



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

## 31 May 2021 Meeting

Updates, decisions and actions from meeting

## High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

**Monday 31 May 2021 14:00**

Updates, decisions and actions arising from meeting

### 1. Attendees

A. Members in attendance	B. Additional attendees in support
Prof Brian MacCraith, Task Force Chair	Kate Waterhouse, Task Force Secretariat
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	Dr Lucy Jessop, SRO WS2, Director, NIO
Derek McCormack, Expert on Cold Chain Logistics	Paul Flanagan, SRO WS3
Dermot Mulligan, Assistant Secretary, Innovation and Investment Division, DETE	David Walsh, SRO WS4
Lorraine Nolan, Chief Executive, HPRA	Dr John Cuddihy, SRO WS5
Dr Nuala O'Connor, ICGP	David Leach, SRO WS7
Dalton Philips, Chief Executive Officer, DAA	Pat Healy, National Director Social Care, HSE
Paul Quinn, Government CPO and CEO, OGP	Eileen Hearne, Government Information Service
Paul Reid, Chief Executive Officer, HSE	Damien McCallion, National Director, HSE
Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive Officer, IDA	Deirdre McNamara, General Manager, Quality & Patient Safety, Acute Hospitals Division, HSE
Derek Tierney, Programme Director	Anna Conlon, Special Advisor
	Deirdre Gillane, Special Advisor
	Brian Murphy, Special Advisor
	Keiran Barbalich (PWC), Programme Office
	Yvonne Mowlds (PWC), Programme Office

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

At the meeting, the Task Force:

- Noted the Taoiseach's recent address and its positive references to the vaccination programme and the role it is playing in Ireland's exit from the pandemic.
- Noted completion of two actions (update on tracking VC vaccine waste minimisation; capturing registration, uptake and DNA data), and progress on the GP vaccine waste action.
- Heard a communications update, including on updates to public information campaigns following the 28<sup>th</sup> May announcement by Government; the continuing #ForUsAll campaign and ongoing registration of 45-49 year olds; ongoing engagement of the HSE with stakeholder and advocacy groups; a continued focus on myth-busting and addressing vaccine hesitancy; a digital campaign aimed at pregnant women; and planned distribution of vaccination booklets. News coverage last week included rollout to those aged 45-49; milestone statistics on the programme (2.6m doses administered); Janssen delivery delays; EMA approval of Pfizer for those aged 12+; EU Digital COVID Certificate; vaccine dose intervals and the Indian variant. Research continues to show positive vaccine uptake attitudes.
- Heard a programme update: while GP data is still unavailable following the cyber-attack, an estimated ca. 2.7m vaccines were administered to 30 May (ca. 50% of adults have received Dose 1; up to 20% are fully vaccinated) and ca. 290K vaccinations were administered last week – feedback from across the programme has been consistently positive thanks to the significant efforts of all involved, including the HSE, hospital groups and GPs; the HSE submitted their plan operationalising the latest NIAC guidance and this is under review by DOH; agreement has been reached on the role of pharmacists in the programme; and the EMA has approved the use of Pfizer for those aged 12-15. The programme for w/c 31 May includes plans to deliver 280-300K vaccines, including 75K to high-risk, very high-risk and vulnerable groups (cohorts 4, 7, 9a) and 150K across the age cohorts, with registration for those aged 40-44 to open this week.
- Reviewed a programme status report, noting that while supply continues to be a limiting factor, significant work continues across all workstreams, including under WS4 where administration of AZ Dose 2 is the final significant stage in the cohort 2 (fHCW) programme while a process is in place for new HCWs, vaccination of cohort 3 house-bound patients is continuing as is vaccination of cohorts 4 and 7, which includes pregnant women, and vaccination of socially vulnerable groups; and under WS6 where the focus remains on maintaining stability and continuity following the cyber-attack and Sprint 10 is expected to be in production shortly.
- Discussed Integrated Operational Planning, noting that the HSE submitted its operational plans (incorporating the latest NIAC guidance) for consideration to DOH last week and that it continues to progress its current plan and has capacity to deliver 300K vaccines per week. The TF also reviewed:

- a draft rollout schedule by cohort, which is subject to supply and uptake, with plans in place to keep uptake under review and maximise it at local level;
  - a workforce overview, noting continued strong levels of recruitment through existing and new channels, including students as vaccinators as allowed by a new SI – more detailed recruitment numbers will be available shortly;
  - a VC overview: 37 VCs in operation with UCD to open this week and some other venue moves planned (sustainability of current sites is under review - information will be shared shortly and will be considered in the context of a national assessment of future vaccination needs led by DOH); VCs are administering ca.30K vaccines per day and have the capacity to expand to meet demand at peak periods; analysis of non-attendance at VCs shows very low overall figures (3.69% in a recent 30-day period);
  - analysis of vaccination uptake: while people from across all ages are continuing to come forward for vaccination, a team is in place to ensure that everyone that registers is scheduled for a vaccination (e.g., where incorrect details are supplied); and plans are in place to vaccinate very large numbers of those under 50 this weekend;
  - GP vaccination activity: noted the significant work done in the GP programme to date and that a process has been agreed for GPs to continue as part of the vaccination programme, supporting the VCs;
  - an update on Community Pharmacy, expected to join the programme in early June: up to ca. 1,000 pharmacies will vaccinate over-50s who have not yet been vaccinated while ca. 350 will support VCs in a targeted programme, broadening geographical spread of the programme; engagement is ongoing.
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- Discussed vaccine supply and forecast, including at EU level; on domestic supply in Q2, Janssen supply for June remains uncertain, but even in the best-case scenario only around half the amount originally expected will arrive, with a similar situation for Q3; the distribution of AZ supply across Q3 is also unknown while schedules for the next 5 weeks remain largely indicative.
  - Discussed medium-term issues, including:
    - 1) COVID variants, noting that a sub-group chaired by D/Taoiseach has been set up to monitor the risk of variants and will report to Government in mid-June;
    - 2) Current NIAC considerations, which include the use of Pfizer in those aged 12-15, variants, heterologous vaccination and the future use of vaccinations.
  - Reviewed operational performance, including the scorecard (noting absence of GP data due to the cyber-attack); a rolling total of doses administered, noting weekly administration is expected to stay between 250K and 300K based on expected supply; comparative ECDC data on vaccination status across the EU, noting Ireland's favourable position; and while the ability of the programme to report on surveillance data has been impacted by the cyber-attack, these continue to show significant decreases in cases, hospitalisations and deaths in vaccinated cohorts.
  - Noted, in summary, the ongoing variability of supply; Integrated Operational Planning and the Q2 plan; concerns around the Indian variant; and data and

processes in relation to registrations, non-attendance and time between registration and scheduled appointments.

- Agreed that the next meeting of the HLTF will take place on Tuesday, 8 June.