

Health advice on checking people who are self-isolating

Request as received

- "...options for checking in on self-isolating people..."

Key messages

- undertaking 'health checks' on people in self-isolation would have limited public health benefit and would be logistically challenging. The most promising option for undertaking health checks is outbound telehealth.
- the key processes that would need to be established to implementing health checks are:
 - processes for identifying and recording contact details for returnees requiring self-isolation
 - identifying and deploying additional resourcing at the border
 - implementing appropriate telehealth capacity and capability.

Further information

- predicting the number of people that may return to New Zealand from mainland China and self-isolate is not possible based on current information. We are working with MFAT and Customs to source this and expect to have relevant intelligence flowing in the coming days.
- MFAT advises that 1,378 New Zealanders are registered as being in mainland China on Safe Travel.
- undertaking 'health checks' on people in self-isolation would have limited public health benefit and would be logistically challenging
- the most promising options for health checks on people in self-isolation:
 - outbound telehealth (e.g. check-in calls from Healthline) – we have had some initial discussions with Homecare Medical and this is a viable possibility from its perspective. Inbound call capacity would be reduced while outbound activity took place unless resourcing is scaled up
 - outbound calls through the Police contact centre – Police have indicated that it may have capacity to undertake outbound checking. We are still in the early stages of discussions but this is likely to be a lower-cost option

- automated or personal text messaging to self-isolating people – this would have minimal impact on staffing but we need to investigate feasibility before we would recommend it as a viable option – at present we have not identified a suitable platform to deliver this but will engage with telehealth providers to determine options
- a combination of the above – for example automated text messaging with symptom and self-care reminders and targeted outbound telehealth.
- a range of processes will need to be in place to implement health checks, the most critical being:
 - options for recording and monitoring people entering New Zealand and their contact details and self-isolation location
 - centralised collection and management of this information and follow-up status so that we can ensure that all self-isolating people get the information they need.
- we are exploring several options for collection and management of this data. The most promising options are:
 - utilising powers granted by the recent Cabinet paper to retrieve passenger information from carriers (e.g. airlines)
 - collecting information at the border through:
 - the 'management of ill traveller protocols' currently in place
 - requiring details to be provided to border staff
 - retrieving information from passenger arrival cards (potentially a highly-intensive process).
- It is likely that additional resourcing will be required at the border to ensure that information is collected and transmitted to the centralised location.