



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

8th May 2020

Via email to Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

I write to you following the meeting of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE).

NPHE continued its consideration of travel from overseas at its meeting today. NPHE has previously advised on this matter including as reflected in the Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business. The discussion today was informed by WHO guidance, approaches and learning from other countries, and reports of importation of cases in a number of countries following relaxation of restrictions.

NPHE is concerned that, as the number of indigenous cases here declines and Ireland moves towards easing some measures, the relative importance of the risk of importation of cases from overseas increases. The principal public health objective of NPHE's advice is therefore to eliminate in as far as possible all non-essential travel. In particular, the NPHE is concerned that Irish residents may be actively planning to resume travel overseas in the near term for tourist purposes.

The impact of any imported cases on disease spread would be all the greater in the context of easing of domestic restrictions and the resultant increased movement and contact between people. In addition, a significant increase in the number of cases in Ireland as a result of importation could have an impact on public compliance with public health guidance and restrictions. Ultimately, the suppression of community transmission which has been achieved and which should allow for greater resumption of social and economic life in Ireland could be endangered.

NPHET therefore considered several possible measures, including mandatory quarantine. NPHET recognised that preparatory work, including in relation to regulatory, operational and communications measures, will be required to give effect to any decision the Government may make having regard to this public health advice. In addition, it will be essential to ensure clear messaging through coordinated public communications.

NPHET recommends that the necessary whole of Government work is undertaken to allow for Government decision on the introduction of a range of more stringent requirements related to travel from overseas, to include

- a. mandatory completion of the Public Health Passenger Locator Form by all persons arriving into Ireland from overseas;
- b. restrictions of non-essential travel from all countries other than EEA countries and the UK (with exemptions to include Irish citizens or residents);
- c. a mandatory regime of self-isolation for 14 days at a designated facility for all persons arriving into Ireland from overseas (with limited exemptions to include supply chain workers and those in transit to other jurisdictions, such as Northern Ireland);
- d. a programme of public communications designed to deter all non-essential travel should be put in place.

Arising from a separate discussion, NPHET recommends that Government Departments, regulators, State Bodies and organisations across society should commence preparation of appropriate guidance and planning as part of the process of easing of the current public health restrictions

Please see enclosed a copy of the letter issued to the HSE CEO following today's meeting, for information.

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

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