



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

## 08 March 2021 Meeting

**Updates, decisions and actions from meeting**

## High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

**Monday 8 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>  |
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| 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                                     | Deirdre Watters, Head of Communications, DOH   |
| Rachel Kenna, Chief Nursing Officer, DOH                                       | Elizabeth Headon, Programme Communications   |
| Barry Lowry, Chief Information Officer, OGCI                                   | Dr Lucy Jessop, SRO WS2, Director, NIO, HSE  |
| Derek McCormack, Expert on Cold Chain Logistics                                | Paul Flanagan, SRO WS3   |
| Dermot Mulligan, Assistant Secretary, Innovation and Investment Division, DETE | 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  | Deirdre McNamara, General Manager, Quality & Patient Safety, Acute Hospitals Division, HSE |
| Derek Tierney, Programme Director  | Michael Lohan, IDA (instead of Martin Shanahan)  |
| <b>Additional attendees in support</b>   | Stephen Donnelly, Minister for Health  |
| <i>i. Task Force Secretariat</i>   | <i>iii. Programme Support</i>  |
| Kate Waterhouse, Task Force Secretariat  | Yvonne Mowlds (PWC), Programme Office  |
|  | Keiran Barbalich (PWC), Programme Office   |

**Apologies:** Lorraine Nolan, Chief Executive, HPRA

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

At the meeting, the Task Force:

- Noted that the vaccine programme has now entered a steep, upward slope and has reached some major milestones, including administering over 500,000 vaccinations, and that supply instability is ongoing.
- Reviewed an update on open actions/near-term issues, noting completion of three actions, including the approach to reaching immobile patients over 70, and discussed ongoing progress on remaining actions/issues: policy considerations & assessment of sub-prioritisation of cohorts, and on cohort population sizes; approach to vaccinating minority communities and vulnerable groups; waste minimisation at point of use being built into Operational Scorecard; and confirming the role of pharmacists in the vaccination programme. A number of open actions, including workforce matters, are discussed separately.
- Heard a communications update on the Public Information Campaign, with a new TV ad on air; radio ads moving to call those over 80 this week; 'We're on the Way' ad in Sunday papers and due on radio this week; very active engagement with the Community Network, which is being extended to cohorts 4 and 7. CSO research confirms continued high demand for vaccine, and finds that for 46% of those surveyed, the greatest concern is a long wait for the vaccine. News coverage, including on supply (AZ shortfalls; published revised table of vaccine deliveries); GP operational challenges; vaccination hubs in Cork/Galway and a visit by Taoiseach to Ballybrit vaccination centre. Political communications include appearance at the Health Committee (Tue) and Dáil Statements (Thurs) by Minister Donnelly; and upcoming plans include managing expectations on cohort 4 and vaccine supply.
- Heard an update for w/e 28 Feb, including administration of 513,322 doses to 5 Mar, surpassing the milestone of 500,000 doses, with over 85s on track to be substantially completed this week; a site visit by the HLTF to the national cold-chain storage facility to review GP distribution model and improvements for next phase; continued work on clinical and operational matters for cohort 4; over 2,000 applications for vaccinator role from recruitment campaign, relaunched to include dentists and optometrists; publication of next HPRA safety report and EMA safety update - both favourable; and commencement of EMA rolling review of the Sputnik V vaccine.
- Discussed upcoming planned activity for w/c 01.3.21, including a target of 84,166 doses administered across 4 cohorts, including commencement of cohort 4; commencement of vaccinations for housebound patients with support from the National Ambulance Service; and expected EMA recommendation of the Janssen vaccine.
- Reviewed a programme status report for the ramp-up phase, noting that supply certainty remains a central risk, and that a metric for waste minimisation is being finalised. Reviewed stock management and operational approaches to ensuring availability of second doses.

- Heard an update on the distribution model from WS2, noting operational challenges during the week to the GP distribution model; while noting that over 90% of deliveries to GPs have been as expected, a number of improvements have now been built into the GP model: new dedicated call centre; appointment of relationship managers with contact details provided to GPs; new regular Bulletin on vaccine availability to be circulated to GP Network; ongoing improvements to the distribution process, with work ongoing to move from the current commitment of at least 24 hours' notice for deliveries to a 7-day distribution schedule and improved delivery frequency; principles of availability and fair and equitable distribution will continue to apply. WS2 will engage with GPs to assess how well the new processes are working, and will continue to work on the ramp-up (workforce, fleet, logistics management).
- Heard an update on workforce readiness, which included an overview of assumptions and calculations being used to identify the workforce required to match expected supply: identification of requirements is expected to be finalised this week. It also included a positive update on national and local recruitment, and on vaccination centre (VC) readiness, with a number of centres up and running, more expected to open every week, and City West being used as an operational learning site. Next steps include finalisation of delivery mix assessment at peak (pharma/GP/hospital), which considers capacity, supply, cohort characteristics and costs; HR workforce planning; development of reporting and monitoring of VC readiness and progress, and learnings; and agreement on local arrangements. It was agreed that this item will remain as a standing item on the agenda, and that a workforce dashboard, which is being finalised, will be provided to the HLTF on a weekly basis.
- Heard an update on IT matters from WS6, which focussed on security and data protection matters, as well as a discussion on data collection.
- Discussed vaccine supply and forecast, noting ongoing high levels of supply unpredictability, including recent AZ schedule changes, and uncertainty about future changes; ongoing engagement with AZ on supply and delivery schedules; a temporary reduction in Moderna supply this month communicated to GPs; the expectation of a large number of deliveries in the last days of Q1 that it will not be possible to administer until Q2; EMA rolling review of CureVac and Sputnik V and expected recommendation on Janssen; and ongoing consideration of all options for additional vaccine supply, including a possible request for an EU redistribution mechanism. Discussed the need to manage public expectations on supply - both vaccines now expected (versus figures published earlier) and broader uncertainty.
- Was addressed briefly by the Minister for Health on the need for engagement and consideration of all options to secure additional vaccines, as well as the need for significant engagement and communication in relation to cohort 4 - both patients and the clinical community.
- Discussed medium-term issues, which included:

- Update on virus variants: extent and transmissibility of variants present here; expectation of further variants; efficacy of vaccines on variants; noted that vaccinating quickly and widely is key to stopping mutations; agreed further updates to be provided as required.
  - Considerations around allocation sequencing policy for future cohorts are under active consideration.
  - Vaccine bonus: visitation in nursing homes, to be discussed this week, is likely to be the first formal indicator; it is expected that there will be communications towards end March/April on what vaccination will mean at a population level, and later at an individual level, as underpinned by evidence. The need for careful balancing of communications was agreed.
  - Overview of current issues under consideration by NIAC: ongoing review of current/future vaccines (emerging data; efficacy; dosage; suitability for cohorts); ongoing review of the prioritisation list; vaccinating under-16s.
  - Vaccine certification: policy being considered in light of EU Council statements and national position; debate ongoing at EU/international level; certificate prototypes ready and have been tested with very positive feedback.
- Heard an update on the indicative operational scorecard; work and engagement is ongoing on a rolling metric on the efficiency of the vaccination programme (vaccines received, available, administered).
  - Noted, in summary, ongoing supply uncertainty, rollout to cohort 4, ongoing work on the distribution model and programme workforce, and IT matters, including security.
  - Agreed that the next meeting of the HLTF will take place on Monday, 15 March at 2pm.

**New actions agreed by Task Force – 8 March**

| # | Action   | Owner                           |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Finalise workforce reporting dashboard requirement for weekly completion | Derek Tierney, Damien McCallion |