

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Mr Stephen Donnelly
Minister for Health

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Our ref – SUB-0029-2020

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Dear Stephen

THE HEALTH PROTECTION (CORONAVIRUS, INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2020 - DATA-SHARING WITH ROI

Thank you for your acknowledgement of my letter dated 10 December 2020 regarding passengers arriving in Dublin and travelling immediately to NI. As you are aware, our Departmental officials have been working to try to reach agreement to share data collected on your passenger locator form (PLF) which could be used to contact passengers who have travelled on to NI after arrival in ROI.

My initial contact with you on this matter was on 20 July 2020, with further requests up to my most recent letter of 10 December. You will appreciate that I, along with the NI Chief Medical Officer, Dr McBride, and our GB counterparts, are concerned at the length of time taken to set in place a suitable arrangement.

The emergence of new strains of the virus makes the need for collaboration on this work even more important and we must do all that we can to work together to protect people on this island, where we have so much movement of people in both directions across our shared border, and try to reduce the spread of the virus.

My officials have been advised by your officials that progress has been delayed due to legal obstacles to making a data sharing agreement. However, Ms Brenda King, the Attorney General for NI, has been working with your Attorney General since early November 2020, and I understand the exact nature of the legal issues remains unclear.

You will agree that it is in all of our interests to resolve any issues as soon as possible and, to aid this, please could you provide urgent clarification on the legal obstacles facing your Department, which are preventing the agreement of a data sharing arrangement with NI. Once we are clear on the obstacles preventing the data sharing agreement, then we will be able to work together to resolve them as quickly as possible

I appreciate your continued assistance in this matter and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

Robin Swann MLA
Minister for Health

Working for a Healthier People

