

COVID-19 Northern Ireland Updates 26th March:

Health

- The total number of cases in Northern Ireland has risen to 241 with 10 deaths associated with virus
- UK Government order for 10,000 new ventilators from Dyson includes Northern Ireland
- All hospital visits have now been stopped with only certain exceptions which include: Paediatrics, Maternity, Neonatology and paediatric intensive care, Critical care areas and Palliative care
- The Royal College of Nursing in Northern Ireland has set up a helpline for nurses to offer support
- Beech Hall Health Centre in West Belfast will operate as a community based Covid-19 assessment centre from Monday
- Each Health Trust will open a specific coronavirus centre

Business

- The UK Government announced its Self Employed Support Scheme which will cover 80% of monthly wages and includes freelancers
- This will be calculated using average monthly profits over the last three financial years and the person will have had to be earning in 2018/19
- Support will be capped at £2500 per month and it will be made as one off payment in June
- The Small Business Grant Scheme is now live with it expected to provide support for 30,000 small businesses in Northern Ireland with payments beginning from next week
- Businesses that are currently in receipt of Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) will be eligible to receive a £10,000 cash grant payment
- A grant of £25,000 will be provided to companies in the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors with a rateable value between £15,001 and £51,000
- A new, temporary, statutory right is available for eligible workers to take Emergency Volunteering Leave to help the Health and Social Care system in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Education

- Schools may open over Easter Break to support key worker's children

Political

- The NI Executive has now been granted a swathe of extra powers to tackle the Covid-19 outbreak, as part of the law passed through Westminster
- They include: police being able to fine people and businesses who don't comply with social distancing measures, being able to bring back retired medical professionals and changing the rules around inquests
- An ad hoc Covid-19 Committee has been set up which includes all 90 MLAs



- Question time for ministers has been suspended until May

Infrastructure

- Public Transport will now be free for all healthcare workers and should only be used by essential workers

Agriculture

- The Ulster Farmers Union have welcomed a move by government to relax TB testing to offer relief to vulnerable farmers

