

Stephen Donnelly TD
Minister of Health

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Your Ref:
Our Ref: SUB-0566-2021
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Dear Stephen

Data Sharing – RoI Passenger Locator Forms

I am writing to you in response to your letter of 13th May 2021 on the above issue.

I note you advise that the proposed IT solution is in “user acceptance testing phase”. I understand, however, that officials from the Public Health Agency here have yet to receive an invitation to participate in that testing, an invitation that has been promised for more than a month. The Public Health Agency stand ready to participate and trust there will be no further delay. The recent discovery of ‘the Indian variant’ in Northern Ireland, whilst not linked to travel from the Republic of Ireland, reinforces the need for urgent co-operation across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland on international travel. Again therefore, I would be grateful for your confirmation of a date when the IT solution will be finalised and the data sharing can commence.

I understand the Public Health Agency will provide clarity very shortly to your officials on the use to which the data will be put. You will also note, contrary to your letter, there is no discussion between the Public Health Agency and my Department on the need for the data to be verified and follow up action taken where appropriate. Therefore, for certainty, the relevant ‘use’ section(s) in the data sharing agreement should include:

“verification of details provided on the Passenger Locator Forms”

That use would appear to mirror that outlined in the RoI Regulations, made in February, and allow for the verification by the Garda Síochána.

My officials have already confirmed this with your officials and I trust therefore the agreement can now proceed at pace to implementation so that data sharing can commence.

You also asked for my support thereafter in sharing PLF data of travellers from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland. I am very happy that my officials continue to provide that support, which will build on their provision of appropriate contact details for the other United Kingdom nations in mid-February.

I have copied this letter to the First Minister the Rt Hon Arlene Foster, MLA, deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, MLA, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland The Rt Hon Brandon Lewis, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, TD and the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health