**DHJ Health Forum notes:**

At the end of the meeting, David Hope-Jones (SMP, Chief Executive) gave the following summary of discussions and proposed the following priorities and action points for the SMP.

**1 Summary of Discussion:**

At the time of this meeting (15.00, 31st March) there were no confirmed cases of Coronavirus in Malawi. *[Following this meeting, on the 2nd April, the President announced three confirmed cases in Lilongwe].*

1.1 Preparedness to date:

Listening to a number of contributors, across the College of Medicine, the Ministry of Health, the Malawi Scotland Partnership and others, there have clearly already been a number of important steps taken to prepare Malawi for a likely outbreak of Covid-19, including:

* Early action from the Government of Malawi, closing schools and universities, and banning large gatherings;
* Clear advice through the mass media on hand washing and social distancing;
* Significantly increased handwashing facilities: for example, on gates to markets;
* Three testing centres established and operational (albeit currently at very low levels);
* Donation of 20,000 rapid diagnostic kits;
* Further support from the Scottish Government, as part of its longstanding links with the College of Medicine;
* £1.8m of support from DFID Malawi, through UNICEF Malawi;
* Strong coordination and clear planning from the Ministry of Health and College of Medicine.

1.2 Challenges:

Through discussions, it was immediately obvious the prospect of a Covid-19 outbreak in Malawi presents a number of significant challenges, including:

* Need to significantly increase the capacity of testing centres;
* Lack of re-agents for testing;
* Practical challenges ensuring social distancing in areas of dense population;
* Lack of quarantine facilities and staffing;
* Lack of intensive care facilities and staffing;
* Fewer than 20 ventilators in a population of c19m;
* Lack of awareness/key message penetration in rural and remote areas;
* A feeling of lack of support amongst healthcare staff;
* The value of testing if there is so limited quarantine and ICU treatment options.

1.3 Priorities:

Priorities in the coming period will include:

* HR;
* Infrastructure;
* Assurances and support to those in the front-line;
* Containment and contact tracing/surveillance;
* Engagement with local Community Based Organisations (CBOs);
* Increasing testing

1.4 Ideas for immediate sharing:

Through discussions, a number of prospective ideas emerged for immediate sharing, which would be useful for the SMP to help facilitate, including:

* Heather Cubie (NHS Lothian/University of Edinburgh) suggested seeing if plans can be shared from Scottish organisations now using 3D printers to produce face shields and other PPE. *Heather to share details with College of Medicine.*
* Tracy Morse (University of Strathclyde) suggested sharing the resources and posters that have been produced in Malawi, so the SMP can help disseminate. *Tracy to share with SMP.*
* Paul Garside (University of Glasgow) suggested it would be useful to look at the Chief Scientific Officer’s latest call for applications. Even if not thinking about applying, there is useful thinking here about, for example, isolation. *Paul to share links with SMP.*
* Heather Cubie suggested there could be useful sharing between NHS Lothian and the College of Medicine. *Heather to help facilitate.*

**2 SMP’s Strategic Priorities and Next Steps:**

In the coming days the SMP will publish its full COVID-19 Response Strategy, which will include details of how the SMP will support its members respond to the challenges in both Scotland and Malawi. The discussions in this Heath Forum will help inform the latter.

2.1 Strategic Priorities:

David Hope-Jones proposed the below five strategic priorities for the SMP in this area:

1. Disseminate relevant information.
2. Establish a space for the sharing of experience, information and resources, listening to a range of voices.
3. Support coordination and collaboration.
4. Offer clear Malawi-led advice about how members can support their partners.
5. Ensure all our work follows the principle of *do no harm*: ensuring our members are following government advice and best practice, and are not unnecessarily taking staff away from their work.

2.2 Next Steps:

1. SMP to circulate an online survey to be completed by all those taking part in this meeting, both giving feedback on this, the SMP’s first fully digital Member Forum meeting, and also inputting on what support services would be most useful from the SMP in this area. [*By end of day]*
2. SMP to upload presentations, Zoom recording and summary notes from this meeting to past event webpage on the SMP’s website. [*By end of week]*
3. SMP to establish WhatsApp group, which anyone can opt in to by completing the online survey, for the sharing of information about COVID-19 preparedness and response in Malawi. *[By start of next week]*
4. SMP to create channels for anyone that wishes to share information from their perspective in this area including, for example, updates, reflections and concerns from different partners across Malawi. It is important we are listening to a range of voices, including healthcare professionals on the ground. *[By next week]*
5. SMP to promote all relevant fundraising appeals. *[By next week]*
6. SMP to create a webpage for disseminating key messaging and updates to members and partners. It will approach Members active in this space with specific expertise to assist curating this page, to ensure we are providing the right information at the right time. We are committed to disseminating and following the advice of the Government of Malawi. *[By next week]*
7. SMP to explore having another Zoom meeting in 2-4 weeks, if deemed useful and appropriate, to review and update. *[By following week]*