



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

12th May 2020

Via email to Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

I write further to today's meeting of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET).

The NPHET continued its consideration of issues in relation to travel from overseas in the context of preparing for easing the public health social distancing measures currently in place. The numbers of cases in Ireland has been declining over the past few weeks, and as the measures are slowly and carefully lifted, it is important that a swift increase in cases does not occur caused by the importation of cases due to non-essential travel, whether due to visitors to Ireland or Irish residents returning from overseas travel.

The NPHET noted the status of the disease in Great Britain and in Ireland. While there are differences in how the UK and Ireland collect and report on COVID-19 incidence rates and number of deaths, meaning that these data are not readily comparable, the NPHET specifically examined the UK rates for daily new hospitalisations and admissions to ICU, which are considered to be good proxy indicators for disease prevalence in the community. NPHET noted how these daily new hospitalisations and admissions to ICU in the UK currently compare with those for Ireland.

Consequently, the NPHET expressed a public health concern regarding the potential risk of imported cases associated with non-essential travel from and through Great Britain to Ireland, via Northern Ireland, if different travel arrangements were to apply to such overseas travel.

1. The NPHE recommends that efforts be made to address the potential public health risk associated with non-essential travel from and through Great Britain to Ireland, via Northern Ireland, if different travel arrangements were to apply to such overseas travel.

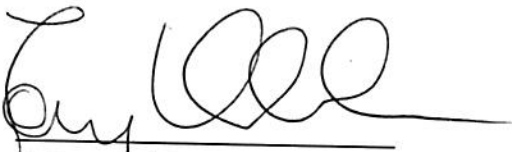
Furthermore, I also wish to bring the following additional recommendation of the NPHE to your attention:

2. The NPHE agreed that its recommendation of 27th March 2020 with regard to pausing all non-essential health services (i.e. as part of the public health restrictive measures introduced on that date), in respect of non-acute care is now to be replaced with a recommendation that a phased process is initiated to recommence the delivery of non-essential non-acute care in line with appropriate clinical and operational decision-making, and having regard to public health guidance.

I also enclose a copy of the letter which has been forwarded to the HSE CEO arising from today's NPHE meeting.

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

Yours sincerely,



Dr Tony Holohan
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