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**TO: PS/FIRST MINISTER
PS/DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

copy recipients listed below

TACKLING CORONAVIRUS: THE APPROACH OF THE IRISH GOVERNMENT

Summary

Issue	New measures introduced by the Irish Government to tackle the Coronavirus epidemic.
Timing	Routine
Fol implications	This submission is likely to be disclosed if requested.
Recommendations	This submission is for information only.

Background

1. In common with other jurisdictions, the Irish Government is in the process of introducing additional social distancing and business restriction measures to tackle the coronavirus epidemic.
2. The new measures have been publicised, but are not yet the subject of legislation. I understand that, in the coming days, regulations will be made under the Health (Preservation and Protection and Other Emergency Measures in the Public Interest) Act 2000 and will be enforced by the Garda Síochána.
3. Overall, the intended *effect* of the Irish measures appears to very similar to that of the measures adopted in UK jurisdictions, although the *approach* differs. The core objective is for people to stay at home; with minimal unnecessary travel; and restrictions on gatherings. The Irish Government guidance does not have quite the same emphasis on keeping the economy going as, for example, the English guidance.

4. The key difference in approach is that the Irish Government specifies those things that are 'essential' or 'key' – businesses, services, and workers, with everything else restricted; whilst the UK approach is to specify the things that are restricted, with everything else being unaffected.
5. However, despite the differences in approach, the net effect looks to be broadly similar, because the Irish 'essentials' lists are very broad and comprehensive. There are 16 categories of 'essential service provider':

- Agriculture and Fishing
- Manufacturing
- Repair and installation of Machinery and Equipment
- Electricity, Gas and Water
- Construction
- Wholesale and Retail Trade
- Transport Storage and Communication
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Information and Communications
- Financial and legal activities
- Professional, Scientific and Technical activities
- Rental and Leasing Activities
- Administrative and Support Services
- Public Administration and Defence
- Human health and social work activities
- Community/Voluntary Services

6. Some of these are very broadly defined. For example, just one of the entries under 'manufacturing' includes:

“the manufacture of products necessary for the supply chain of essential services; computer, electronic and optical products including semi-conductors; electrical equipment, machinery and other equipment (including agricultural and forestry machinery); medical devices; and medical and dental equipment and supplies.”

7. The essential dimensions of construction are:

- *essential health and related projects relevant to the COVID-19 crisis, and supplies necessary for such projects*
- *repair/construction of critical road and utility infrastructure*
- *delivery of emergency services to businesses and homes on an emergency call-out basis in areas such as electrical, plumbing, glazing and roofing..*

8. The effect of the approach to the retail sector of the economy also appears likely to be very similar in effect to the measures in Northern Ireland.
9. The extent to which individual citizens will be under a legal requirement to remain at home appears also broadly similar to the requirement in Northern Ireland.
10. No detailed information is available yet on penalties and enforcement.
11. More detailed information is expected to be available in the coming days.
12. The text of the main Irish Government guidance document is appended.

Recommendation

13. This submission is for information only.

Personal Data

CHRIS STEWART

cc **PS/Minister Lyons**
PS/Minister Kearney
David Sterling
Anthony Harbinson
Karen Pearson

Name Redacted

IRISH GOVERNMENT MEASURES

There are exceptions for some workers in key businesses but for the majority of people, the rule is simple: Stay at home.

This is the best way to minimise the risk of COVID-19 to your friends, families and communities.

You can buy food and attend medical appointments and even get out for some exercise but you are being asked to do as little as you possibly can.

You cannot arrange a gathering with anybody you do not live with. [Cocooning](#) will be introduced for those over 70 years of age and those who are extremely medically vulnerable to COVID-19.

Exceptions

Stay at home in all circumstances, except in the following situations:

- to travel to and from work where the work is considered an essential service. [You can see the full list of essential workers here](#)
- to attend medical appointments and collect medicines and other health products for yourself, your family or someone who is vulnerable or cocooning
- for vital family reasons including caring for children, elderly or vulnerable people but excluding social family visits
- to take brief individual physical exercise within your locality, which may include children from your household within 2 kilometres of your home and adhering to strict 2 metre social distancing measures

Essential service workplaces

- everyone who can work from home must work from home. This includes essential workers and workers in essential government, utilities or other functions
- adult community education centres and local community centres are closed
- all essential services should ensure safe working conditions are in place
- specific advice will be available from the Health and Safety Authority

Health Services

- all non-essential surgery, health procedures and other non-essential health services are postponed
- all visits to hospitals, residential healthcare centres, other residential settings or prisons are stopped with specific exemptions on compassionate grounds
- pharmacists are to be allowed by law to dispense medicines outside the dates spelled out in prescriptions according to their own professional judgement

Transport and Travel

Travel restrictions will be implemented as follows:

- there will be a nationwide restriction on travel outside of 2 kilometres from your place of residence, except for the restrictions listed above
- public transport and passenger travel will be restricted to those who are buying food or medicines, carers, going to medical appointments and essential workers
- travel to Ireland's offshore islands is limited only to residents of those islands
- local authorities will relax on-street parking laws to meet the travel needs of essential workers
- the arrival of personal non-national maritime leisure vessels is banned (except to exceptions as 'port in a storm')

Legislation and Regulation

The measure above will be reflected in the regulations to be made under the Health (Preservation and Protection and Other Emergency Measures in the Public Interest) Act 2000 and will be enforced by the Garda Síochána.

