

Media Release

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Guernsey Local Resilience Forum meets in preparation for Omicron wave

As part of wider preparations for a rise in COVID-19 cases over the coming weeks, with the arrival of the Omicron variant, a meeting of the Guernsey Local Resilience Forum was held last week.

The forum includes representatives from all critical States services and infrastructure, utilities, emergency services, supply chain, transport, retail and wholesale sectors. Local Resilience Forums are an established format in the Bailiwick and throughout the British Isles for multi-agency cooperation, for responding to major incidents, ensuring business continuity and planning for emergencies.

The forum stressed the importance of reviewing business continuity plans for all sectors and services to ensure that they are up to date and ensure they capture the lessons learnt in managing the pandemic to date. The meeting looked at various scenarios for services and businesses to be clear on how they would operate with reduced numbers of staff, with a request to identify and work through specific areas of vulnerability.

It also asked attendees to consider the possibility of an Omicron wave coinciding with other pressures, such as an unexpected weather event or key personnel being off island during the holiday period, which might compound the challenges in maintaining service delivery.

A significant rise in cases of COVID-19 may not be experienced by all sectors at the same time, some may find they are more heavily impacted than others. Because it is difficult to forecast the extent of any Omicron wave and who and where may be more severely impacted, attendees were also asked to consider how they would cope if they were to see half or more of their workforce infected with COVID-19 in a short period of time, and what knock-on effects there would be for other areas if a particular service failed.

The meeting acknowledged that the Bailiwick were behind the UK in terms of the wave, and moving ahead with the booster programme as quickly as possible was a key mitigation.

The meeting of the Guernsey Local Resilience Forum was chaired by Jason Moriarty, the States of Guernsey's Strategic Lead for Operation Delivery, who said:

“As we know there is still a lot of uncertainty around Omicron as it is still a new variant which makes planning even more of a challenge. While we work very quickly to protect our population through booster vaccinations, and slow the spread of the virus, we still need to plan for some of the more serious scenarios that may occur, even though we very much hope that this does not materialise. I appreciate that different sectors and businesses, depending on size and nature, will have very different considerations and will be potentially impacted in different ways but if you haven’t revisited your continuity planning, I’d strongly encourage you to think about how you would operate with a proportion of your workforce being absent as a result of having to isolate because they have COVID-19. With the aim of living responsibly with COVID-19 and keeping services, livelihoods and businesses going, we are all asking ourselves what additional preparations or changes we can put in place at this stage.”

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