

COVID-19 Strategic Intelligence Group

12.00 pm 20 July 2020 Zoom Video Conference

Present:

Professor Ian Young	Chief Scientific Officer, DOH
Dr Michael McBride	Chief Medical Officer, DOH
Dr Lourda Geoghegan	DCMO, DOH
Dr Naresh Chada	DCMO, DOH
Professor Frank Kee	Centre for Public Health, QUB
Dr Declan Bradley	Consultant Public Health Medicine, PHA
Professor Stuart Elborn	Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences. QUB
Dr Liz Mitchell	
Professor Hugo Van Woerden	Director of Public Health, PHA
Muriel McRobbie	DOH (Secretariat)

Apologies

None received

Welcome

1. Prof Young welcomed participants to the meeting and indicated that the minutes of the previous meeting would be circulated in due course.

Status Update

2. Prof Young updated the group on key developments.
 - The significant outbreak from a karaoke party in a domestic setting in Limavady has seen a cluster of over 30 secondary Covid-19 cases being detected in the Limavady area. Contact tracing personnel worked tirelessly over the weekend and successfully contacted the individuals involved and self-isolating was advised. The consequence of this will, however see the R rise significantly above 1 for a period of time when calculated using new cases.

Tabled Papers

3. The Group considered the following three papers presented to the meeting on testing of healthcare workers for signs of COVID-19:

[Paper 2: HCW Testing Commission – PHE](#)

[Paper 3: Testing HCW for signs of COVID infection at different frequencies – PHE](#)

[Paper 4: Testing in an imperfect world](#)

- Prof Young provided some background and views on the papers. Papers 2 & 3 assumed a perfect diagnostic test, and it was therefore agreed that they should be viewed with caution.
 - Paper 4 shows that as the prevalence declines the PPV also declines which means that even with a very good test, with high sensitivity and specificity, at low population prevalence the results become dominated by false positives. Discussions ensued on the preferred method of testing and members agreed this issue requires further consideration by the modelling group.
4. The Group also considered the following two papers presented to the meeting on Shielding:

[Paper 5: Shielding](#)

[Paper 6: Edinburgh Segmentation and Shielding Briefing](#)

- Prof Young advised the group that the first paper relates to shielding in international comparator countries and was commissioned by the Cabinet Office. Although colleagues are prohibited to share the documents more widely, extracts may be shared amongst policy colleagues.
 - Paper 6 investigates protecting only the vulnerable, i.e. shielders and allowing the pandemic to “run its course” for the younger and healthy population. SAGE is not supportive of this strategy. In summary, the group agreed to note that whilst this approach would provide difficulties for childcare, communities and extended families it is important this issue is communicated and discussed with appropriate colleagues.
5. The Group considered the following two papers presented to the meeting on transmission through events:

[Paper 7: Assessment of Covid-19 – Transmission through musical events](#)

[Paper 8: Superspreading Events and Clusters](#)

- Prof Young advised members that PHE England are considering available evidence and will announce recommendations in due course in relation to singing and musical events.
6. The Group also considered the following paper presented to the meeting on Physical Distancing:

Paper 9: Distancing Follow Up

- This paper details how comparator countries have approached the 2m v 1m social distancing guidelines. The paper was noted.
7. The Group similarly considered the following paper presented to the meeting on Schools:

Paper 10: Schools Follow Up in France, Germany and Demark

- This paper provides an update on schools reopening in France, Germany and Denmark. Prof Young advised members that further analysis is essential before guidance can be given to policy colleagues.
 - Dr Bradley is trying to acquire information from a four-nation group on this issue and will keep the group apprised of developments.
8. The following paper presented to the group on Scientific Grounding was also considered:

Paper 11: Scientific Grounding

- This paper aims to inform policy advice from scientific data in comparator countries. The paper was noted.

Any Other Business

- Prof Young informed members the adopted position when asked about public scientific advice remains that information is forwarded to the Executive who will communicate advice accordingly.
- Prof Young made members mindful that papers considered by the group along with redacted minutes may be published if required.
- Dr McBride advised members that colleagues in the Republic of Ireland are keen to work with colleagues in QUB on the SPIN Paper. Prof Elborn welcomed the opportunity. **ACTION: Dr McBride therefore agreed to share the relevant ROI key contact details with Prof Elborn.**
- Dr Bradley enquired with members about a SAGE paper on the effects of Covid-19 on Learning Disability residential settings set to be shared with the four UK CMO's. Dr Geoghan advised the group that policy colleagues will receive data flows for the LD sector. Although the first wave didn't impact severely on LD, policy colleagues are reviewing data in the event of a second wave.
- A short discussion ensued on the high mortality rate of Covid-19 on individuals with Down syndrome. Prof Young agreed this subject area should be examined by policy colleagues.

Date of next meeting: 27/7/20