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MEMORANDUM E (21) 125 (C)

**FROM: FIRST MINISTER  
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

**DATE: 27 MAY 2021**

**TO: EXECUTIVE**

### **FINAL EXECUTIVE PAPER – TRAVEL TO NORTHERN IRELAND FROM WITHIN THE COMMON TRAVEL AREA (CTA)**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to consider options of relaxation of arrangements for travel to Northern Ireland from other parts of the Common Travel Area.

#### **Background**

2. During the Executive meeting on 27 May, TEO officials were asked to bring forward a paper on CTA with proposals including mitigations. Work on CTA to date has been led by DoH.
3. Currently (since 24 May) individuals travelling into the Common Travel Area who are intending to stay for more than 24 hours are required to self-isolate on arrival for 10 days unless they are exempt.
4. Exemptions include:
  - work, where you cannot work from home
  - accessing health and social care services
  - accessing education services which does not require an overnight stay
  - accessing critical services including childcare or services to victims
  - fulfilling essential caring responsibilities
  - buying essential goods or services within your local area, where you live in counties that border the Republic of Ireland
  - attending the care and exercise of an animal, or veterinary services, where you live in counties that border the Republic of Ireland
  - fulfilling a legal obligation, including attending court or satisfying bail conditions, or participating in legal proceedings
  - to provide emergency response services
  - to attend a funeral of a member of your household or close family member

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- visits to family and friends
  - those who have completed mandatory managed isolation on arrival at a point of entry elsewhere in the CTA and travelled directly to NI upon leaving the managed isolation facility
5. The guidance also specifies a number of scenarios where individuals are permitted to leave self-isolation.
6. If an individual is exempt from self-isolation, they will be asked to:
- take a pre-departure Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test
  - order day two and day eight post-arrival LFD tests
7. Ministers have highlighted the inconsistency with other parts of the Common Travel Area and also the requirements which apply to International Travel to most green list countries.

### Options

8. The options are:
- i. Do nothing. At present, the policy is that CTA travel to and from here is set out in guidance only. The policy aims to keep CTA travel to a minimum at this stage due to concern about the need to delay variants of concern arriving here. The guidance sets out a number of exemptions from self-isolation; and most recently travel to see family and friends here has been added with advice to take tests before departure and after arrival here. CMO and CSA have been clear that this is their preferred option based on the need to delay the variant arriving here
  - ii. Lift the guidance entirely. The drivers for this option are economic and societal. For example, the travel industry wishes to be able to advertise, and airports report that approximately 70% of their business is domestic travel. Other drivers include consistency of message with other travel policies, and consistency with decisions already taken in other jurisdictions
  - iii. Lift the guidance but retain mitigations. This may take the form of retaining guidance on not travelling if people have symptoms, not travelling if they know they are positive, to take tests before departure, and to take tests at days 2 and 8 and the need to self-isolate if positive after arrival.

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9. The advice from Minister Swann remains that the guidance on CTA travel should be retained until the impact of the changes made on Monday 24 May can be assessed. The scientific data continues to show higher rates of prevalence of variants of concern (VOCs) in other regions of the CTA and if we are to maintain our good progress there is a need to delay the importation of such VOCs into NI for as long as possible, allowing time for wider vaccination roll-out here and minimising any potential for community transmission.

### **Recommendation**

10. The Executive is invited to:
- discuss the above options, and
  - note the health advice.

**RT. HON ARLENE FOSTER MLA**  
First Minister

**MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA**  
deputy First Minister

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