



Northern Ireland  
Executive

**WE ALL  
MUST DO IT  
TO GET  
THROUGH IT**



STAY HOME



KEEP DISTANCE



WASH HANDS

# **NI EXECUTIVE'S COVID-19 STRATEGY POINT IN TIME REVIEW 28 MAY**

NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE  
COVID 19 STRATEGY  
POINT IN TIME REVIEW

## INTRODUCTION

The Executive has previously agreed a strategy to oversee its COVID 19 Response. This strategy identified three key priorities:

1. Health and well-being of our citizens
2. Our economic well-being and preparing to revitalise the economy (in the immediate/short term and the medium to long term)
3. Our societal and community well being

All actions taken by the Executive in its response to the pandemic have been aimed at securing best outcomes against these three priorities.

The strategy is underpinned by a range of actions which are being taken forward across departments. Actions can be both specific to a department or cross cutting across a number of departments.

The Executive received regular updates on the strategy with Actions being updated and amended as necessary to ensure it remains current. The Strategy has enabled the Executive to focus on red risk issues each of which had been the subject of a paper and discussion.

This document serves as a 'point in time' review of the strategy, to enable the Executive to take a holistic look at the state of play for the response phase. Action owners have reviewed the activities they have undertaken, outlined the impacts and outcomes received and also identified future actions required.

***N.B*** *Given the regular updates provided by the Minister of Health at each Executive meeting, input from the Department of Health has not been sought for this review.*

It is recognised that this Review cannot capture every action progressed across the Executive. It is intended to set out the key actions which remain to be taken in the Response phase, with supporting context on key activities.

It will be essential that the remaining actions are delivered in line with the R rate, which will be kept under review. A number of other key steps and decisions have been taken and delivered. For example, the Executive has had several discussions about resource allocations, and has discussed at every meeting the necessary updates to the Assembly, and all discussions have been guided by the science and by regular updates from the Minister for Health.

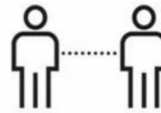




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## **PRIORITY WORKSTREAM 1 HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF OUR CITIZENS**



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Identify, contact and provide support for the most vulnerable people so that they can stay safely at home. & Ensure children, vulnerable people and the self-isolating have access to food and medicines.		1.1
		1.5
REF NUMBER: 1.1 & 1.5	OWNER: Moira Doherty, DfC	

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

1. A Covid 19 Community Helpline which has been contacted by over 12,000 people by phone call, email and text;
2. A volunteering effort that has seen over 4,000 individuals come forward to assist with the delivery of services in their communities;
3. A community pharmacy service to ensure that those who can't get to the pharmacy have their medicines delivered to their door by volunteers;
4. An Access to Food response that ranges from signposting to local stores who are delivering direct to people's homes, to Council co-ordinated volunteers picking up some shopping for people who cannot leave their homes; through to the direct delivery and access to food, working with Councils and grass roots organisations on the ground. This includes a food box element and as of 22/05/2020, 103,000 boxes have been delivered. This support allows for a box of essential items to be delivered directly to the door of vulnerable people who cannot access food through online shopping, family, friends or local support networks. These boxes will also be available to both shielding and non-shielding people who fall into this group;
5. A Covid 19 Community Support Contingency Fund which has allocated, through Councils, an initial £1.5m to assist the community response to those in need relating to food, income and connectedness; and
6. A webform which went live on ni direct on 5.05.20 to allow those in the shielded group to register for their details to be passed to Asda, Iceland, Sainsbury's and Tesco to be offered a priority online delivery slot.

#### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

1. Community Helpline has answered over 95% of calls made in the last month providing support and onwards referrals for food boxes, medication deliveries, social contact and many other services for vulnerable people.



2. Access to food continues to be the main reason for calling the Community Helpline. W/C 27 April 2020, 1,791 citizens were connected to the support they require. 70% of callers needed help to access food and 5% medication.
3. 103,000 food boxes have been distributed to date. With the outbreak of Covid-19, there are those who received shielding letters from their GP's and, along with others who are vulnerable, are required to stay at home who can neither get out for food or secure other means of accessing food such as through online delivery or family/friends.
4. 207 community pharmacies registered with the Community Development and Health Network scheme and 205 have been matched with a Voluntary and Community Organisation.
5. Over 4,000 volunteers have registered with Volunteer Now in response to their #HelpEachOtherOut campaign.
6. £1.5m allocated through Councils to voluntary and community organisations via the Community Support Fund to assist the community response to those in need relating to food, income and connectedness.

## **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

1. The delivery of the overall access to food response, including the delivery of food boxes over a period of 12 weeks whilst reviewing and developing the food response from the emergency phase to a recovery phase. Within this, the links between the access to food and wider themes (anti-poverty, economic impact, individual resilience/self-efficacy).
2. The Department is working with Inspire, which is already contracted to the NICS and Public Health Agency, to identify ways to bring together and build on existing mental health and wellbeing resources within the voluntary and community sector, to achieve improved and more targeted impact. A key element of the proposal is a public campaign (Your Mind Matters) which will have both general population messages and also specific messages and resources for vulnerable groups – identified as carers, people living with addiction, older people and those shielding, people living with mental ill health and people dealing with grief and loss. The public campaign will be supported by a central digital hub which will offer more in depth information and links to support, including the supports available through community organisations.
3. The Department is now planning for the recovery and renewal phase. Key stakeholders are involved in transition planning and co -design of our policy response.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Sufficient supplies of PPE for non-Health care sectors.		1.2
REF NUMBER: 1.2	OWNER:	Sharon Smyth, DoF

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

- DoF PPE Co-ordination Hub was established on 24 March 2020 to:
  - Provide oversight of orders placed with suppliers and completion of those orders;
  - Look to expand the number of suppliers to government;
  - Work with procurement bodies on a north/south and east/west basis;
  - Provide updates to the Executive;
  - PPE Supplier Offers registration process established through NIDirect COVID-19 landing page. The page went live on 7 April 2020. This has reduced the amount of duplication of offers received and has allowed offers to be registered and co-ordinated for all sectors;
  - A triage function has been established to allow offers to be fast tracked and to free-up time for Health staff to carry out the technical assessments process.;
  - A re-purposing work stream has been established with InvestNI and DoH to assist manufacturers to repurpose their operations to produce essential PPE;
  - Orders have been placed with local suppliers and internationally.

#### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

- All PPE supplies sourced for DOJ's Temporary Resting Place for use by undertakers.
- As of week ending 15 May 2020, 647 PPE orders have been placed for the Non Health Sector Departments with an aggregated value of £7.233.178.
- 87% of this expenditure has been with NI based suppliers.
- DoF worked with DoH and TEO to award a significant international PPE contract.
- Sustainable supply chains have been established locally for visors, hand sanitiser and cadaver bags which were in short supply globally.

#### ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN?

- All Departments have been advised to carry out risk assessments to assist in forecasting demand for PPE over the next 6-12 months (to include PPE required if staff return to the office estate and any contingency stock which should be held to assist with any subsequent outbreaks).



2. When this demand is identified DoF will assist in sourcing.
3. This may be sourced through the establishment of a PPE Dynamic Purchasing System by June /July 2020 which DOH will take the lead on as the largest user and experts in medical grade PPE.
4. Other local manufacturing opportunities for PPE will continue to be explored to ensure sustainable supply chains across the UK and Ireland to mitigate against the risks of future supply chain disruption in the event of further outbreaks.





<b>WORKSTREAM:</b>		<b>RAG RATING</b>
To use the public information campaign to reinforce social distancing messages and encourage wider societal response to current crisis.		1.3
<b>REF NUMBER:</b> 1.3	<b>OWNER:</b> Chris McNabb, EIS/TEO	

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

1. A high impact multi-channel advertising campaign has been running since 23 March across TV, radio, outdoor, digital and social media, weekly and daily press. The vast majority of advertising has included social distancing messaging and encouraged people to stay at home, keep your distance and wash your hands. The following image appears on all advertising (apart from radio):



- **Household Leaflet:** A leaflet was issued to every home in Northern Ireland which included messaging on social distancing.
  - **TV:** A heavy weight TV campaign has been rolled out across the following channels: TV (5 TV adverts): UTV, Channel 4, ITV Breakfast, ITV Hub, All 4, Sky and Virgin. Messaging includes stay at home, self-isolation/symptoms and a celebrity advert #StayAtHomeHeroes
  - **Radio:** Cool FM, DTR, DTR Country, Q Network (7 stations), U105, Blast, Tesco instore and Spar instore radio. Messaging has included stay at home (including Bank Holiday and Easter edits), touch and self isolation,
  - **Outdoor:** Asda Live, Adshel (bus shelters), retail 6 sheets, Adbox convenience stores and petrol stations, A3 ambient, Pulse channels (digital outdoor), 96 sheet backlit close to City Airport and Tesco Knocknagoney.
  - **Print:** Belfast Telegraph, Irish News, News Letter, Daily Mirror, The Sun, 35 x weekly titles, NI4 Kids, Farming Life, Farm Week and Irish Farmers Journal.
- Digital:** A wide range of high impact digital advertising plus Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram and search.

#### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

1. According to industry research tools, to date the Executive's COVID 19 campaign is estimated to have reached approximately 98% of the NI population at least once. It is estimated that the average adult will have been exposed to the campaign 86 times.



2. **The digital activity has delivered:**

- **Impressions** (number of times the advert has appeared on screen): 19 million
- **Clicks** (the number of times someone has clicked through on the advert: 127.5k
- **Reactions**, Comments, Likes, Shares: 23.8k

**ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:**

1. Keep the key message under review, inline with the current Covid 19 situation.
2. High profile multi-channel advertising will continue to be rolled out over the coming months.
3. Daily NI Executive press conferences.
4. Polling exercise is also under consideration.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Ensure there are sufficient school places for vulnerable children and for key worker parents to continue to work.		1.4
REF NUMBER: 1.4	OWNER: Ricky Irwin, DE NR, DE	

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

1. Launched Safer Schools App on 10 April to support schools and parents in terms of child protection & safeguarding during Covid-19;
2. Issued guidance on vulnerable children and young people on 10 April. This is reviewed regularly to reflect updates to UK guidance;
3. A weekly reporting system has been put in place in relation to the Education Authority's support to vulnerable children and young people;
4. Five virtual Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Groups have been established (to align with the 5 Health Trust areas) to ensure appropriate safeguarding and child protection responses and referrals have been made; to support appropriate multi-disciplinary child/protection/safeguarding decision making and to provide help and support through EA services where appropriate;
5. Contributing to a cross-Departmental action plan led by DoH to support vulnerable children and young people during Covid-19 and beyond;
6. A multi-disciplinary panel process established involving health and education to consider the needs of vulnerable children attending special schools and other children with complex needs;
7. Ministerial guidance and Frequently Asked questions to support schools opening for children of key workers and vulnerable children launched on 24 March – updated regularly – most recent update 30 April;
8. Guidance on social distancing in education settings launched and updated on 3 April;
9. Video on social distancing and hygiene in schools (produced in collaboration with PHA) released on 27 April;
10. C-19 Clustering arrangements launched on 31 March;
11. Daily data gathering survey to all settings commenced on 21 March and is carried out on a daily basis to assess the situation on the ground across a range of things including No.



schools open / No. children in attendance / No vulnerable children / general issues / distance learning / finance;

12. Interactive map updated daily on DE website showing open schools;
13. EA key worker helpline launched 30 March; EA Key worker placement system launched 31 March; Vulnerable children placement scheme launched 11 May.

#### **IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:**

1. Vulnerable and key worker children prioritised during the Covid-19 response.
2. Daily data is being used to feed into planning assumptions and interventions at local level to ensure so far as possible that appropriate provision is made for vulnerable children and the children of key workers.
3. Enhanced collaborative working with the EA and other Departments to ensure the needs of key workers and vulnerable children and young people are being identified and met. Specific focus on children with complex needs.
4. Monitoring arrangements in place in relation to the EA services which are providing support key workers and to vulnerable children and young people.
5. Many support services moved online and being provided remotely to vulnerable children and their families for example Special Educational Need (SEN) services, Child Protection, Behavioural Support, Autism.
6. Increasing numbers of vulnerable children attending school.

#### **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:**

1. Consideration of support for vulnerable children and young people beyond Covid-19 will be required. Actions and timeframes will be included in the Department's Education Restart Programme.
2. Consideration of options to provide summer activity schemes for vulnerable children and key workers' children drawing on the private, community and voluntary sectors.
3. Consideration of contingency arrangements and further guidance in the medium term as well as long term (actions for long term will be included in the Department's Education Restart Programme).
4. Ministerial sign-off sought on proposal to initiate engagement with education providers and develop detailed guidance in support of "New School Day" planning.



<b>WORKSTREAM:</b>		<b>RAG RATING</b>
<b>Ensuring the safe operation of custodial environments.</b>		<b>1.6</b>
<b>REF NUMBER: 1.6</b>	<b>OWNER: Ronnie Armour, DoJ</b>	

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

- Custodial operations are being maintained with adjusted measures:
  - introduction of a restricted, house-based, regime;
  - introduction of proportionate social distancing measures;
  - restriction of movement between and access to prison establishments;
  - shielding of older and vulnerable prisoners;
  - isolation of individuals who are symptomatic and 14 day self-isolation for all new committals;
  - reduced “doubling up”, i.e. those sharing a cell;
  - cessation of face-to-face visits effective 23 March 2020; virtual visits introduced on 30.3.20 across all establishments
  - suspension of temporary release and working in the community schemes;
  - introduction of temporary early release for prisoners within 90 days of release;
  - closure of Learning and Skills Units;
  - increased allowances, television access and telephone credits;
  - increased cleaning and use of PPE in line with World Health Organisation, Public Health Agency and all other relevant guidance;
  - Testing of symptomatic prisoners and staff/family members. There is a criteria for individuals to meet before they are tested and we apply it. We have developed our own internal track and trace programme for staff and for prisoners who test positive.
  - ongoing engagement of voluntary and community sector partners to supplement the work of NIPS in supporting those within our care and their families
- £1.9m has been secured from the Executive to support the additional costs of Covid-19 in Prisons Service.

#### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

- One confirmed prisoner case (*prisoner who tested positive before his committal to prison custody*);
- Staffing levels stable across all establishments;
- Landing-based regimes in place across all establishments;
- Virtual visits operational and 600 took place w/b 11 May.





## **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:**

1. Temporary releases scheme ongoing.
2. Piloting of virtual learning between students and teachers at Hydebank Wood. The aim is to roll out virtual learning across all three prisons over the coming weeks.
3. NIPS is taking forward a range of activity to examine and plan for stages of recovery.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
<b>Ensure the continued supply and production of;</b> <b>(a) essential food and feed, to and from farms,</b> <b>(b) as well as the supply of essential drinking water, waste water and water services.</b>		1.7
REF NUMBER: 1.7	OWNER: Norman Fulton, DAERA Julie Thompson, DfI Paul Grocott & Michelle Scott, DfE	

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

##### (a) essential food and feed, to and from farms:

1. Participation in UK-wide Task and Finish Group to assess the risk of hauliers entering financial distress and disruption to supply chains for critical goods;
2. Established an industry forum of key stakeholders representing the agri-food supply chain that met 3 time per week (initially) and now weekly, to provide a 2 way communication channel and forum that could capture industry intelligence, discuss and resolve issues;
3. Established a forum with NI Livestock Auctioneers Association (NILAA) and other stakeholders that met regularly and developed a protocol so that Livestock Markets could operate safely for staff and customers and fulfil their role in the food supply chain;
4. Engagement 1 to 1 contact on regular basis with industry stakeholder and food company representatives to capture intelligence and resolve issues;
5. Ongoing monitoring of processing capacity and supply chain to identify potential issues with routes to market that would lead to surplus product with no market outlet and build up of product / livestock on farms, and preparation of support packages;
6. Ongoing monitoring of market prices for agricultural produce and preparation of support packages to prevent farm business failure in the event of a sharp decline in farm gate prices;
7. Lodged a marker bid with DoF for the resource need to deal with significant on-farm produce loss and disposal should this risk materialise;
8. Obtained £25m funding from Executive to support sectors most affected by Covid-19;
9. Developed and agreed a phased contingency response plan with the pig sector to deal with the possibility of reduced processing capacity – which is now owned by the sector;



10. Worked with NIEA to agree disposal protocols and guidance for surplus farm produce, eg milk;
11. Liaison with Defra and DA counterparts at official and Ministerial level to monitor developments and appropriate responses.

**(b) as well as the supply of essential drinking water, waste water and water services:**

12. Significant contingency plans to maintain these vital services have been put in place by DfI and NIW. Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) and NIEA are providing regulatory oversight to protect public health and the environment.
13. While some regulatory monitoring requirements have been relaxed to ensure social distancing requirements this does not compromise standards that need to be achieved to protect public health.
14. NIEA has published a Regulatory Position Statements in relation to wastewater compliance requirements and regulatory sampling requirements.
15. The DWI is working with owners and users of private water supplies as well as council officers to identify the sites in operation, treatments in place and any risks that need addressed in the absence of routine monitoring.
16. NIEA has implemented a pollution surveillance programme focusing on areas which could impact the raw water for drinking water, shellfish production, bathing waters and rivers of high conservation value.
17. The 24hr pollution hotline is operating as normal with incidents triaged by duty officers and inspectors allocated to investigate depending upon the initial severity assigned. Incidents within the designated surveillance areas (drinking water abstractions etc.) are prioritized for investigation.

**IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:**

**(a) essential food and feed, to and from farms,**

1. Key issues escalated to EBRIG and assessed at UKG level.
2. Facilitated successful initial extension of Drivers Hours legislation application to DfI for the Dairy and Animal Feed sector.
3. Risks to supply chain disruption from staff absenteeism has significantly abated (though not yet gone).



4. 23 livestock markets have now reopened and re-established outlets and cashflow for cattle and sheep businesses.
5. Sector level pig contingency response plan agreed and in place.
6. Options for dairy, beef and ornamental horticulture intervention developed in outline form that are deliverable and State Aid compliant.
7. Contributed to a joint industry and Government promotional campaign to increase consumption of milk in order to help rebalance supply / demand due to loss of food service markets.
8. Developed the basis of the potential targeted support package and scheme for ornamental horticulture where produce has not been able to move off production units.

**b) as well as the supply of essential drinking water, waste water and water services:**

9. From the 13 April- 26 May NIEA have carried out 2315 proactive waterway checks as part of the surveillance programme in place. This has resulted in the identification of 68 pollution incidents. Since lockdown began on the 23 March the Agency has also responded to 302 reports of water pollution via the 24h hotline (figure as of 26 May). This number is slightly below but in line with what is normally received for the same time period. Whilst there has been a relaxation of the frequency of some monitoring undertaken by NIW, there has been no change in the regulatory standards and therefore there has been assurance that public health is being protected.
10. Private water supply being used at high risk sites are being managed to ensure there is no risk to users.

**ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:**

**(a) essential food and feed, to and from farms:**

1. Ongoing engagement with Agri-food Industry Stakeholders;
2. Ongoing engagement with NILAA and relevant stakeholders.
3. Ongoing monitoring of market prices and development of support schemes for Dairy, Beef, Ornamental Horticulture and other sectors if required to addressing the growing revenue risks from market disturbance (part of the economic response).

**(b) as well as the supply of essential drinking water, waste water and water services:**

4. DWI will continue to work to ensure any changes in usage of private water supply on sites does not increase the risk to public health.



5. Work with NIW will continue to increase their monitoring programme to ensure that public health protection is maintained.
6. NIEA and DWI are working with NI Water to establish the impact of COVID-19 on their Capital Investment Programme.





WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Ensure continued food supply.		1.9
REF NUMBER: 1.9	OWNER: Mark Livingston, DAERA, DfE, DfI – John McGrath	

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

1. Officials engaged with the Department for Transport's (DfT) Critical Freight Taskforce who had been scoping a draft intervention for critical UK sea freight routes including GB-NI and a UK wide Haulage sector support scheme.
2. Participation in UK-wide Task and Finish Group to assess the risk of hauliers entering financial distress and disruption to supply chains for critical goods during COVID recovery phase and beyond.
3. An NI Haulage Industry critical analysis group was established to provide strategic direction to determine if the current pressures on the Haulage Industry to maintain the supply of critical goods into and around NI. This group had representatives from NI Departments, Haulage Industry, UK retailers and DfT.
4. DAERA developed an evidence base to provide the Executive with early warnings of real world impacts on all supply routes relevant to NI food security:

International Food Supply	Growing Food	Processor capacity	Food to the Shelves (Logistics)	Food on the shelves (Retailers)	People (Consumers)	Vulnerable People

#### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

1. A Financial intervention worth £5.5 million was provided to secure ferry capacity.
2. Initial findings of the NI Haulage Industry critical analysis group showed no evidence to suggest food is not being supplied by the haulage industry and responses to the latest FTA surveys reveal more than 80% of haulage firms across the UK are financially viable for the next 2 months.
3. DAERA produced a Food Observatory Report a dashboard that will allow us to continuously assess the health of the food supply system, with a view to encouraging and supporting measures to maintain its flexibility and resilience



## **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:**

1. UK-wide Task and Finish Group will provide a data analysis of supply and demand for haulage in UK;
2. NI Haulage Industry critical analysis group will circulate a position paper in relation to the group's evidence'
3. The Executive Office will develop an escalation policy that will focus on delivering solutions to the priorities in keeping food on our shelves; and
4. DAERA will continue to track the health of the food supply chain and develop contingency plans and refine current actions.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Maintain and enhance housing solutions during the Covid 19 crisis in the (a) Social Housing Sector (b) Private Rented Housing Sector		1.10 (a)
		1.10 (b)
REF NUMBER: 1.10	OWNER: <span style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 0 5px;">NR</span> , DfC	

## ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

### (a) Social Housing Sector:

1. Secured agreement with Social Landlords to the effect that there shall be no evictions due to Covid-19-related rent arrears.
2. Guidance for social sector landlords and tenants is currently under development.
3. NIHE currently carrying out only emergency repairs to their properties. They have begun working with contractors to look at other remedial work that could be undertaken while strictly following PHA guidance.

### (b) Private Rented Housing Sector:

4. Private Rented Sector Tenancies Bill has received Royal Assent. This Bill requires all private landlords to give 12 weeks' notice to quit to tenants during the Covid 19 emergency and protects tenants from eviction.
5. Private Rented Sector Guidance published, providing much welcomed advice for those in the PRS. Guidance now updated to take account of the Bill.

## Homelessness

6. Housing worked closely with DoH, PHA, PSNI and providers to develop guidance to help homeless providers respond to the COVID-19 crisis. The second version of the guidance is published and we continue to update. Version three is nearing completion.
7. Testing is available for clients and staff.
8. NIHE working with PHA to implement homeless surge plan. Increased use of temporary accommodation (short term lets, hotels, B&Bs) to free up space for isolation in hotels by those who are homeless. £3.3m of extra funding secured to help with these costs.



9. Working with Health on housing those with No Recourse to Public Funds during this period –MOU signed on 15 May. NIHE will recharge Health for accommodating those with NRPFs during this time (NIHE assisting Health with the discharge of its function).
10. NIHE is working to resolve issues and sustain rough sleepers in accommodation longer term once this period is over.

### **Supporting People**

11. Updated guidance has issued to Supporting People providers from NIHE on 17 April.
12. PHA support and additional testing is available for all accommodation based schemes where 2 or more clients have tested positive for Covid-19 or are showing symptoms.
13. The Department is assured that within Supported People schemes all appropriate steps in line with current government guidance are being taken by Supporting People providers, including deep cleaning, social distancing and self-isolation measures, and that the Housing Executive will closely monitor the situation to ensure that the health and well-being of vulnerable tenants is protected.
14. The Executive has approved a bid for £10m to support vulnerable people in Supporting People schemes. This additional funding is to be used for: bank/ temporary staffing in order to continue to provide services at a time when they are likely to be experiencing a high level of absenteeism; loss of supplementary income from social enterprises; cleaning costs now that there are confirmed cases within Supporting People schemes; loss of provider income (SP and Housing Benefit funding, which will reduce as fewer clients can be accommodated at lower density, which may be required to enable physical distancing) and contingency planning arrangements.
15. In addition, flexibility has been granted to those Supporting People providers who hold accumulated Supporting People Reserves to use these reserves to meet Covid-19 pressures.
16. The 2020/2021 budget has been confirmed at £72.8 million to allow NIHE to allocate first quarter funds, which have been issued to providers in order to prevent any cash flow issues.
17. Work is ongoing between DfC, DoH, CPD and NIHE to ensure availability of appropriate PPE to those accommodation-based Supporting People providers that are not jointly-commissioned with DoH. DoH has offered assistance in the short term and a bid for additional funding from the Executive to cover these costs has been prepared.



## **IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:**

### **(a) Social Housing Sector:**

1. Repair calls for week ending the 22th May - 6,385
2. Lettings 23. This is at a lower volume than usual but illustrates that emergency moves are going ahead as required. This is also against a backdrop of an increase in temporary accommodation placements.

### **(b) Private Rented Housing Sector:**

3. No. of homelessness presenters due to loss of private rented accommodation (since 1st May 2020) as of 22 May was 46, compared to 139 in the equivalent period in 2019.
4. No of homeless presenters due to loss of private rented accommodation (since 1<sup>st</sup> April) as of 30<sup>th</sup> April was 60, compared to 181 in the equivalent period in 2019.

### **Homelessness (position at 22 May)**

5. Current placements in temporary accommodation was 2,855 (768 New presenters since 1st May and 2,090 since 23 March).
6. The NIHE has reported that those previously rough sleeping are now engaging with services. It is; however, recognised that this situation will be difficult to sustain over the medium term.

### **Housing Rights**

7. Housing Rights continue to provide essential housing advice to the public with demand for services monitored on a weekly basis. The latest data available can be summarised as follows:
  - Housing Helpline: W/E 15 May – The number of clients assisted during this week was 206 (weekly average 150). Of these 49% were enquiries in relation to the private rented sector. Notably, across all Housing Rights Helplines (Public; Landlord and [www.housingadviceNI.org](http://www.housingadviceNI.org)) for the first time since the crisis began COVID-19 related enquiries were not the main issue with only 18% of enquiries received related to COVID-19. The top issue was affordability.
  - Landlord Helpline: W/E 15 May – A total of 30 callers were assisted during the period (weekly average is 30); of these 17% were seeking guidance on COVID-19 related issues. A free webinar on COVID-19 & the private rented sector tailored to landlords and letting agents operating in the sector was held on 14th May 2020. A total of 15 participants including landlords, letting agents and relevant staff from councils and DfC attended.





## Supporting People

8. A number of Supporting People services, particularly those supporting older people, have been impacted by covid-19: operational information from providers indicates that, as of 26 May, SP providers have reported 59 confirmed covid-19 cases among SP service users, of whom 22 are deceased; 35 SP staff have tested positive for covid-19.
9. 42 of 861 schemes across all thematic groups are still reporting significant staff shortages of 30% or above. The issue is particularly acute for Homeless sector schemes, with a consequent impact on schemes' ability to accept referrals.

### ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:

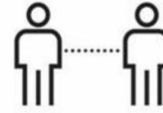
1. Still trying to resolve supply of PPE to a small subset of Supporting People providers: temporary solution currently in place; permanent solution (post 29 May) has been agreed with NIHE and CPD and arrangements are being put in place.
2. Guidance on covid-19-related issues is being prepared for social sector tenants and landlords. It is anticipated this will be published within the next two weeks.
3. NIHE are now starting to look at an exit strategy iro homelessness, including lessons learned.
4. Consideration is currently being given to how/whether social housing construction could resume – in line with some other UK Jurisdictions. Issue has been flagged to the Executive. Guidance on achieving social distancing within construction industry will be a key part of considerations.
5. Co-ownership (the Department's main intermediate homes delivery partner) has indicated that it would like to be in a position to recommence its Scheme, which is based on the purchase of homes from the open market. We continue to work closely with Co-Ownership on this issue.
6. Housing has already commenced work to preparing for wider recovery. As a first step, we are developing a 'virtual housing panel' comprised of experts across housing and associated sectors, including our key delivery partners and those with wider influence i.e. representatives from the finance and academia to help ensure that we have both a real-time understanding of what issues are developing in and across sectors and have access to the most up to date data/evidence to help inform decision making. The first meeting of the group took place on 21 May. Work is ongoing, involving the Panel, to consider if and how the COVID-19 Regulations should be amended to facilitate a reopening of the housing market.



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**PRIORITY WORKSTREAM 2**  
**OUR ECONOMIC WELL-BEING**  
**AND PREPARING TO**  
**REVITALISE THE ECONOMY**



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Monitor the impact on the economy and consider the measures / policy framework needed to revitalise the economy post COVID 19		2.1
REF NUMBER: 2.1	OWNER: Paul Grocott, DfE John McGrath, DfI Colum Boyle, DFC DAERA DoF	

#### ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN:

1. Maintain economic activity to the extent possible, by establishing and working with the LRA group to develop guidance on safe working.
2. Provision of a comprehensive macroeconomic and sectoral interim assessment of the economic impacts of Covid-19, which has been shared with Executive colleagues. This provides information on the detail and severity of impacts across various sectors to assist policy colleagues in considering measures needed to revitalise the economy;
3. Executive Paper on Partial Economic Restart;
4. Ongoing monitoring of various short term economic indicators to assess the impact of Covid-19 on the local economy. This includes data on: vacancies; footfall; HGV and LGV traffic; Universal Credit claims; and furloughed workers/redundancies for Invest NI client companies. Latest monitoring data is issued to the data portal of the Hub on a weekly basis;
5. A substantial package of rate reliefs for business worth £213 million was announced on 19 May;
6. Executive paper seeking agreement to:
  - launch a communication campaign to kick-start the economy with construction and manufacturing employees returning to safe workplaces;
  - continue to emphasise and promote the trends for home working for our businesses in the services sector;
  - extend the first step in relaxing the restrictions on garden centres to include other outdoor non-food retailers; and
  - take a second step for non-food retail in June, to open stores with lower frequency visits, such as stores that sell household electrical appliances, mobile phones and furniture.
7. DoH Regulation Templates submitted for:



- Outdoor non-food retailers including New & Used Car Retailers, Retailers of Light Motor Vehicles, Lorries Trailers, Retailers of Caravans or Motorhomes, and Retailers of Agricultural or Other Large Machinery;
- Non-food retail with lower frequency customer visits and / or with a greater propensity for larger store areas, but only where those outlets have the locational characteristics of having direct street access or that direct access within a retail park lower frequency retail activities. This would include household electrical appliances, computer and electronic equipment, mobile phones, and furniture and furnishing stores.

#### **IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:**

1. Guidance issued via the LRA group.
2. Informing Executive decisions;
3. All businesses in Northern Ireland will receive a four month rates holiday; and
4. Airports and businesses in the retail, hospitality, tourism and leisure sectors will benefit from 100% rate relief for 2020/21.

#### **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:**

1. Papers on how the economy will recover from the pandemic by next Review Point, including:
  - the further steps we will be taking for the retail sector;
  - supporting vulnerable but viable businesses through the next phases of the pandemic;
  - supporting our people who become unemployed to retrain, upskill and keep close to the labour market: and delivering on our long term commitment for a strong, competitive and regionally balanced economy with more people working in better jobs in these challenging times.
2. Labour Market interventions strategy to be developed within Work and Health in DFC.
3. Ongoing coordination between DfE, DfC and Invest NI Ongoing.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Provide financial support and make regulatory easements (within the Devolved sphere).		2.2
REF NUMBER: 2.2	OWNER: Ian Snowden, DoF Diarmuid McClean, DfE & John McGrath, DfI	

#### ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN:

1. Two financial support schemes have been set up for businesses in NI. A £10k scheme is available to support small businesses in receipt of SBRR and industrially de-rated manufacturing businesses. The scheme has been extended to small businesses in rented accommodation. A £25K support scheme is available for businesses in the retail tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors. Both schemes close to new applications on the 20 May.
2. Developed and set up a web portal for small business to apply on 26 March.
3. Developed and set up a web portal for businesses whose rates are paid by their landlords to apply on 30 March.
4. Application period for both the £10,000 and £25,000 grants ended on 20 May.
5. All applications have been checked to ensure that there are no duplicate payments.
6. Grants have been paid out in batches as quickly as possible after the applications have been received.
7. Payment batches are released twice each week – on Tuesdays and Fridays – unless there is a bank holiday.
8. A new Microbusiness Hardship scheme aimed at providing support for businesses with 1-9 employees opened on the 20<sup>th</sup> May.
9. Driving licences with an expiry date between 1 February and 31 August 2020 will be treated as valid for a further seven months. It removes the requirement for a medical assessment for some drivers. The new arrangements will be put in place in the coming days, as soon as a new EU Regulation becomes law. Other regulatory easements were put in place for drivers and the freight sector.

#### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:

1. By 22 May, 22,063 grants had been paid out, worth £220.63 million.
2. Indications are that there has been a high degree of accuracy in the payments. 10 grants have been returned by businesses who believe they received them wrongly and a small





number of other reports (fewer than 15) have been received of grants going to the wrong person.

3. Up to 22 May for the 10k scheme there have been 22,243 applications to date with £210million paid out to businesses.
4. For the £25K scheme there has been 3327 applications to date with Payments of £40 million paid to businesses.
5. There have been 916 applications to the Microbusiness scheme with a further 837 in progress.

#### **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

1. As of 22 May, approximately 2,500 valid applications for the £10,000 grant remained to be processed.
2. DfE: Both the £10k and £25k schemes closed to applicants on the 20 May.
3. The Microbusiness Hardship Fund opened for applications on 20 May.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
<b>Maintain supplies of essential items and related supply chains</b> <b>- Protect the health outcomes by ensuring essential goods are available</b> <b>&amp;</b> <b>Maintain essential transport arrangements and flows of goods -</b> <b>Work with Administrations and Governments to ensure the goods we need reach us and public transport provision is continued to assist essential workers.</b>		2.3
		2.4
REF NUMBER: 2.3 & 2.4	OWNER: Karen Pearson, TEO Paul Grocott, DfE John McGrath, DfI Trevor Connolly, DfE Bill Pauley, DoF	

#### ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN:

##### AIR

1. DoF, DfE and DfI engaged with the UK Government regarding the need for temporary support for airlines and airports in order to maintain the airbridge between NI and GB.
2. Following agreement being reached with UKG, the Executive agreed on the 24<sup>th</sup> April that it would contribute half of a maximum £6.646m financial support package, with the UKG meeting the cost of the other half. The support, which was announced on 1<sup>st</sup> May, will be provided for 3 months until end June 2020 after which the position would be reconsidered.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-safeguard-vital-great-britain-northern-ireland-air-links>
3. The final DfE/DfI/Council MoU for the London/CoDA PSO route has now been signed by all three parties.

##### SEA/ROAD

4. BIA has contacted the Finance, Economy and Infrastructure Ministers (email on 19 April 2020 at 22.26) seeking financial support for their freight operation. We understand that BIA has subsequently confirmed to DoF that it does not need immediate assistance.
5. Rathlin Island Ferry service has been reduced to facilitate only essential travel to and from the island.
6. £10.6-£16.6m financial support package for our three ferry operators across 5 Irish Sea routes agreed between UKG and the Executive on 19th April. The package is to last for 2 months. 40% cost contribution from NI Executive.



7. DfI supporting cross departmental work led by DfE and DfT to inform solutions to ensure road haulage sector can support maintenance of critical supply chains. This has included escalating NI specific concerns to UKG and engaging with industry representatives to support DfE to establish firm evidence base in relation to issues with hauliers and potential to impact on critical supply chains. In addition, non-financial measures such as relaxation of drivers' hours rules put in place help the haulage industry.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

8. The public transport network has been reduced in line with the significant reduction in demand whilst maintaining geographic coverage. Current services are focussed on ensuring that essential workers can continue to access the workplace and services with clear messaging that travel should not be undertaken unless essential.
9. Free travel has been extended to all Health and Social Care workers during the COVID-19 outbreak.
10. Community Transport Operators have been supported in transitioning their services to facilitate essential travel only in rural areas and to support local communities by undertaking journeys to deliver groceries/ food boxes/ prescriptions. In addition to confirmation of DfI Grant payment, collaborative working with DAERA has ensured that ARTS funding will also be made available to support operators.

## **IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:**

### AIR

1. The support will ensure that an airbridge between NI and GB is maintained, allowing the continued movement of key workers and goods. This will consist of
  - An increased subsidy to Loganair to maintain PSO route between City of Derry Airport and London;
  - Support for Derry and Strabane Council to ensure CoDA remains open to enable PSO route to operate;
  - Support to Belfast City to ensure it remains open to support the daily Belfast - London flight; and
  - Support for Aer Lingus to ensure Belfast to London flight remains operational

### SEA / ROAD

2. Rathlin Island Ferry is continuing to facilitate food and goods delivery to the island.
3. Rathlin Island remains Covid free.



4. Ferry package could maintain capacity at on average c.60% of pre-COVID 19 capacity (exact levels will be determined through implementation process on specific routes). Ferries are reporting a slight upturn in freight volumes this week.
5. If Road Haulage operators are unable to maintain adequate capacity and make commercial decisions to reduce capacity there is potential impact on critical good supply. At this stage no immediate concerns are being raised.

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

6. Reductions in the public transport network has built resilience into the network to allow Translink to manage services in light of staff absences and reduced demand. In line with this reduction of the network, capacity was maintained to ensure that the travelling public could continue to practise social distancing on public transport services.
7. Free travel for Health and Social Care workers has been implemented and has removed the cost for those essential workers.
8. CTOs are having a positive impact in their local communities – working in collaboration with a wide variety of partners including Councils, local retailers, pharmacies.

#### **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

##### AIR

1. As part of their commitment to the funding, the UKG specified that the Executive should work with DfT to set out its intended approach after the end of this initial 3 months, given that the demand for air travel could still be below pre-Covid 19 levels.
2. As signalled by DoF in their Executive Funding Paper, work will need to commence in the forthcoming weeks, with DfT and HMT, on the arrangements post June 2020.
3. Continued monitoring of BCA and CODA on behalf of DfT to ensure they discharge their obligations under the airport support package.
4. Continued monitoring of impact of ferry support package.

##### SEA / ROAD

1. Continued monitoring of the financial position of Rathlin Island Ferry Limited. This activity will be ongoing.
2. Work ongoing to support DfE to evidence need for support for hauliers.
3. Financial position of ports being monitored.

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

4. Continued monitoring of the public transport network to manage capacity on the network as demand increases. This activity will be ongoing.
5. Continued monitoring of what each CTO is delivering. This activity will be ongoing.



<b>WORKSTREAM:</b>		<b>RAG RATING</b>
<b>Ensure that individuals and families are supported</b>		<b>2.5</b>
<b>REF NUMBER:</b> <b>2.5</b>	<b>OWNER: Margaret Rose McNaughton, DE</b>	

#### **ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN:**

1. The Department of Education's aim was to ensure children entitled to FSM would still be able to avail of a meal during the day when schools (normally open) would be closed. The quickest most efficient way of ensuring this was to introduce a system of direct payments in lieu of free school meals to those who could avail of it.
2. On week commencing 25 May the fifth payment to bank accounts and by cheque for 56,802 payees were made which represented 101,862 children entitled to Free School Meals of an estimated value of £2,750,382. Payments by Aspen Card to 46 Asylum Seeker families representing 82 children to a value of £2,214 will also be made.
3. Backdated payments amounting to an estimated £554,148 have now been paid to 5,632 payees representing 9,722 children entitled to Free school Meals.
4. Following the payments on week commencing 25 May the EA will have paid out around £13.693m (pending any BACS rejections) direct to bank accounts or by cheque £ and £11k will have been paid by Aspen Card to asylum seeker families since schools closed. This represents total payments in the region of £13.704m in respect of 101,944 children.
5. The next round of payments into bank accounts, by cheque or by Aspen Card is scheduled for week commencing 8th June.
6. Payments will continue until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

#### **IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED:**

1. Making payments to support the vast majority of children entitled to free school meals has ensured that families do not endure additional hardship during lockdown and that children can avail of a meal each day.

#### **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN:**

1. While the majority of families in receipt of FSM received direct payments from 23<sup>rd</sup> March, some 2,000 payees did not submit bank details in time for the first and second run of





payments. Backdated payments have now been made direct to bank accounts, by cheque or by Aspen Card.

2. As payments in lieu of FSM will cease from 30<sup>th</sup> June there is an urgent need to consider what support will be put in place for the summer months (when children are not entitled to FSM). Holiday Hunger is an issue that arises every year as the school holidays approach – it is not for one department alone to resolve - it will be for the Executive to decide on the way forward with respect to the short term need over July and August and the longer term strategic direction. Work has begun on scenario planning for delivery of School Meals when schools re-open.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
To put in place planning for economic recovery: Sectoral assessments and remedial /targeted support		2.6
REF NUMBER: 2.6	OWNER: Paul Grocott, DfE John McGrath, DfI DAERA & DoF	

#### ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN:

1. Terms of reference for Vulnerable but Viable Medium Term intervention work-stream drafted and stakeholders identified.
2. Inaugural meeting between the Department and stakeholders held and terms of reference agreed.
3. Invitation for economic intervention proposals issued to deliver partners.
4. Intervention proposals received from Invest NI, Tourism NI and Intertrade Ireland.
5. Proposals reviewed and queries and clarification requests issued in respect of all submissions.
6. Refined Loan scheme proposal received from Invest NI and is currently with Economists.

#### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

1. Developing interventions for a future as a strong, competitive and regionally balanced economy with more people working in better jobs.

#### ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN

1. June monitoring key milestone for interventions



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## **PRIORITY WORKSTREAM 3**

### **OUR SOCIETAL AND COMMUNITY WELL BEING**

WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Respectful arrangements to respect the dignity of the deceased		3.1
REF NUMBER: 3.1	OWNER: Julie Harrison, DoJ	

## ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN

1. An approach centred on respect and dignity and engagement with the Faith communities.
2. Relocation of DOJ 'mass fatalities' emergency storage provision to Kinnegar site.
3. Construction of NI Temporary Resting Place to cater for excess deaths (based on modelling of potential COVID and non COVID deaths and existing surge capacity).
4. Management of the NI Temporary Resting Place (Operational Plan is in place if needed. Facility can be 'stood up' with 24 hours' notice).
5. Communications and Engagement (establishment of Project Dignity reference group and associated Communications plan including LTT for Ministers and content for NI Direct).
6. Emergency Management (establishment of 'trigger point' mechanism via DOH Gold and agreement of detailed operational plan with relevant organisations).
7. Stand Down and Recovery (following construction and testing of the facility, the Temporary Resting Place is now in standby. An activation plan is in place should it be needed in future).

## IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

1. Capacity has been provided for body storage should it be needed (construction complete 29/4).
2. Plans for operation of the NI Temporary Resting Place are established (operational plan is in place if needed. Facility can be 'stood up' with 24 hours' notice).
3. Relevant stakeholders have been involved in both the technical and dignity considerations in design, build and operational planning (Project Dignity Steering Group remains in place to provide resilience for future excess deaths planning).



4. A mechanism is in place to monitor mortuary capacity (daily updates via Health Gold from 29/4).
5. A dedicated point of contact has been established for Funeral Directors to ensure that the normal process of burial and cremation is supported.

#### **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

1. Monitoring of excess deaths will continue until the end of the pandemic.
2. An updated excess deaths plan will be completed within two months of the end of the pandemic to inform any future need.
3. Monitoring of PPE requirements for the funeral sector will continue until the end of the pandemic.





WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Ensure good environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards.		3.2
REF NUMBER: 3.2	OWNER: Tracy Teague & Robert Huey, DAERA, Julie Thompson, DfI FSA (NI)	

#### ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN:

1. Delivery of official controls and activities to ensure feed & food safety, animal health & welfare and environmental protection standards are maintained throughout the agri-food supply chain.
2. Provision of export health certification (EHC) for agri-food products and live animals.
3. Implementation of processes to enable easements for EHCs in order to maintain global supply chains.
4. Implementation of import easements to facilitate imports of products of animal origin from third countries.
5. Surveillance for enzootic & epizootic disease to maintain animal health and welfare - includes portal controls, post import testing and animal disease eradication programmes.
6. Maintain capacity and capability to respond promptly to epizootic disease incursions & reported breaches of animal welfare.
7. Close engagement with stakeholders to understand the impacts of COVID-19 on NI agrifood export markets.
8. Close engagement with HSENI & PHANI to ensure a safe working environment for NICS staff in meat processing establishments.
9. Sharing of skills and resources with PHA across the areas of epidemiology and COVID-19 surveillance in meat processing establishments and data analysis in care homes.
10. Close engagement with stakeholders across the UK to understand the impacts of COVID-19 and identify support mechanisms.
11. Engagement with equine sector and pigeon farriers on the resumption of activities.
12. The Drinking Water Inspectorate (DWI) is working closely with NIW to ensure the reduced regulatory monitoring put in place does not compromise regulations re public health.



13. NIEA has implemented a pollution surveillance programme focusing on areas which could impact the raw water for drinking water, shellfish production, bathing waters and rivers of high conservation value.
14. The 24hr pollution hotline is operating as normal with incidents triaged and prioritised by duty officers and inspectors.
15. The Department has engaged closely with Councils across NI to ensure their kerbside collections are maintained and to support their role in delivering recycling services as a priority and that residual waste be diverted from landfill to recovery.
16. With the support of the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) a new waste tracker has been developed to monitor kerbside collections, fly tipping events, the status of household waste recycling centres and capacity within the waste sector.
17. New principles and non-statutory guidance to assist Councils on their decision making on reopening of their household waste recycling centres have been published.
18. Amendments were made to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (NI) Regs 2020 to include travel to HWRCs, namely at 5.2(i)(i) *to access critical public services, including; (v) services provided by a district council or other public body, including household waste or recycling centres.*
19. Regulatory Position Statements (RPS) have been published on the DAERA website covering waste facilities, wastewater compliance, and regulatory sampling. These publications provide guidance on potential flexibilities for a defined period during this emergency.
20. A new communications campaign promoting managing your waste and litter responsibility has been launched.
21. Flexibilities have been introduced to the 2020/21 Strategic Environment Fund (for eNGOs and Councils) to take account of the impact of COVID on project finances and deliverables.

## **IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED**

1. Delivery of safe food supplies and agri-food supply chain continuity;
2. Enable placing of NI agri-food produce on the domestic and EU market & provision of requisite veterinary certification for Third Country trade;
3. Maintain NI's existing global reputation for high public health, animal health & welfare and environmental standards;



4. Engagement with a range of organisations in the environmental Non-Government Organisation (eNGO) sector has highlighted their unprecedented challenges;
5. Early and active engagement with the Councils effectively managed the situation and enabled kerbside collections to continue;
6. Waste Operators are actively using the new Covid 19 Regulatory Position Statements;
7. The SIB tracker is providing very helpful metrics and trends;
8. Reports of fly tipping events during lockdown have increased but are being responded to and dealt with. Reopening household waste recycling centres should help with this;
9. The communications campaign is proving very valuable in raising public awareness; and
10. From the 13 April- 4 May NIEA have carried out 1028 proactive waterway checks as part of the surveillance programme in place. This has resulted in the identification of 34 pollution incidents. Since lockdown began on the 23 March the Agency has also responded to 216 reports of water pollution via the 24h hotline (figure as of 4 May). This number is in line with what is normally received for the same time period.

#### **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

1. Further enhancing capacity and capability to deliver official controls & activities against backdrop of reducing resource due to COVID related absence & illness (ongoing);
2. Developing alternative official control delivery strategies as required in accordance with PHA guidance, e.g. remote verification and ongoing engagement with PHA, HSENI & agri-food industry to develop best practice service delivery protocols;
3. Work will be undertaken to ensure existing funding programmes and budgets to support the resilience of eNGO partners to deliver shared strategic env priorities (by end May 2020);
4. Engagement with Councils and the waste sector will continue to monitor service provision;
5. The communications campaign with a focus on litter will continue;
6. Extensive work is needed to look at recovery;
7. Engagement between NIW, NIEA and DWI will continue to ensure effective regulation is maintained; and
8. Set up and administer funding scheme to meet the needs of Zoo animals, if need established.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
We will protect our staff.		3.3
REF NUMBER: 3.3	OWNER: Head of Civil Service NICS HR	

#### ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN:

- NICSHR has established a HR Hub to better prioritise and ensure an organised approach to addressing people management issues emerging from the COVID-19 crisis. The hub is focusing on work specifically related to COVID-19 in the following areas:
  - Corporate Operational Personnel Redeployment Unit (COPRU)
  - Policy & guidance
  - Health and wellbeing
  - Learning and development
  - HR data
  - Pay and reward.
- Some example of works completed by the HR HUB include:
  - Launch of an NICS Covid-19 Information Hub website to provide information, advice, guidance and FAQs on HR matters and people issues specifically associated with COVID-19;
  - COPRU has been established to centrally manage resourcing issues across the NICS should departments exhaust their emergency planning arrangements;
  - Development and implementation of a Line Manager Quick Reference Guide to highlight the number of scenarios our staff could find themselves in the current situation, some of which may impact on their capacity and / or capability for work;
  - Development of specific COVID-19 health and wellbeing support materials for colleagues. This includes materials on managing stress and anxiety, domestic abuse, working from home and information on the range of support mechanisms available to all colleagues;
  - Learning and development bundles have been developed and implemented covering key themes in the context of remote working and wellbeing, with top tips on leading teams; resilient leadership; prioritisation of work and management; effective on-line meetings; looking after your mental health; and healthy remote working;
  - Development of temporary NICS Volunteering Policy to enable colleagues to support the wider community during this time; and
  - Development and implementation of enhanced terms to protect agency workers and ensure those who should remain at home are able to do so.





3. In parallel to the above, essential 'business as usual' HR work has continued to be maintained including payroll, welfare support, employee relations and completion of urgent recruitment and internal promotion competitions.

## IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

1. Key impacts from work completed by the HR Hub to date include:
  - **Staff are better informed** through the provision of key messages during the period of lock-down and remote working and guidance on how to address the many scenarios that our staff may find themselves in that may impact on their capacity and / or capability for work;
  - **Staff are safer** through putting in place arrangements to support staff who should remain at home to do so and enhanced health and wellbeing support for colleagues; and
  - **Key services** maintained through effective redeployment of staff and ensuring the NI HUB staff is appropriately resourced to deliver the NI emergency response

## ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN

1. The relaxation / recovery phase will bring with it new priorities and challenges. NICS departments will be identifying risks and challenges ahead of time and putting in place plans to mitigate them, supporting the development of a recovery plan to enable emergence from the crisis as positively as possible while recognising the long term consequences of the crisis and planning accordingly.
2. From a workforce, staff resources and skills perspective we need to move away from our current horizon of the immediate need to short, medium and long term planning.
3. In the above context, NICS HR will progress work to address a number of workforce, staff resources and skills issues both in terms of the ongoing COVID-19 situation as well as what preparations we might consider in readiness for a recovery phase, including:
  - Roll out of NICS wide approach to support the provision of robust data on staffing position across the NICS;
  - Development of a temporary remote working policy;
  - Provision of advice in relation to managing attendance (annual leave).
4. In addition to these new pieces of work, NICS HR will continue to optimise use of COVID-19 Staff Information Hub to ensure our staff are kept updated and revise existing HR policy to respond to emerging people priorities as we move through the various phases of this crisis.
5. This will be driven by changes to government policies and it is assumed that social distancing measures will remain in place for some time although may take varying forms. The HR Hub has started to think about issues such as:





- Varied start and finishing times to minimise overcrowding to public transport at traditional peak times; working from home continuing to be more prevalent; staggered shifts; and potential use of full working week, etc.;
- Learning and development support for leaders and leadership teams for the relaxation and recovery phase;
- Priorities and challenges for managing the NICS workforce in the 'new norm' including issues such as mental health, managing individuals/teams working remotely;
- Internal communications;
- Trade union engagement.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Measures to maintain community wellbeing in isolation and beyond, targeting specific groups		3.4
REF NUMBER: 3.4	OWNER: Moira Doherty, DfC	

## ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN:

1. The Department is working with Inspire, which is already contracted to the NICS and Public Health Agency, to identify ways to bring together and build on existing mental health and wellbeing resources within the voluntary and community sector, to achieve improved and more targeted impact. A key element of the proposal is a public campaign (Your Mind Matters) which will have both general population messages and also specific messages and resources for vulnerable groups – identified as carers, people living with addiction, older people and those shielding, people living with mental ill health and people dealing with grief and loss<sup>1</sup>. The public campaign will be supported by a central digital hub which will offer more in depth information and links to support, including the supports available through community organisations.

## IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

This provision will launch on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020.

Sports Branch officials have worked with HSC/PHA/DoH to ensure that critical safety messaging as it evolved was cascaded through NI Sports Forum and SportNI to Governing Bodies, Sporting Organisations and clubs. This opened up access to social media channels and to audiences of young people that had previously been beyond the reach of the health organisations. The sporting sector used role models to pass on the key health and safety messages about staying at home and saving lives, remaining active and the importance of being aware of the mental health and well being of those in a vulnerable position.

Sport NI has launched the Sport Wellbeing Hub, an online resource released to the sports sector and communities to offer well-being support during the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides instant access to a range of information including guidance that is tailored specifically to help care for an individual's wellbeing needs such as:

- Guided self-assessment via 'Chatbot';
- Self-help programmes and digital intervention tools;
- Searchable '5 ways to wellbeing' map;
- Wellbeing information library; and
- Video content featuring some of our sporting heroes talking about mental health.

<sup>1</sup> To note, a separate and distinct piece of work on the Community response to Bereavement is in train with DoH colleagues. No costs are involved and any synergies with this programme will be realised; but it has been agreed that there is a specific and different focus in each initiative.



The Sport Wellbeing Hub was developed with Inspire one of our leading mental health charities; to help sports users to create their own wellbeing care-plan, as well as giving guidance on support through a guided self-assessment. The hub is for everyone across the sporting community, those who are involved in sport, at all levels and all abilities.

## **ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN**

The online resource is due to launch on 1 June 2020. Each partner has populated a Key Messages calendar which has been co-ordinated to reflect expertise and provide varied, interesting content but with a consistent approach. This forms the basis of a communications calendar to share key messages and drive traffic to the web resources for more info and support. This calendar of communications will ensure that a range of topics are covered between launch and October 2020, including depression, bereavement, caring responsibilities, money worries, suicide and eating disorders.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Support to rural communities		3.5
REF NUMBER: 3.5	OWNER: Fiona McCandless, DAERA DfC	

### ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN

1. Provided easements to contracted parties in local government, statutory bodies and community and voluntary sector to facilitate continued delivery and project payment
2. Focused resources on project payment issuing £4m in payments since 24 March, including to 400 micro businesses and community organisations
3. Secured TRPSI funding and enable community and voluntary partners to focus on supporting Covid response rather than BAU and contributed £250k to COVID FUND

### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

1. £6.8m m paid out to small rural businesses, community and voluntary sector organisations and local government between 1 March and 27 May. Local government has been enabled to maintain contracts with third parties, extend delivery dates and receive payments without the need for physical checks.
2. Rural Support Networks working with over 1500 Community organisations and providing linkages with DfC, Health and local gov't. Community Transport partnerships have delivered food and medical supplies to isolated rural dwellers and Social prescribing networks have focused resources on making contact with isolated dwellers.

### ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN

1. DAERA have set up and lead a weekly meeting with Rural Stakeholders to consider emerging issues impacting rural communities and dwellers and will continue this work.
2. There remains on-going concern around the availability of Food parcels, sustainability of organisations, connectivity in rural areas and the recovery including provision of social distancing supports in community venues. DAERA are liaising with statutory and community partners to consider potential solutions and support mechanisms.
3. DAERA are also scoping the need for a Micro-Capital Grant Scheme in September that will assist rural community groups to implement social distancing solutions and a business capital grant scheme that will support micro rural businesses. DAERA are also considering the potential usage of rural community venues.



WORKSTREAM:		RAG RATING
Ensure continuity of learning for children and young people		3.6
REF NUMBER: 3.6	OWNER: NR DfE – Jim Wilkinson	DE

## ACTIVITIES YOU HAVE UNDERTAKEN

1. The Department of Education's (DE) Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards Directorate (CSQD) has established a Contingency Programme to ensure a co-ordinated response on issues relating to continued delivery of the curriculum and assessment. The work comprises two key strands, firstly, the delivery of qualifications and secondly implementation of the curriculum through distance learning, insofar as it is possible. Central to the delivery of both is the efficiency and effectiveness of our Education Technology Services (referred to as C2K).

### Exams and Qualifications

2. The primary focus of the examinations and qualifications project will be development of an alternative fair and equitable qualifications awarding arrangement, which is capable of issuing grades for all candidates entered for CCEA A-Level or GCSE qualifications on or before the issue of results.

### Continuity of learning

3. The core objective of the continuity of learning project is to support and secure, as far as possible, the continued learning of pupils at home and in school, during the current pandemic and beyond. The major strategy for achieving this is, and will be, the production and dissemination of high quality support and guidance for teachers, parents and learners.
4. Progress has been made in a number of key areas including:
  - Agreement on new processes for examinations and assessment for summer 2020 for GCSEs, AS levels and A-levels;
  - Agreement on new processes for Occupational Studies and CCEA Entry Level qualifications;
  - Early implementation of new examination processes including guidance to centres and learners and design of appeals process;
  - Establishment of a network of designated link officers for schools who are a central point of contact for schools;
  - Establishment of dedicated groups of education professionals to co-ordinate the effective collation, development and dissemination of resources to teachers and parents;





- Collation of baseline information, to establish current practice by schools, support resources already available, areas of need and concern, requiring development of support materials and examples of practice and resources which are working well and can be disseminated
- Development of dedicated webpage for parents and carers with educational resources for primary, post-primary, Irish medium and SEN learners;
- Development of new support and guidance materials, where needs and gaps have been identified: undertaken in collaboration with practitioners and with partner bodies
- Development and provision of a menu of Teacher Professional Learning activities, to meet needs identified through baseline exercise
- Introduction of a strategy to lend devices to disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people at key transition stages so that they are able to access online learning
- Ongoing management and maintenance of C2K system; and
- Temporary modifications to the statutory assessment and school reporting arrangements.

## **Vocational Qualifications**

5. The Department for the Economy's Skills and Education Group has established a Project (3 phases) to manage the impact of cancelled assessments/exams for vocational qualifications (VQs) scheduled for summer 2020, advised by a cross-sector Task and Finish Group:

### **Policy (Phase 1 - complete)**

- DFE Minister announced on Thursday 23 April that qualifications used for progression to further study such as BTEC Nationals, Cambridge Technicals and a range of other level 2 and 3 qualifications, including Essential Skills, will be treated in the same way as GCSEs, AS and A Levels, with learners receiving a calculated result for summer 2020.
- Where calculation is not possible for VQs relating to occupational competence or licence to practice, consideration will be given to adapting assessments with delay of award as a last resort.
- NI vocational qualification policy will be aligned with England and Wales to maintain portability of qualifications and transferability for learners across UK.

### **Implementation solutions (Phase 2 - ongoing):**

- DFE working closely with CCEA Regulation, OFQUAL and awarding organisations to identify optimal implementation arrangements for the assessment/award of the different VQ groupings. Essential Skills has been prioritised / implementation agreed.
- CCEA Regulation will issue final instructions for the award of all VQ groupings to awarding organisations week commencing 25 May.



**Delivery (Phase 3 - ongoing):**

- Implementation arrangements for Essential Skills are currently being rolled with learning centres.
  - Implementation arrangements for other VQ groupings to be rolled out over coming weeks.
  - Target completion date – secure award of as many vocational results as possible by end of August, in line with published results dates.
6. As a result of decisions made in the 19/20 year, additional workstreams or projects may need to be established to consider actions that will be required in subsequent years.

**IMPACT AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED**

1. The specific impacts and outcomes to be realised through the delivery of the CQSD Contingency Programme are as follows:
  - minimal disruption to children's learning through continued delivery of the NI curriculum via a combination of remote learning and other alternative approaches;
  - pupils have the opportunity to achieve qualifications they deserve and progress to the next stage of learning or employment;
  - a cross-organisational approach to the COVID -19 situation maximising the effectiveness of all available education resource;
  - a structured approach to delivering effective outcomes for children and young people;
  - effective lines of communications identified internally and externally with stakeholders; and
  - the development of effective frameworks for future policy development and implementation.
2. All of the above designed to provide ongoing assurance to the Minister, Executive and Public during the COVID-19 period that educational standards and provision will be maintained insofar as is possible.
3. Specific outcomes to be realised by Vocational Qualifications Project:
  - maximise number of vocational learners to receive VQ results as originally planned before the end of August;
  - minimise disruption to vocational learners' progression pathways (education/employment);
  - ensure fair, reliable and consistent awarding procedures;
  - maintain validity and integrity of vocational qualifications; and
  - ensure ongoing portability / transferability of VQs and learners across UK.
4. Successful delivery of this project will have a significantly positive and direct impact on the 19/20 vocational qualification cohort in terms of facilitating as much standard progression as possible to the wider education / employment continuum.



## ACTIVITIES STILL TO BE UNDERTAKEN

1. Qualifications Appeals process to be finalised and published in the coming weeks.
2. Development of strategies to support the system in the medium and longer term, building on what exists and exploring best practice in blended learning approaches.
3. Further consideration to be given to implications for delivery of the curriculum, qualifications and professional support for teachers in the 2020/2021 academic year.
4. Vocational Qualifications:
  - Appeals procedure to be agreed and finalised.
  - Ongoing Phase 2 and Phase 3 work as above, working to secure award of as many vocational results as possible by end of August, in line with published results dates.

