

Nursing Home Expert Panel Report
Implementation Oversight Team (IOT)
Meeting: 13th January 2021, 11.00 am

Meeting note

Attendees:

Kathleen Mac Lellan	Chair, Assistant Secretary, Social Care Division, DOH
Niall Redmond	Principal Officer, Older Persons Policy Development Unit, DOH
Emily De Grae	Assistant Principal, Older Persons Policy Development Unit, DOH
Karen Greene	Chief Nursing Officer, Department of Health, DOH
Rosarie Lynch	Head of Patient Safety Surveillance, NPSO, DOH
David Noonan	Principal Officer, GP Services and GMS Contract, DOH
Georgina Bassett	Nursing Project Manager, Older Persons Policy Development, DOH
Clodagh Murphy	Assistant Principal, Acute Hospitals, DOH
Fiona Larthwell	Principal Officer, Older Persons Services Oversight & Planning, DOH
Helena Keleher	Principal Officer, Older Persons Policy Development Unit, DOH
Neil Kavanagh	Assistant Principal, Older Persons Services Oversight & Planning, DOH
Matthew Hornsby	Assistant Principal, Older Persons Services Oversight & Planning, DOH
Dr. John Cuddihy	National Director, Public Health, HSE
Dr Kevin Kelleher	Assistant National Director, Public Health, HSE
Deirdre Lang	Director of Nursing, HSE
Dr Siobhán Kennelly	National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead, Older Persons, HSE
Gerry Clerkin	General Manager, Community Operations, HSE
Fiona Walsh	Fair Deal Specialist, NTPF
Mary Dunnion	Chief Inspector of Social Services, HIQA
Susan Cliffe	Deputy Chief Inspector, HIQA
Kelly Jones	Project Manager, HIQA
Carol Grogan	Head of Programme Regulatory Practice Development, HIQA
Brigid Doherty	Public Interest Representative
Prof. Cecily Kelleher	Chair of Reference Group

Apologies:

David Walsh	Implementation Lead, HSE
Pat Healy	National Director Community Strategy, HSE
Malachy Corcoran	Principal Officer, Unscheduled Care, Department of Health, DOH

Secretariat:

Nuala O'Reilly	Assistant Principal, Older Persons Policy Development Unit, DOH
Stephen Dunk	Executive Officer, Older Persons Policy Development Unit, DOH
Deirdre O'Riordan	Executive Officer, Older Persons Policy Development Unit, DOH

DISCUSSION and ACTION POINTS

	Agenda item	Discussion and Actions Agreed
1.	Adoption of minutes of previous meeting	The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted without amendment.
2.	Conflict of Interest	There were no issues raised in this regard at this meeting.
3.	Update on Epidemiological Data	<p>Recent outbreaks and the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in nursing homes were discussed. The seriousness of the current situation was acknowledged. The deterioration of the number of new outbreaks in recent times in line with the increase in community transmission was noted.</p> <p>The HSE confirmed that the data was consistent with their experience. The HSE confirmed that up to 20 nursing homes are of particular concern, but 93 nursing homes with outbreaks are currently being closely monitored.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the mortality rate in wave 2 has not been as high as the first wave. It was highlighted that Safe Staffing is critical and current staff rotas are being closely managed.</p> <p>The value of the serial testing programme was highlighted and concern was expressed regarding the high number of positive cases healthcare workers.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that a high-level Ministerial interagency meeting took place on 8th January. Discussions focused on current challenges, current supports and issues arising. The Chair acknowledged the extensive supports provided by the HSE and HIQA. HSE is mobilising as much staffing support across the system at possible and it also has agreements with other State bodies such as Defence Forces for such support. However, it was also noted that given the level of COVID-19 related absence across the system, staffing is expected to be a very challenging over the weeks ahead. It was also noted that significant resources and training, including in relation to IPC has been provided to nursing homes. The Chair noted that interagency engagements will continue given the current situation with a focus on safe staffing.</p> <p>Action 3.1 Secretariat to circulate epidemiological presentation to IOT and Reference Group.</p>
4.	Matter for Referral to Reference Group	The Chair encouraged IOT members to consider matters for referral to the reference group.
5.	Updates/Matters Arising	<p>(a) General</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that the second progress report has been approved by the Minister and will be published on the Department's website in due course, and would also be circulated to the Reference Group for information.</p> <p>The Chair acknowledged the input from HIQA/HSE in relation to the ECDC Options analysis for the recent NPHEP Paper.</p> <p>Action 5.1 Paper on nursing homes and COVID-19 submitted to NPHEP</p>

recently to be circulated to the IOT members.

(i) Serial Testing- The HSE provided an update on Serial testing noting:

- Cycle 6 which took place before Christmas showed an infection detected rate of 1.22% (67k swabs with a 76% uptake)
- Cycle 7 infection detected rate 1.3 % (last week)
- It was confirmed that, where appropriate, for the next few weeks until end January, testing may be provided on a weekly basis subject to the advice of local HSE teams, availability of testing capacity and agreement with nursing homes

The Chair noted that the increase in serial testing has acted as an effective early warning system and an important support to nursing homes as well as offering some assurance for residents.

(b) Safe Staffing Recommendations – The Deputy Chief Nursing Officer (DCNO) provided an update re: Recommendation 5.5 noting;

- Extensive engagement has taken place with the HSE and the Guidance Document has been finalised.
- HSE have identified 6 sites made up of both public and private facilities where the document will be trialled for validation purposes.
- the pressures currently facing services and confirmed the data review will take place offsite to avoid adding further pressures.
- DoH is on target for the progression of the Safe Staffing Framework and subject to Ministerial approval hope to make the International Expert appointments needed for the Taskforce.

(c) Update on communications campaign

- The webinars were successful and were well received in the system.
- The Communications Campaign issued; however, it was noted that some of the messaging may have been overtaken by the focus on vaccinations.
- All the information is available on the HSE URL website which is publicly accessible.
- A Webinar took place on Friday the 8th January relating to Consent/3rd party vaccinations and is also on the website.
- HSE Communications team to revert on the number of visits to the URL to get a sense of participation/engagement.

Action 5.1: HSE to send links for the communication campaign material to DOH for inclusion on the IOT webpage.

Action 5.2: HSE to obtain data from HSE Communication Unit in relation to the number of hits the communication campaign webpage is receiving.

Action 5.3 Communication Campaign team to engage with HSE and DOH press offices regarding possible tweets to highlight the resource.

		<p>(d) Update on the Communications Protocol under recommendation 14.1 (HSE & HIQA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HIQA confirmed that the communication pathways have been streamlined at a local, regional and national level. - The Communications Protocol is currently with HSE for review and will be finalised thereafter. <p>The Chair acknowledged the work of both the HSE and HIQA in establishing the protocol and requested a final update at the next IOT.</p> <p>Action 5.4: HIQA to give final update on Communications Protocol at next IOT meeting.</p> <p>(e) Update from the Chair of the Reference Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Reference group have completed their review across the recommendations and issued a briefing note to the Chair of the IOT on the 23rd Dec, with a view to discussing it at the forthcoming meeting of the Chairs. - The HPSC Visiting Guidance, referred from the IOT was discussed in detail by the Reference Group. - The Reference Group acknowledged the balance required to protect residents along with the need to ensure contact with family members. - The Reference Group has highlighted some issues relating to the mental health research agenda and may look to secure some resources to progress the matter further. <p>Community Response Teams (CRT) were discussed by the IOT with the main points as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CRTs have a national forum and meet every Friday. - Work is ongoing in relation to Recommendation 7.1 and a workshop is scheduled to take place on 22nd January. - The impact that COVID-19 has had on the workforce /residents and families was highlighted. - <p>The Chair confirmed that funding is available in 2021 to support the implementation of the recommendations including progressing the evolution of CRTs, which can be considered via formal proposals to the Department in the normal way.</p> <p>Action 5.5: HSE to provide update on Community Response Teams (CRTs) at next meeting.</p> <p>NPSO gave an update in the context of Recommendation 2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AMRIC have completed extensive work on the HSELand and a number of IPC modules have been added. - It was highlighted that this is a welcome additional resource for IPC training.
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6.	COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Update	<p>The HSE provided an update on the COVID-19 vaccination programme noting that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HSE are on schedule for all nursing homes to be visited for administration of the first dose of the vaccine by 24th January. - As of Sunday, the 10th Jan, 30 nursing homes have had a successful rollout with plans for further 150 – 200 to be completed by the end of this week, - It was noted that close to 100% of residents and staff received the vaccine from the first 30 nursing homes to date. - The schedule is to be replicated to ensure that the 2nd dose is administered approximately 3 weeks after the first. <p>A query was raised regarding the nursing homes that have had a COVID outbreak and the HSE confirmed that they have included these nursing homes in the rollout in line with public health risk assessment but they are not administering the vaccine to individuals who are unwell or have had a positive COVID Test result in the previous 4 weeks. These vaccinations will be deferred for a 4-week period.</p>
7.	Update on second phase of HIQA survey of providers implementation progress (HIQA)	<p>The Chair confirmed that that the 1st phase has been completed and a report was provided by HIQA. The report had informed a major part of the 2nd progress report. The Chair confirmed discussions have taken place in relation to the 17 Recommendations for inclusion in the 2nd Phase.</p> <p>HIQA provided an update on the second phase of HIQA survey of providers implementation progress noting that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HIQA confirmed that the survey will issue as required but noted that feedback is needed regarding the thematic nature of some of the recommendations. <p>The Chair identified the need to cross reference the proposed questions for the 2nd phase against the recommendations with a view to referring it to the</p>

		<p>Reference Group for feedback.</p> <p>Action 7.1: HIQA to provide draft questions for the second phase of the provider survey to the DOH in first instance and then to IOT for consideration and referral to Reference Group.</p> <p>Action 7.2: HIQA to provide update on second phase of survey at next meeting.</p>
8.	HPSC Visiting Guidance	<p>The Chair noted the continued concern from the previous IOT meeting that the HPSC Visiting Guidance would be consistently observed and implemented.</p> <p>The Chair confirmed that engagements took place with the HSE regarding assurances that the guidance was still appropriate given the current epidemiological situation, noting the vaccine rollout and the new UK variant of COVID -19.</p> <p>Following on from the engagements it was decided that the guidance was robust, however it was confirmed that an important note was added regarding local decision making with particular focus on risk assessment.</p> <p>DoH confirmed that Minister Butler met with SAGE Advocacy on the 12th January in follow up to the engagements with the HSE on the visiting guidance. It was noted that the meeting with SAGE was productive and the Minister conveyed that she did not wish to see a return to visits on either compassionate grounds or end of life being curtailed. DoH also confirmed that the Minister had issued a public communication in light of the vaccine rollout to highlight the needed balance for staff to focus on the rollout while being cognisant of the need for visits for compassionate grounds and end of life care.</p>
9.	AOB	<p>The Chair confirmed that the Flu Vaccine update presented at the last IOT has been circulated to the group.</p> <p>The HSE confirmed that over 70% of over 65s have had the flu vaccine. It is expected that will increase to approximately 73%. There has been a large increase in the uptake of the vaccine from under 65s with underlying medical issues.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) has an online recruitment event on the 28th January and that this might present an opportunity for the sector.</p> <p>The Chair acknowledged the work to date of the IOT in progressing the recommendations and confirmed the IOT meetings will now be taking place every 3 weeks.</p> <p>Action 9.1: Secretariat to circulate dates for future IOT meetings in 2021.</p>