



Stay home

I'm appealing to every man, woman and child to make these sacrifices for the love of each other... Show that you care for your family and friends

PAUL CULLEN
and PAT LEAHY

People have been told to stay at home in virtually all circumstances and all public and private gatherings have been banned for two weeks as part of the Government's latest sweeping measures to tackle coronavirus.

More non-essential shops and services will be closed, non-essential surgery is to stop and a ban on visiting hospitals and other healthcare settings is being imposed except on compassionate grounds.

The only exceptions to the stay-at-home rule is for travel to health, social care or other essential work, shopping for food and takeaways, medical appointments and for "vital family reasons" such as providing care.

People will also be allowed take "brief, individual" physical exercise within 2km of their home, and farming will continue.

Major policing

Late last night An Garda Síochána said there would be a major policing operation this weekend to ensure the new restrictions were being complied with. There will be a high visibility Garda presence all over the country involving thousands of gardaí on foot, bike and mobile patrols.

The Garda operation which runs until 7am on Monday will focus on encouraging compliance with the new measures. However, the Garda said they would intervene where groups of people or venues or outlets were ignoring the new restrictions.

The measures were announced shortly after the death of another three people from the virus was announced.

Among the fatalities is the first healthcare worker to die in the outbreak, a nurse at Talaght Hospital, The Irish Times understands.

Shielding, or cocooning, is to be introduced for everyone over 70 years of age and other vulnerable categories of people, effectively requiring them to stay at home.

The list of essential workers

exempted from the provisions, to be published today, includes those in healthcare, social care, the public and civil service, utilities, necessary goods (food and medicine), financial services, transport and communications, it is understood. Journalists are also expected to be included.

Use of public transport is to be limited to people providing essential services, travel to offshore islands will be limited to residents and pharmacists will be able to dispense medicines even where prescriptions have expired.

"These are radical actions aimed at saving as many people's lives as possible," Taoiseach Leo Varadkar declared, announcing the measures in Government Buildings. "In the days or weeks ahead, we're not prisoners of fate, we can influence what's going to happen to us next."

Mr Varadkar appealed to people to "give meaning to our freedom" by agreeing to the restrictions, "restricting how we live our lives, so that others may live."

"I'm asking us for a time to forego our personal liberties and freedoms for a greater cause. And I'm appealing to every man, woman and child in our country to make the sacrifices, not out of self interest, but for the love of each other."

Recommendations

The extra measures are being introduced on foot of recommendations by the National Public Health Emergency Team at its meeting earlier yesterday.

Chief medical officer Dr Tony Holohan said NPHE was concerned about increases in the numbers of cases, ICU admissions and deaths, as well as the emergence of 10 clusters of the disease in nursing homes.

A total of 22 people with Covid-19 have now died in the Republic. The number of new confirmed cases of the disease surged to 302 yesterday, the highest daily total so far. There are now 2,121 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Ireland.

The number of cases is doubling roughly every four days, which is somewhat better than



Taoiseach Leo Varadkar at last night's press conference
Photograph: Crispin Rodwell

New measures In force until April 12th

Everyone must stay at home in all circumstances, except for the following situations:

- To travel to and from work only where the work is an essential health, social care, or other essential service that cannot be done from home (a list of these will be provided)
- To shop for food or household goods, or collect a meal
- To attend medical appointments or collect medicines and other health products
- For vital family reasons, such as providing care to children, elderly or vulnerable people
- To take brief, individual physical exercise within 2km of your own home, which may include children from your own household, as long as you adhere to two-metre physical distancing
- For farming purposes – food production and care of animals
- All public and private gatherings of any number of people outside a single household or living unit are prohibited
- More non-essential shops and services will be closed
- Adult community education centres and community to close
- All non-essential surgery, health procedures and other non-essential health services will be postponed
- All visits to hospitals, other residential healthcare settings and prisons are to cease, with exceptions on compassionate grounds
- Shielding or cocooning will be introduced for all those over 70 and specified categories of vulnerable people
- Travel to our offshore islands limited to island residents
- Pharmacists will be permitted to dispense medicines outside of the current period of validity of the existing prescription
- All public transport and passenger travel will be restricted only to essential workers

was forecast at the start of the outbreak.

Up to last Wednesday, 419 patients had been hospitalised with the disease, it said, and 59 of these had been admitted to ICU.

While declining to describe the measures as a "lockdown", Mr Varadkar admitted they were "very restrictive" and added: "There isn't much more we can do."

He admitted the measures would be hard to police but said the gardaí have powers to detain people and that penalties can be imposed.

Meanwhile President Michael D Higgins has signed into law the Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Covid-19) Bill 2020.

It gives the Government extensive emergency powers to combat the pandemic and mitigate economic collapse.

The Bill prevents evictions of tenants, imposes a rent freeze, allows restaurants to become takeaways and provides for the rehiring of retired healthcare workers and former soldiers.

It also provides temporary income support schemes by contributing to wage costs to allow employers to continue paying their employees.

President Higgins said it was for "a time of crisis" and it was appropriate it had time limits and left constitutional rights in place.

Protective equipment

Stocks of personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare staff tackling the Covid-19 outbreak are "beginning to run low", according to the Health Service Executive. It is currently seeking to redistribute stocks to sites with "particular shortages", it said.

A large shipment of PPE is scheduled to arrive in Dublin Airport tomorrow and be distributed in the following days, but it remains unclear if existing supplies will be sufficient to bridge the gap until then.

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TOTAL CASES
2,121
NEW CASES
302
DEATHS
22
NORTHERN IRELAND
CASES 275 DEATHS 13



Carry on trading Still open for business MAGAZINE



Fintan O'Toole

“This will surely make us think differently about the dignity of labour and about what it demands

Jennifer O'Connell

“What happens in the next stage, when the virus is still raging, but fatigue and distress will set in?

David McWilliams

“Economic hibernation is as it sounds: we are putting the economy to sleep in as gentle a way as possible



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Weather

Cold, breezy and mainly dry with a mix of cloud and sunny spells. Top temperatures of 7-12 degrees in gusty winds.

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