

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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**FROM: NAOMI LONG MLA**  
**Minister of Justice**

**DATE: 25 June 2020**

**TO: NICHOLA MALLON**  
**Minister for Infrastructure**

## **FACE COVERINGS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT**

Thank you for your memo and draft Executive paper of 25 June 2020 seeking Executive agreement to implement a mandatory requirement for face coverings on public transport from 3 July.

As you acknowledge in your paper, there has been constructive and helpful engagement between our officials on how these proposed restrictions might be enforced.

You will be aware that the policing of COVID-related restrictions is proving to be increasingly complex and contentious, and both the Police Ombudsman and the Northern Ireland Policing Board are undertaking reviews of operational decision-making by the police. This is inevitably impacting on public confidence in policing at a time when we need to encourage the public to behave responsibly in order to keep themselves and others safe.

I welcome the intention to make legal provision for this requirement through amendments to the existing Health Protection Regulations, since this should allow PSNI to use the same fixed penalty notice as that used for breaches of other restrictions under that legislation. However, I expect this penalty to be used very sparingly indeed. I therefore also welcome your confirmation that the focus will be on education, support and advice and that sanctions will only be applied as an absolute and exceptional resort. This seems to be an entirely sensible and proportionate way forward.

I am copying this memo to Executive Secretariat, the Attorney General, Departmental Solicitor and to First Legislative Counsel.

Best regards,

**Personal Data**

**NAOMI LONG MLA**  
**Minister of Justice**