

**FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH**



Mr Colm Gildernew MLA  
Chair of the Committee for Health  
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Date: <sup>u</sup>13 April 2021

Dear *Colm,*

In December 2020, the Executive established an Executive COVID Taskforce (ECT), to be chaired by the interim Head of the Civil Service, to support a coherent and comprehensive response to the pandemic going forward. The Taskforce includes a number of work streams relating to adherence and compliance, protecting the public, strategic communications and recovery.

On 2 March this year, the Executive published its planned pathway out of the current COVID-19 restrictions. The Pathway is supported by a revised process for a 4-week Executive review cycle. The new process also permits a more urgent consideration of proposals from Departments deemed to have urgent or compelling reasons to fall outside the four week review process.

In this new process, the management of the changes to the restrictions regulations envisages a greatly reduced role for my department and an increased role for the COVID Strategy Group in TEO.

TEO will now hold the lead responsibility and operational management of the process leading to Executive decisions on the ongoing need for restrictions and the requirement to amend the regulations. This responsibility includes receiving and managing all proposals from Executive departments, management of the decision making process and facilitating consultation with departments on the drafting of amendment regulations. This work is supported by a Cross-Departmental Working Group, chaired by the Director of the TEO COVID-19 Taskforce team with membership from all 9 Departments and key stakeholders, including local government and PSNI.

The Committee should note that while my Department is still required to make the regulations and officials can provide the Committee with details on drafting and content, the policy and policy intent behind them increasingly sits outside the DoH remit.

Similarly the introduction of managed isolation for Northern Ireland under the International Travel Regulations has been led by TEO through their task and finish group. Whilst my officials can continue to brief Committee on the regulations, any queries regarding operational elements of this work are outside of their remit.

In light of this recent change in process, the Committee may wish to consider how best it can engage with TEO with a view to enhancing and maintaining its scrutiny role regarding amendment to the regulations and the regulation making process.

I hope you find this letter helpful

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

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