

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE COVID-19 VIRUS

LEARNING FROM OTHER BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORIES

St Helena remains free of the COVID-19 virus. What we have learnt is to be prepared, to stay informed and to stay one step ahead. As we learn more about COVID-19 it is important that we adapt our current policies and procedures to make them as effective as possible for St Helena.

There are lessons that can be learnt by examining how other Overseas Territories impacted by COVID-19 have responded to the Pandemic.

How other islands are dealing with COVID-19

Anguilla

The Caribbean Island Anguilla was hit by COVID-19 on 26 March with two confirmed cases and a third case on 3 April. Anguilla has a population of about 14,000 people and, despite its Princess Alexandra Hospital having no ICU capacity, all three COVID-19 patients have since recovered.

From 30 April onwards restrictions have been in place such as no public gatherings of over 25 people, no sporting events, and everyone must adhere to physical distancing.

Anguilla has had no COVID-19 cases since then and this week reopened to visitors. Anguilla's Hon. Parliamentary Secretary Quincia Gumbs-Marie*, said:

"There are three main principles that have governed and grounded our efforts as we formulated our reopening protocols – research, risk mitigation, and capacity.

"Given our current COVID-19 free status, management of risk is at the center of our strategy."

**Source: CaribbeanJournal*

The Falkland Islands

The Falkland Islands has a population of around 2,500 people (source: Falkland Islands Government website).

The first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on the Falkland Islands on 3 April 2020. The number of cases peaked at 13, all of which were at the military base at Mount Pleasant.

On 1 May, an easing of restrictions was announced and schools and businesses were allowed to reopen on 11 May.

There were no confirmed cases amongst the general population of the Falkland Islands. All patients have since recovered.

Following this, the Falkland Islands have been COVID-19 free.

The important lesson to learn from the Falkland Islands is that such a crisis can be managed and controlled.

Ascension Island

Ascension Island has a population of around 800 people (source: Ascension Island Government website).

Since April authorities have been isolating all persons at the point of arrival, ensuring they observe a 14-day quarantine period in order to safeguard the wider community. This robust entry control system has allowed public venues to remain open and life to otherwise continue as normal, despite regular flights arriving from both the UK and the USA throughout this period.

Ascension Island had a recent experience where two low-level positive COVID-19 test results were returned following routine testing of individuals subject to compulsory isolation measures. As a consequence of these two positive test results, the Ascension COVID-19 Response Level was escalated. This was a precautionary measure to alert authorities and the public to an increase in the potential level of COVID-19 risk.

As per the Georgetown Hospital protocols, subsequent tests were conducted on the two individuals. These results indicated significantly reduced levels of COVID-19, to the point of non-infectious amounts, and were therefore deemed to be negative. The two individuals continued their 14-day quarantine period remaining under observation, and were tested along with the rest of their arrival cohort prior to their release from isolation.

Public venues and facilities stayed open during this time as there was no expectation that COVID-19 could have been introduced into the wider community. Members of the public were encouraged to continue to practice good cough and hand hygiene and social distancing.

Arrivals to Ascension continue to quarantine in properties and facilities around the Island and Ascension remains COVID-19 free.

COVID-19 (the disease caused by the novel coronavirus) *What you can do*



Lessons for St Helena:

The key lessons for St Helena are:

- We are learning from what is happening around the world, particularly from countries that are similar to us
- We have a firm and effective quarantine strategy in place that needs to be supported by all of us to continue being effective
- Globally, the situation with COVID-19 continues to evolve. This means that the situation on St Helena must also evolve. We have to be flexible and consider future changes in an appropriate and phased manner, based on the latest evidence
- Whilst St Helena remains free from COVID-19 at present, it is essential that the Island is also prepared should there be a case. We are working towards this. More will follow on this topic in our next update.

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