

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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**FROM: NAOMI LONG MLA
MINISTER OF JUSTICE**

DATE: 20 DECEMBER 2020

**TO: ARLENE FOSTER MLA
FIRST MINISTER**

**MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

Dear First Minister and deputy First Minister,

Given the news this weekend from England, Scotland and Wales on increased restrictions and changes to the guidance around Christmas travel and mixing, as well as a similar announcement in the Republic of Ireland, and further to our engagement yesterday evening, I am writing to ask that we consider meeting urgently as an Executive to discuss the implications for and position in Northern Ireland.

We are obviously affected by decisions taken elsewhere in these islands regarding travel, much of which will take place over the next few days. Furthermore, I believe, as I'm sure you do, that we need to consider whether our current plans are sufficient locally in respect of Christmas relaxations, especially given the new strain of Covid-19 that has been identified in England and which may also be responsible for some cases locally.

I am also concerned that schools generally and primary schools, in particular, will now be under immense pressure during the Christmas period as parents and teachers alike are anxiously looking to the Executive for guidance. The statements from the Education Minister after most schools closed for Christmas has caused huge concern, not least as

it asked primary schools to facilitate transfer tests in January, for which no contingencies have been put in place.

I would welcome an Executive meeting at our earliest possible convenience - preferably urgently today - to discuss these critical issues and review our current advice and guidance to the public. Whilst I would not normally request meetings on a Sunday, I do think the urgency and exceptional nature of the current situation warrant it.

I have copied this memo to other Executive Ministers and the Attorney General.

With thanks for your consideration of this request.

Personal Data

**NAOMI LONG MLA
MINISTER OF JUSTICE**