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Sent via email to: [MaryLou.McDonald@oireachtas.ie](mailto:MaryLou.McDonald@oireachtas.ie)

20 March 2020

Mary Lou,

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and I both share the view that looking after the health and wellbeing of our citizens at this time is paramount.

The UK Government's approach is clinically led, based on the expert advice of the UK's four Chief Medical Officers and health agencies across the United Kingdom. You will have seen that the Prime Minister has set out robust advice on social distancing in recent days. Furthermore, last night Ministers in Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland announced that schools will be closing.

The Executive, working with the Chief Medical Officer for Northern Ireland, is taking the decisions that are needed to protect the people of Northern Ireland. That said, it is more important than ever that the UK Government and the Executive are working closely with our partners in Wales and Scotland to keep the whole of the UK safe. I have been in regular contact with the First and deputy First Minister and will continue to do so going forward.

Of course, Northern Ireland's unique circumstances highlight the need to ensure that the approaches taken in Northern Ireland, the rest of the UK and Ireland are joined up and delivering the best outcomes for people across these islands in line with the best scientific and medical advice. I want to assure you that we are in close contact with our Irish counterparts at this time.

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We are fully committed to working together to do all we can to combat Covid-19 across these Islands. The Taoiseach and the Prime Minister spoke on this very issue yesterday, and are both clear on the need to be joined up and working closely. Officials from both Governments are taking forward discussions on how we can improve the way in which we collaborate on Covid 19 going forward

This Government will continue to do everything it can to keep Northern Ireland safe during this challenging period. I hope the Prime Minister and I can have your support as we move forward.

**Personal Data**

**THE RT HON BRANDON LEWIS CBE MP  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**