Statement from the National Public Health
Emergency Team - Thursday 21 January

From Department of Health

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The Health Protection Surveillance Centre has today been notified of 51 additional deaths related to COVID-19.

49 of these deaths occurred in January.

The median age of those who died is 80 years and the age range is 58-103 years.

There has been a total of 2,818* COVID-19 related deaths in Ireland.

(*Validation of data at the HPSC has resulted in the denotification 1 death. The figure of 2,818 deaths reflects this.)

As of midnight Wednesday 20 January, the HPSC has been notified of 2,608 confirmed cases of COVID-19. There has now been a total of 181,922 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ireland.

Of the cases notified today:

- 1,230 are men and 1,346 are women
- 55% are under 45 years of age
- the median age is 42 years old
- 1,019 in Dublin, 204 in Cork, 135 in Donegal, 132 in Galway, 131 in Kildare, and the remaining 987 cases are spread across all other counties

As of 2pm today, 1,943 COVID-19 patients are hospitalised, of which 214 are in ICU. There have been 105 additional hospitalisations in the past 24 hours.

Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, said:

"While we are making clear progress in reducing incidence we can see we still have a very large burden of infection – to illustrate this on 1 December, when we last eased restrictions, our 5 day moving average was 261 cases per day, today it is almost ten times that number at 2,430 cases per day.

"It is evident that the population is working as one to reduce contacts and interrupt further transmission of the disease. However, we are witnessing the effects of high levels of community transmission through our hospital and ICU admissions and reported deaths. We
need to continue to work together to drive this infection down and bring the disease back under control."

Dr. Ronan Glynn, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, said:

"There have been 532 deaths so far in January and we can unfortunately expect this trend to continue over the coming days. Limiting contacts, keeping physical distance from others, hand hygiene, appropriate use of face coverings and general awareness about how your interactions could potentially spread infection will ultimately prevent further morbidity. Following public health advice will directly save lives."

Professor Philip Nolan, Chair of the NPHET Irish Epidemiological Modelling Advisory Group, said:

"Incidence is gradually falling but remains very high across all age groups, particularly in those aged 85 and older. A considerable effort by all of us to cut down on contacts has resulted in the R number reducing to 0.5 - 0.8. We have to keep it below 1.0 if we are to successfully emerge out of this current wave."

Karina Butler, Chair of the National Immunisation Advisory Committee, said:

"Vaccine arrival has been a real morale booster in hospitals and nursing homes. As we are able to roll it out to the wider community it will undoubtedly lift spirits. But please remember we are at a precarious time and if we drop our guard we could undermine our efforts to combat COVID-19. For now, we must stay the course, keep contacts to a minimum, stay home and follow public health advice."

The HSE has today published the results of the PRECISE study, which looked at antibodies to COVID-19 in healthcare workers in two Irish hospitals.

In St James’s Hospital, 15% of staff had antibodies for COVID-19 while 4.1% of staff in University Hospital Galway had antibodies.

Dr Lorraine Doherty, National Clinical Director for Health Protection HSE, Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC), said:

"The results of the study will help the health service in its response to COVID-19. It is also important to note that antibody positivity cannot be taken to mean a person is immune, and all Infection Prevention and Control measures still need to be followed.

"The study will be repeated in the springtime to see how seroprevalence changes with successive waves of the pandemic, and how antibody status changes in the individuals who participate both times. The second round of testing will also look at vaccine response versus natural infection, given recent commencement of the national vaccination programme."

The COVID-19 Dashboard provides up-to-date information on the key indicators of COVID-19 in the community. The dashboard also now includes information on total vaccines administered.

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