



## Picture Diary

**BAY VIEW:** Claire Thornborrow, from Bantry, and Chris May, from Dingle, enjoying the view of Bantry House and Gardens and Bantry Bay behind during some sunshine earlier this week. Picture: Andy Gibson

# Heartache of a funeral during lockdown

I WROTE this poem following the death of my father, Jim Egan, of St Luke's in Cork, a few weeks ago. He did not die of Covid-19 but his death and funeral took place during lockdown restrictions.

**Death In A Pandemic**  
My father died  
in the middle of a pandemic

When my mother died  
I remember wondering  
how people carried on  
as normal  
as if the world had not just shifted on  
its axis  
and nothing would ever be the same  
again

When my father died  
Nothing was normal

Air hugs  
from a distance  
with those I longed to embrace

Counting heads  
Spread through a near empty church

The ache for my brother  
unable to get home from New York

'twas the neighbours  
lining the road  
that broke me

We should have been together  
telling tales

## Your Letters

*of the man they knew longer than me*

'A lovely man'  
'A gentleman'  
'A handsome fella'  
Loved and loving

My dad  
Orla Egan, Cork

## Child scheme

I AM writing to express my concern about the roll-out of the Summer Provision Scheme.

It is essential that as many children as possible avail of this scheme, and urgent clarity is needed from the Department of Education to ensure that schools, teachers and SNAs can provide it.

Children with special educational needs are among those who have suffered the most from the lockdown.

Their routine has been turned upside down and the lack of socialisation has affected them deeply. It has also been extremely difficult for their parents.

Despite huge efforts from parents, children and teachers, there is no doubt that the lack of schooling has seen children fall back.

These children need to be the first priority for the Department of Education as we return to schooling.

A Summer Provision Programme is crucial to give these children the chance to recover some lost ground, to provide socialisation and stimulation.

Parents need relief too. Many are getting in contact with me expressing alarm and concern that they cannot find a place in a school, or a tutor for home-based Summer Provision.

Schools are in an impossible position because they don't have any of the detail they need around health and safety protocols or guidelines. They also cannot organise insurance or transport because of this.

So many schools are not yet in a position to offer the programme. Likewise, many teachers and SNAs are also concerned about the lack of detail.

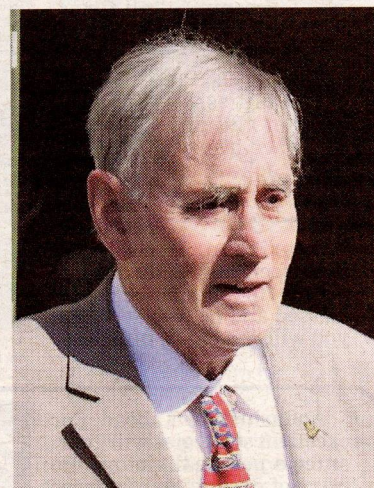
There seems to have been no capacity planning done. I am concerned the preparation hasn't been done. Schools, families and teachers haven't been in a position to organise this programme.

I am deeply worried that many families will end up disappointed as they will not be able to find themselves a programme or a place for their child.

The Government may try to shift the blame on to the schools, but the reality is that it will be because of their failure to plan for this scheme.

The Minister needs to bring forward the guidelines and protocols as soon as possible, so that the number of spaces available can be maximised and that the largest possible number of children can avail of it.

Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire TD, Cork South Central, Sinn Féin spokesperson on Education



**'A LOVELY MAN':** Jim Egan, of St Luke's in Cork, who died in May — his daughter, Orla, wrote a poem about the difficulty of saying farewell during the Covid-19 restrictions

### 5 ways to send us your letters or comments:



**Post:**

Letters to the Editor,  
The Echo, Linn Dubh,  
Assumption Road, Blackpool, Cork



**Email:**

Letters@theecho.ie

**Text:**

text ECHO plus your  
name and comment to  
53305 (0.30c per text)



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■ Letters must include a full address and may be edited. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification.