



Mr. Stephen Donnelly TD,
Minister for Health,
Department of Health,
Miesian Plaza,
50-58 Lower Baggot Street,
Dublin 2.

4th September 2020

Via email to Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

I write further to yesterday's meeting of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). As you are aware, the NPHE agreed the Framework for Future COVID-19 Pandemic Response and sent this forward for Government consideration on 23rd July. Since then, as a result of the epidemiological situation, restrictive measures have had to be introduced on two separate occasions at both a regional and national level.

The NPHE today considered the learnings from the introduction of the most recent measures, and considered opportunities to refine and enhance the Framework to ensure that it is clear, consistent and implementable. The NPHE agreed a number of revisions and refinements to this Framework for Government's consideration which are set out in the appendix to this letter and which should be considered as an Addendum to the Framework already provided. The refinements relate only to the public health restrictive measures in the Framework, and changes are not proposed to any other element of the Framework.

In summary, the NPHE is recommending the adoption of a five-level framework, with the current 'orange phase' split into three levels (Levels 2, 3 & 4) as set out in the Appendix. NPHE believes that this will allow for a coherent, stepwise and phased approach to the introduction and escalation of measures and will provide greater clarity and certainty across all aspects of society.

The NPHE also gave further consideration to the issue of the reopening of pubs and bars and increase in numbers permitted to attend mass gatherings. In the context of refinements to the current Framework, NPHE agreed that, in general, pubs and bars would be open in Levels 1 and 2 and provision could be made for increased gatherings in particular circumstances. This is contingent on consideration being given to the type of additional protective measures to be put in place, drawing on current guidelines and measures in place internationally. In particular, the NPHE stressed the importance of having in place clear advice on capacity limits and it will consider this matter further in

the coming weeks. However, given the nature of the current epidemiological situation and the recent reopening of schools, NPHET advises that it is inappropriate to advance these measures at present. Rather, it is proposed that they could be activated subject to the disease trajectory having been stable for at least 2 weeks (and no sooner than Monday 21st September).

The NPHET also recognised the centrality of clear and consistent communications in relation to the rationale underpinning the Framework and key messages in relation to the continuum of measures within it, recognising that it is only through individual and collective action that we will be able to manage and control this disease.

The NPHET also considered a set of advice from the Expert Advisory Group (EAG) in relation to the recommended isolation periods for confirmed cases and alternative methods of swabbing for children. The HSE will review its algorithms in line with this for approval by the NPHET next week.

The NPHET of course remains available to provide any further advice and recommendations that may be of assistance to you and Government in relation to ongoing decision-making processes in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would be happy to discuss further, should you wish.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Ronan Glynn

A/Chief Medical Officer

Chair of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team

cc. Ms Elizabeth Canavan, Department of the Taoiseach and Chair of the Senior Officials Group for COVID-19