



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

## 01 March 2021 Meeting

**Updates, decisions and actions from meeting**

## High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

**Monday 1 March 2021 14:00**

Updates, decisions and actions arising from meeting

### 1. Attendees

<b>A. Members in attendance</b>	<b>B. Additional attendees in support</b>
Prof Brian MacCraith, Task Force Chair	<i>ii. In Attendance</i>
Prof Karina Butler, Chair, NIAC	Sean Bresnan, National Director of Procurement, HSE
Liz Canavan, Chair, SOG on COVID-19	Dr Lorraine Doherty, Clinical Director Health Protection, HSE
Fergal Goodman, Assistant Secretary, Health Protection Division, DOH	Dr Ronan Glynn, Deputy CMO, DOH
Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE	Gerry O'Brien, Director, Health Protection, DOH
Rachel Kenna, Chief Nursing Officer, DOH	Deirdre Watters, Head of Communications, DOH
Barry Lowry, Chief Information Officer, OGCI	Elizabeth Headon, Programme Communications
Derek McCormack, Expert on Cold Chain Logistics	Dr Lucy Jessop, SRO WS2, Director, NIO, HSE
Dermot Mulligan, Assistant Secretary, Innovation and Investment Division, DETE	Paul Flanagan, SRO WS3
Lorraine Nolan, Chief Executive, HPRA	David Walsh, SRO WS4
Dr Nuala O'Connor, ICGP	Fran Thompson, SRO WS6
Dalton Philips, Chief Executive Officer, DAA	David Leach, SRO WS7
Paul Quinn, Government CPO and CEO, OGP	Damien McCallion, National Director, HSE
Paul Reid, Chief Executive Officer, HSE	Susan Mitchell, Special Advisor to Minister for Health
Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive Officer, IDA	
Derek Tierney, Programme Director	<i>iii. Programme Support</i>
<b>Additional attendees in support</b>	Yvonne Mowlds (PWC), Programme Office
<i>i. Task Force Secretariat</i>	Michael McDaid (PWC), Programme Office
Kate Waterhouse, Task Force Secretariat	

## 2. Updates, decisions and approvals by Task Force

At the meeting, the Task Force:

- Noted the Government's recent publication of 'COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 - The Path Ahead' and the key role of the vaccination programme in the next phase of Ireland's response to the pandemic; the Government's revised Vaccine Allocation Strategy following the advice of NIAC, the Deputy CMO, HSE and DOH and the impact on the vaccination programme; and the approval by the FDA of the Janssen vaccine, due for consideration by the EMA in the coming weeks.
- Reviewed an update on open actions, noting completion of five additional actions: communications approach for cohorts in light of particular population consent behaviours; finalisation of SI widening the legal basis for the vaccinator role; finalisation of HSE paper on clinical governance for vaccination centres; engagement of HPRA with WS2 to support ramp-up considerations; and finalisation of policy on vaccine waste minimisation, noting that a survey of Pfizer vaccine administration shows very minimal wastage, with reconstitution of the vaccine the main issue.
- Agreed that near-term issues will now be included in open actions, and discussed ongoing progress on remaining actions: more certainty expected this week on DOH policy considerations and assessment of sub-prioritisation of cohorts, with further consideration and decisions remaining; urgent consideration is being given to the approach to vaccinating minority communities and vulnerable groups, which is affected by the revised Allocation Strategy; discussions are ongoing on the role of pharmacists in the programme with the current focus on vaccinating pharmacists; and an approach to reaching immobile patients  $\geq 70$ s has been agreed and is being progressed, involving engagement with the HSE, GPs and the National Ambulance Service; progress on confirmation of cohort population sizes will be reported next week. Workforce requirements and planning are discussed separately.
- Heard a communications update, noting a very active public communications campaign with positive feedback and strong community engagement; the ongoing HSE 80+ campaign; significant communications in relation to the revised Allocation Strategy; research continuing to show high demand for the vaccine; ongoing work with social media to address mis- and false information; and significant work on peer-to-peer communications. There was extensive coverage of vaccines this week: in addition to the revised Allocation Strategy, news events included the ongoing over-85s vaccinations with an increased focus on operational matters; FDA approval of the Janssen vaccine; and reports from the NPHE briefing on the growing positive impact of the programme, including for nursing homes and healthcare workers. Political communications included the Taoiseach's national address on 'COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 - The Path Ahead', with end-June targets for vaccination; and upcoming plans include a continued focus on the efficiency of the vaccination programme, and Dáil Statements and Q&A by MoH.

- Heard an update for w/e 28 Feb, noting 426,070 vaccine doses administered to 25 Feb and the continued roll-out of vaccines to GP practices for  $\geq 85$ s, including over 700 vaccinated at two GP-run clinics in Galway and Cork on 27/28 Feb.
- Discussed upcoming planned activity for w/c 01.3.21, including a target of 88,000 vaccinations; completion of dose 1 vaccinations for over-85s; continuation of intense work on converting the revised Allocation Strategy into a roadmap, integrating new clinical advice from NIAC with operational planning; ongoing work on the pharmacist operation model; and continuation of national recruitment, with the new SI facilitating inclusion of dentists and others as vaccinators.
- Reviewed a programme status report for the ramp-up phase (Feb/Mar), noting that vaccine supply certainty continues to pose a key risk; and that work continues to progress on all workstreams: logistics operations progressing, with a GP support team in place, a demand management unit mobilised and work ongoing with the national cold-chain service to build up fleet and distribution capacity, with HPRA engagement commenced (WS2); opt-in to purchase more than 1m additional Pfizer doses (WS3); concentration on operationalising cohorts 4 and 5, workforce requirements, supply and standing up the 37 vaccination centres (WS4); and work ongoing on integration with GP and pharmacy systems and completion of registration portals; it was agreed that a metric will be designed to demonstrate efficiency of vaccine programme (WS6).
- Discussed NIAC guidance on vaccine types for different cohorts and AZ vaccine interval, and the implications of the Government's revision to the Allocation Strategy, which sets out four new cohorts (4, 5, 6 and 7); this included a review of draft revised timelines for cohort vaccination and of operational considerations: defining and engaging with populations (data estimates to be validated; process to identify population to be agreed), vaccine administration models (vaccine types to be agreed), IT reconfiguration and approach for commencing subsequent cohorts (operational plans to be agreed). Revised plans to commence vaccination of sub-cohort 4a next week in parallel with the continued vaccination of cohort 3 (80-84 years) were discussed. The complexity of the programme, and the importance of ongoing agility, balancing of clinical advice and operational considerations to achieve the greatest benefit, and clear public messaging were re-emphasised. In terms of timelines, it was also emphasised that vaccine benefit is not defined by final doses, and that first doses also convey significant benefit.
- Heard a workforce update from WS4, noting plans for a workshop this Thursday, after which more finalised detail will be available; an overview of the size and type of multi-disciplinary teams required; an update on recruitment, with very strong interest to date and expected to continue, and on resource requirements likely to be met by other State bodies; an update on Garda vetting and training programmes variously in development, finalised, and approved by relevant regulatory bodies; and an overview of a planned roadmap to opening vaccination centres.

- Heard a short IT update on security and data protection matters from WS6 and agreed that a further update will follow next week.
- Discussed vaccine supply and forecast, including two late adjustments w/c 22 Feb to AZ supply, reprofiling of the delivery schedule and the impact on planning, as well as potential issues with Moderna supply in March due to dependencies on EMA approval of a variation.
- Agreed that medium-term issues will be discussed next week.
- Heard an update on the indicative operational scorecard, which continues to demonstrate the efficiency of the programme to date, and noted that updates on waste minimisation at the point of use will be built into the scorecard.
- Noted that the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has issued statements on vaccine fraud and that any issues here should be reported via the European mechanism; agreed that the any information should be shared with the HPRA in the first instance.
- Noted, in summary, the implications of the revised Allocation Strategy and the operationalisation of changes, the continued focus on workforce planning and recruitment, and that more detailed IT updates will be heard next week.
- Agreed that the next meeting of the HLTF will take place on Monday, 8 March at 2pm.

**New actions agreed by Task Force – 1 March**

#	Action	Owner
1	Introduce and communicate metric to demonstrate efficiency of programme (supply to administration)	Derek Tierney, HLTF PMO
2	IT update on security and data protection matters at meeting 17 of HLTF	Fran Thompson
3	Waste minimisation at point of use to be built into Operational Scorecard	Derek Tierney