

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Mr Stephen Donnelly  
Minister for Health

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Our ref – SUB-0029-2020

Date: 13 January 2021

Dear Stephen

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

Thank you for your letter of 12 January 2021 regarding proposals for a data sharing arrangement for information on passengers arriving in Dublin and travelling immediately to NI.

I am disappointed that we appear to be unable to find a resolution to these issues given that we appear to have been working together on this for well over six months.

As you mentioned in your letter, your officials have requested a detailed process map of what data will be used for any by whom. Whilst this may not appear to be an unreasonable request, my Department is unable to make any decisions on next steps until we have been furnished with clarification on the exact nature of the data your Department is prepared to share. The Ireland PLF does not distinguish between NI arrivals and transiting passengers, nor does it collect addresses of NI passengers. Until full clarification on what your team is willing to share, we cannot determine fully how it will be used. My officials have already provided a guarantee to your officials that this information would not be used to enforce quarantine, so I am unclear why this would continue to be an issue at hand.

My officials have requested costings for an alternative approach that could be implemented in the short term to address the public health risk, which would allow us to pay your contractor to issue text reminders to NI passengers on their requirements. I would appreciate if these costings could be provided, as it would negate a lot of work for all of us if this was a solution to the problem. Under this solution no information would need to be shared with NI.

You will wish to note that I will be asking for this matter to be on the Agenda for discussion at the next Quad meeting. I am also in communication with my UK Government counterparts from the other Nations, to raise this issue at UK level.

Rather than continue to engage in written correspondence which does not seem to bring us much closer to a resolution, I suggest we both identify lead officials to take this forward as their sole task, with a firm deadline by which both you and I expect this to be fully resolved. A dedicated team of staff working together team from both sides of the border should be able to reach a legally acceptable position relatively quickly without other distractions.

I would again ask that you give this matter your urgent attention and enable us to work together to resolve the outstanding issues as quickly as possible. I appreciate your continued assistance in this matter and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

I am copying this letter to my Executive Colleagues, to the NI Attorney General Brenda King and the NI Secretary of State Brandon Lewis.

Yours sincerely

**Personal Data**

**Robin Swann MLA**  
**Minister of Health**

