace and certify deep dive
- > Friday - NHS capacity deep dive

In addition, it seems very likely that care homes will be considered although it is not clear when. There may also be items on domestic manufacturing and supply chain vulnerabilities.

Public Services MIG

- > Monday: update on rough sleeping and a substantive item on public sector PPE to agree a plan to manage sector-specific risks.
- > Tuesday: update on support for the death management sector and a substantive item on fraud and key issues in this space resulting from Covid-19.
- > Wednesday: non-shielded vulnerable, TBC focus on vulnerable children.
- > Thursday: various education items including TBC reopening schools, use of summer holidays, remote provision.
- > Friday: TBC

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