



Commissioner for Older People
for Northern Ireland

24 April 2020

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health
Department of Health
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT4 3SQ

By email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Dear Minister Swann,

I hope you are keeping well. I am writing to you in relation to the ongoing situation with testing for Covid-19 in care homes.

I have been liaising with your officials on this and other matters such as PPE for a number of weeks now. While I have received updates on what is happening, I remain very concerned by reports I am hearing from many care home providers and families of residents who believe that not enough is being done to support them to care for the residents at this challenging time. The latest figures published by NISRA this morning clearly show the impact this is having on older people in care homes with 93 deaths in these settings, over one third of overall deaths (34%).

While I welcome steps to test all residents with symptoms of Covid-19, I strongly believe that this needs to be widened out to include all residents and staff as a matter of urgency so we can detect Covid-19 as early as possible. I believe such a strategy would better enable care homes to manage outbreaks, reduce contagion and ultimately save lives. I also believe a similar strategy needs to be rolled out in relation to domiciliary care.

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I am fully aware that testing alone is not a perfect solution but I do believe enhancing it to this level can help to better safeguard and protect some of the most vulnerable in our society at this terrible time.

I would welcome a swift response to this urgent matter and I am very happy to meet to discuss the matter if this was useful.

Yours sincerely,

Personal Data

Eddie Lynch
Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland

CC Mark Ovens
Sean Holland
Mark Lee
Michael McBride
Olive Macleod OBE

Name Redacted

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