

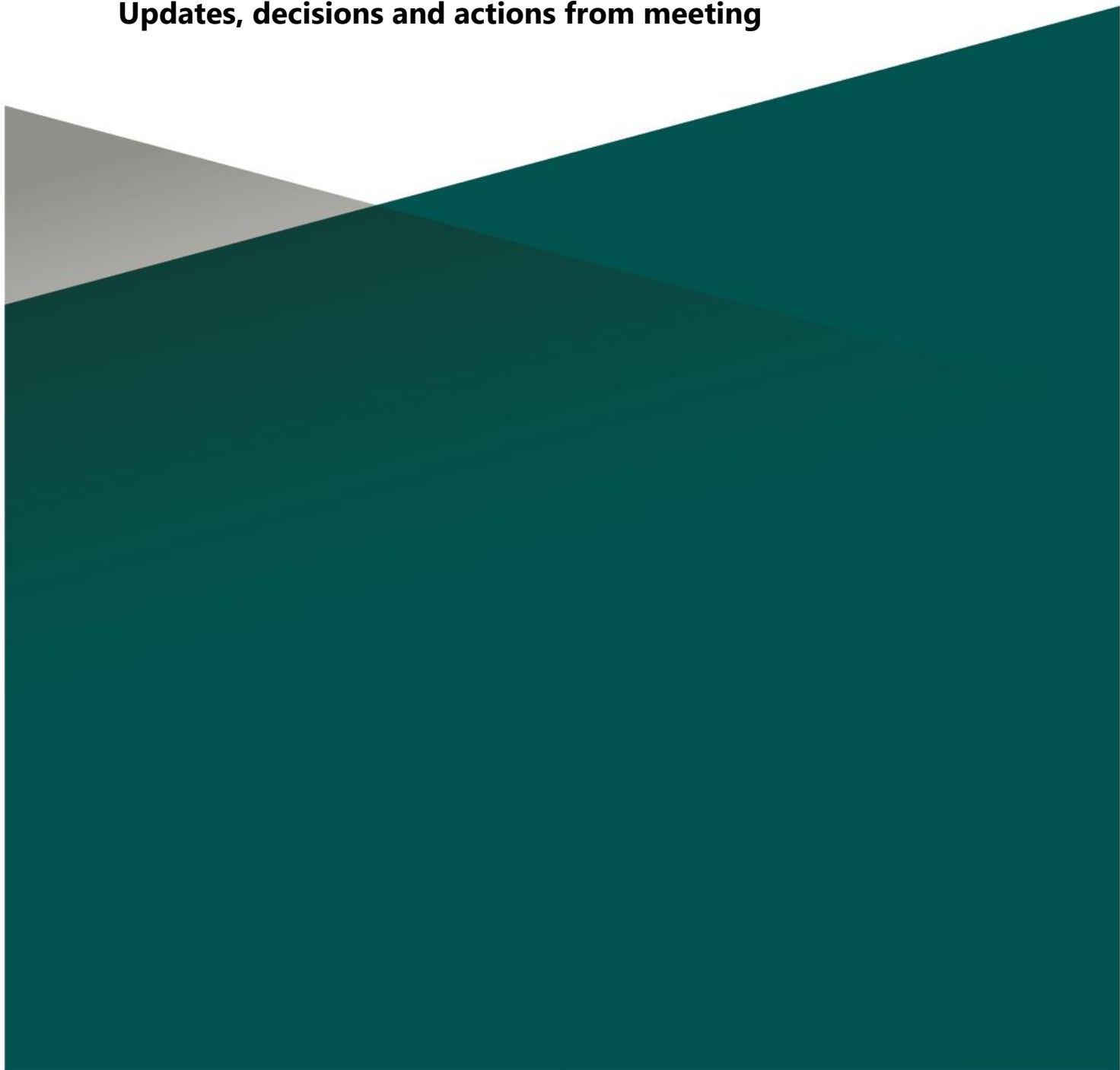


Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

22 February 2021 Meeting

Updates, decisions and actions from meeting



High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

Monday 22 February 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	<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	Elizabeth Headon, Programme Communications
Rachel Kenna, Chief Nursing Officer, DOH	Dr Lucy Jessop, SRO WS2, Director, NIO, HSE
Barry Lowry, Chief Information Officer, OGCI	Paul Flanagan, SRO WS3
Derek McCormack, Expert on Cold Chain Logistics	David Walsh, SRO WS4
Dermot Mulligan, Assistant Secretary, Innovation and Investment Division, DETE	Dr John Cuddihy, SRO WS5
Lorraine Nolan, Chief Executive, HPRA	Fran Thompson, SRO WS6
Dr Nuala O'Connor, ICGP	David Leach, SRO WS7
Dalton Philips, Chief Executive Officer, DAA	Andrew Byrne, Immunisation and Infectious Diseases Policy Unit, DOH
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
Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive Officer, IDA	<i>iv. Programme support</i>
Derek Tierney, Programme Director	Yvonne Mowlds (PWC), Programme Office
Additional attendees in support	Michael McDaid (PWC), Programme Office
<i>i. Task Force Secretariat</i>	Keiran Barbalich (PWC), Programme Office
Kate Waterhouse, Task Force Secretariat	

2. Updates, decisions and approvals by Task Force

At the meeting, the Task Force:

- Expressed sincere condolences to the CMO, Dr. Tony Holohan, on the recent passing of his wife, Emer. RIP
- Noted that increasing supply is driving the ramp-up of the vaccination programme, that there has been some increased certainty on supply, that work on the new vaccination centres is progressing well, with vaccinations in the Helix on Saturday a positive indicator of what lies ahead, and that the next phase of the programme will be informed by tomorrow's Cabinet decision on the Allocation Strategy: a Memo has been submitted to Government following NIAC engagement with the Department of Health, the Minister for Health and the Deputy CMO.
- Reviewed an update on open actions, noting completion of the action on reviewing the mRNA distribution model to GPs, and discussed ongoing progress on remaining actions, including: work on communications approach in light of consent behaviours (new TV ad live today with subtitles and sign; work continuing on wide range of translations/accessible versions of information leaflets; work ongoing with representative groups on communications for hard-to-reach groups); widening the legal basis for the vaccinator role (regulations expected to be ready later this week); HSE confirmation of workforce/support requirements (positive engagement ongoing; vaccinator recruitment successfully started); HSE paper on clinical governance for vaccination centres (prepared, ready for distribution to WG).
- Discussed workforce matters, noting that details on the recent workshop would be discussed following Cabinet's expected decision tomorrow and subsequent adjustments to the programme, and ongoing vaccinator recruitment, including timelines, vetting, and options for part-time/sessional work.
- Heard a communications update, which included a busy week for the public information campaign: a new TV ad live, ca. 1,500 calls to HSE live and increased traffic to HSE webpages and gov.ie, and a health correspondent technical briefing. There were also updates on research (keenness to receive vaccine remains high), news events (commencement of over-85s vaccinations; announcement of vaccine centres and Taoiseach's visit; HSE vaccinator recruitment; GP hub at the Helix; update on vaccine impact from Israel and vaccine equity); political interaction and upcoming plans, including new TV ad and Vaccine Allocation Strategy update. It was agreed that there will be a single anchor point for vaccination figures going forward.
- Heard an update on the vaccination programme for w/e 21 Feb, which saw 340,704 doses administered to 19 Feb, launch of GP rollout for ≥85 years; GP vaccinations in the Helix on 20 Feb; launch of vaccinator recruitment campaign; and announcement of 37 vaccination centres, creating sufficient capacity for forecast supply.
- Discussed upcoming planned activity for w/c 22.2.21, which anticipates administration of at least 109,900 doses; finalisation of scale-up plan for GPs in

March/April; and adaptation of workforce scale-up guided by expected Cabinet decision on Allocation Strategy and vaccine guidance from Deputy CMO, for which intense engagement and time to work through implications will be required.

- Reviewed a programme status report for the ramp-up phase (Feb/Mar), noting the ongoing risks, including to supply albeit with some additional clarity received, with a new key challenge on ensuring minimisation of vaccine waste at point of use: it was noted that reports show very minimal wastage to date and that very clear guidance has been issued to vaccinators on use of 'spare' doses to avoid waste.
- Noted that work continues to progress on all workstreams, including ongoing engagement with manufacturers and ongoing work to ensure sufficient fleet and workforce for vaccination distribution, and it was agreed that the HPRA would provide a member of staff to assist WS2 for a short period (WS2); ongoing work on regulations for widening the list of vaccinator professions and on defining cohort sizes/sub-prioritising cohorts (WS3); ongoing rollout to cohorts 1-3, consideration of role of pharmacists and readying of new vaccination centres (WS4); ongoing discussion of minimum data required for feed-in to reports and engagement on IT integration (WS5); ongoing work on reconfiguring GP system (positive feedback received), progressing citizen and HCW portals, and preparation for pharmacy integration, with additional work completed on certification (WS6); and a focus on communications implications of tomorrow's government deliberations (WS7).
- Heard an update on Q1/Q2 vaccine supply and forecast. Janssen's EMA authorisation application was noted, with more on this and other potential applications anticipated, as well as further data on storage and vaccine doses.
- Noted possible implications of expected government decision on the Allocation Strategy, which will require adjustment of the roll-out programme and create additional operational complexity, and agreed that members will be briefed once the outcome of deliberations is known. It was noted that a decision by the CMO on vaccine types and intervals will be finalised shortly, and will feed into any changes.
- Discussed near-term issues (<3 weeks); in addition to the Allocation Strategy, these include confirmation of pharmacists' role in the programme; confirmation of cohort population sizes; and advice on the use of AZ for ages 65-69. It was noted that work on a vaccination model for cohort 3 immobile patients has been completed and will be discussed at the relevant Working Group later this week.
- Discussed medium-term issues (3-6 weeks): vaccination incentive, including guidance for those who have been vaccinated; NIAC advice and the focus on prevention of severe disease, the effectiveness of all available vaccines and ensuring public confidence; and dose intervals. It was agreed that medium-term allocation sequencing policy (cohorts 6-9) will be discussed next week and that Dr Ronan Glynn will lead a discussion on virus variants and their impact on the strategy in the coming weeks.

- Heard an update on the indicative operational scorecard, noting that buffer stock will be built up this week to safeguard against any supply disruptions.
- Noted, in summary, the importance of tomorrow's Cabinet decision on the Allocation Strategy and of NIAC/CMO guidance on vaccines, the steep rise in vaccine supply expected in Q2, and the time required to operationalise changes to match supply.
- Heard some comments by Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, who noted how well the programme is progressing, the importance of the significant ramp-up ahead, the success of the Helix GP hub and vaccine delivery to a number of islands, the usefulness of the Memo to Government with NIAC's advice, and the need to keep vaccine intervals under review.
- Agreed that an additional meeting may be needed this week following Cabinet deliberations tomorrow. A meeting will take place on Monday, 22 February at 2pm.

New actions agreed by Task Force – 22 February

#	Action	Owner
1	Finalise policy on vaccine waste minimisation	Sean Bresnan, Dr Lucy Jessop
2	HPRA to engage with WS2 to support ramp-up considerations	Lorraine Nolan, Sean Bresnan, Dr Lucy Jessop