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Via email: cmo@health.gov.ie

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Wednesday, 26 March 2021

Dear Dr Holohan,

Firstly, let me extend my condolences to you on the death of your wife last month. I hope you are doing well and managing during these extraordinary times.

We write concerning the restrictions imposed at this time on funerals and the rituals that surround dying in Ireland. Bereavement is intrinsically lonely, COVID-19 restrictions have made it more isolating. It has reduced people's general social outlets, working patterns and natural support networks. The current restrictions of allowing only 10 people attend **any aspect** of a funeral is causing additional stress, anxiety and heartache to many families. We see the current restrictions as being overly harsh and should be revisited as we learn to live with COVID-19 and manage infection risks.

A recent survey, carried out on our behalf, indicates that over 75% of people feel that the grief impact of the pandemic on the nation will be long-lasting. For bereaved individuals, planning funerals of loved ones, honouring that person and receiving the support of their extended family and friends makes for a good impact – we would be keen to minimise any negative impacts over time.

Funerals by their nature are made up of both indoor and outdoor elements. We would request that **there be a change in guidance to allow an increase in the number of people allowed to attend the EXTERNAL elements of funerals such as graveyards etc where social distancing can be adhered to.** In particular where other outdoor events are being allowed to resume, e.g. sports training / events, cultural events, in small numbers, then we recommend that external aspects of funerals should be included in these considerations.

We would ask that NPHET consider less restrictive measures on funerals that will also continue to protect us all. We know from our bereavement support work that increasing the numbers allowed attend even parts of a funeral will at least ease some of the stress felt by families and allow for safe and compassionate mourning.

I remain, yours sincerely,



Sharon Foley | CEO

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