

Speech of An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD, Government Buildings, 27 March 2020

Published: 27 March 2020

From: [Department of the Taoiseach](#)

Check against delivery

Good Evening,

Tonight, I want to speak to you about the next stage in our national response to the Coronavirus Emergency.

Before I do so, I want to express my condolences to the families and friends of those who passed away today – one of whom was a health care worker.

I want to thank all of you for continuing to abide by public health advice.

By doing so, you are saving lives and protecting our health service and its staff.

Once again, thank you to everyone who is working as part of this Great National Effort whether at work or working from home.

Our country is rising to this challenge.

I am convinced that we shall prevail.

At the beginning of this emergency, I told you that there would be difficult days ahead.

We knew that the virus would spread in our country, that tragically, many of our citizens would suffer and that some would die.

I also promised that we would do all that we could do to protect the health of our citizens, to prepare our health service, to support our healthcare staff and to try to cushion the blow to the economy, our businesses and your livelihoods.

Today, with cross-party support, the Oireachtas has passed further emergency legislation.

This will help businesses to keep their staff in work, it will increase social welfare payments for people who lose their jobs, as a consequence of the emergency, including the self-employed.

Payments under these new schemes have already commenced.

Rents are frozen. There will be no evictions.

When I spoke to you on St Patrick's Day I said that more actions would be required in the coming weeks to slow the spread of the virus.

Over this month we have seen the numbers of people falling ill increase every day. We have seen loved ones die.

Guided by the expert advice of our Public Health Emergency Team, led by the Chief Medical Officer, we believe that this is now the time for these actions.

I also told you that there would be a calm before the storm.

The aim of every single action that we have taken is to reduce the impact of the storm on our country.

To slow down this virus, to push it back and contain it.

Throughout all of this, the government has acted on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer and the National Public Health Emergency Team - an expert team of public health doctors, virologists and scientists.

Today, they informed the government that:

The number of confirmed cases in Ireland exceed 2,100.

Sadly, the number of deaths is 22.

There is a day on day increase in the number of admissions to intensive care units, and the number has doubled since Monday.

Transmission in the community accounts for more than half of all cases.

There continues to be an increasing number of clusters, many of which are in nursing home and residential care settings.

The government has received further recommendations on the actions that we need to take to protect our people.

These are in addition to all of the existing measures that are already in place.

So, with effect from midnight tonight, for a two-week period until Easter Sunday, 12 April.

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

- to travel to and from work, or for purposes of work, only where the work is an essential health, social care or other essential service and cannot be done from home. [A list will be provided](#)
- to shop for food and household goods or collect a meal
- to attend medical appointments and 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 2 kilometres of your home, which may include children from your household, as long as you adhere to strict 2 metre physical distancing
- for farming purposes, ie food production or care of animals
- all public and private gatherings of any number of people outside a single household or living unit are prohibited. The virus might be in your household already – so don't spread it to someone else's

Sadly, this prohibition includes social family visits that are not for the vital reasons I have already mentioned.

A further range of non-essential shops and services will be closed.

The guidance given earlier in the week, in respect of essential retail outlets will be revised, to reflect this.

Adult community education centres and local community centres will be shut.

All non-essential surgery, health procedures and other non-essential health services will be postponed.

All visits to hospitals, residential healthcare centres, other residential settings and prisons are to cease, with specific exceptions on compassionate grounds.

Shielding, or cocooning, will be introduced for all those over 70 years of age and specified categories of people who are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19. [Detailed guidance will be available.](#)

Travel to our offshore islands will be limited to residents of those islands.

Pharmacists will be permitted to dispense medicines outside the current period of validity of the existing prescription in line with the pharmacist's clinical judgement.

All public transport and passenger travel will be restricted only to essential workers and people providing essential services.

Apart from the activities I have listed, there should be no travel outside a 2 kilometre radius from your home for any other reason.

These are radical actions aimed at saving as many lives as possible in the days and weeks ahead. We are not prisoners of fate – we can influence what is going to happen. There is no fate but what we make for ourselves.

As we enter this most intensive phase of restrictive actions, the government's emergency response will be ramped up.

Local emergency response will be led by Local authorities who will bring together all the state agencies, as well as local community groups, charities and volunteers, to ensure that all of our citizens get the help they need at this exceptional time.

Freedom was hard won in our country, and it jars with us, to restrict and limit individual liberties, even temporarily. But freedom is not an abstract concept.

We give it meaning every single day – in the way we live our lives – and in the decisions we take willingly to protect our loved ones.

So I am asking people to give meaning to our freedom and liberty by agreeing to these restrictions. Restricting how we live our lives so that so that others may live.

I am asking us for a time, to forego our personal liberties and freedoms for a greater cause.

Tonight I am appealing to every man, woman and child in our country to make these sacrifices – not out of self-interest but for each other.

To begin each day knowing that every single imposition, every inconvenience, every irritation will save lives and help our health service cope.

The whole world is suffering during this pandemic, and Ireland is no different.

What happens now is up to each one of us.

Show your support to our healthcare staff.

Show your support for everyone who is working in essential services or looking after our vulnerable citizens.

Show that you care for your families and friends.

Stay at home.

Tá an domhain iomlán ag fulaingt agus níl Éireann difriúil.

Is ar gach éinne anois cad a tárlóidh.

Taispéain do chuid tacaíocht d'oibritheorí slántiúil.

Taispéain do chuid tacaíocht don seirbhisí riachtanach agus daoine atá ar lag/chuidiú.

Taispéain do bhféicfidh tú i ndhiadh do chlainn agus do chairde.

Fan abhaile.

ENDS