



Mr. Stephen Donnelly TD,
Minister for Health,
Department of Health,
Miesian Plaza,
50-58 Lower Baggot Street,
Dublin 2.

17th June 2021

Via email to Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

I write further to today's meeting of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE). The NPHE reviewed the latest epidemiological data, and the following key points were noted.

Please note the reported epidemiology of COVID-19 as relates to COVID-19 cases, associated deaths, and outbreaks is normally based on notifications to the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system. The cyber-attack on the HSE on 14th May 2021 has prevented the routine notification of these data to CIDR. As an interim measure, epidemiological case data are based on the information captured by the HSE COVID Care Tracker. Please note that these data do not represent notified cases and have not undergone the data validation procedures undertaken through CIDR. As soon as all COVID-19 surveillance systems are restored, COVID-19 cases, associated mortality, and outbreak data will be validated and updated for the relevant period.

- A total of 2,317 cases have been reported in the 7 days to 16th June 2021, which is a 12% decrease from the last NPHE meeting on 26th May when 2,630 cases were notified in the 7 days to 25th May 2021.
- As of 16th June, the 14-day incidence rate per 100,000 population has decreased to 101; this compares with 128 at the last NPHE meeting on 26th May.
- Nationally, the 7-day incidence/100,000 population as a proportion of 14-day incidence/100,000 population is 47%, demonstrating that there have been fewer cases in the last 7 days compared with the preceding 7 days.
- The 5-day rolling average of daily cases was 312 on 16th June, which is a 26% decrease from that of 25th May (419).
- Of cases notified in the past 14 days, 84% have occurred in people under 45 years of age; and 2% were aged 65 years and older. The median age for cases notified in the same period is 25 years.
- The incidence in those aged 65 years and older remains very low, and the incidence in those aged 50-64 years is now decreasing as vaccination takes effect in these cohorts. Incidence in children of school-going age has also decreased markedly since the beginning of June. Incidence in those aged 19-24 years is high, three times that of those aged 25-34 years.
- The decrease in the median age of cases, and the compression of the age distribution, with the 97.5th centile falling from almost 90 years of age to below 65 years of age is due to the significant impact in vaccinated age groups.
- Of the 4,828 cases reported in the last 14 days, 2.8% (135) were healthcare workers.
- Over the 7-day period 9th – 15th June, there have been approximately 87,061 laboratory tests completed (this excludes testing through acutes pathway). This compares with 104,491 laboratory tests in the 7-day period (18th – 24th May) prior to the last NPHE meeting. The positivity rate for tests completed in community and private settings was 2.7%.
- From 9th – 15th June, there were 60,405 community test referrals. This total has decreased by 8.2% compared to the previous week ending 8th June (65,803). From 7th – 13th June, the group with the largest

number of test referrals was the 21-30 years age group, which made up 20.2% of all community test referrals. The detected rate for the 21-30 age group was c.6.7%.

- According to the latest Contact Management Programme (CMP) report, the mean number of close contacts per case (including cases with zero close contacts) increased from 2.6 for the week ending 6th June to 2.8 for the week ending 13th June.
- There were 54 confirmed COVID-19 cases in hospital this morning, compared with 99 on 26th May. There have been 3 newly confirmed cases in hospital in the 24 hours preceding this morning.
- There are currently 18 confirmed cases in critical care, compared with 41 on 26th May. There were no admissions in the previous 24 hours.
- Recent COVID-19 GP Community Tracker (GP Buddy/TCD/ICGP) data indicate a broadly stable trend in terms of the average number of patients contacting respondent GPs that were deemed to be clinically likely to have COVID-19.
- In total, 180 cases of Delta (B.1.617.2), 72 cases of Beta (B.1.351) and 29 cases of Gamma (P.1) have been confirmed through whole genome sequencing in Ireland to date.
- Other cases of variants of note/under investigation that have been confirmed in Ireland to date: 140 Kappa (B.1.617.1), 54 Eta (B.1.525), 15 Zeta (P.2), 11 Iota (B.1.526), 7 Epsilon (B.1.429), 181 B.1.1.318, and 2 B.1.1.7 with E484K mutation.

Outbreaks and associated cases are based on those provisionally reported up to midnight on 12th June 2021 (week 23 refers to 6th – 12th June 2021). Due to the cyber-attack on system networks, data are limited to an aggregate summary of outbreaks reported to HPSC by the regional departments of public health.

Healthcare setting outbreaks:

- There was 1 new nursing home outbreak and 1 new acute hospital outbreak reported in week 23 of 2021, while there were no new community hospital/long-stay units outbreaks reported.
- There were no new outbreaks reported in residential settings in week 23.

Vulnerable Groups/ Key Populations outbreaks:

- There were 6 new outbreaks reported in vulnerable groups/key populations in week 23:
 - There were 4 new outbreaks reported in the Irish Traveller Community.
 - There were 2 new outbreaks reported associated with third level students/settings.

Outbreaks associated with school children and childcare facilities:

- There were 8 outbreaks newly reported in childcare facilities in week 23.
- There were 13 outbreaks newly reported associated with school children (+/- staff) in week 23.

Workplace outbreaks:

- There were 19 workplace outbreaks reported in week 23 across a variety of settings.
- In total, 1 outbreak was reported in a construction setting, 4 were related to food production settings, and 14 outbreaks were reported in other workplace settings and did not have a setting defined.

Disease incidence has been declining since the beginning of June. Incidence in those aged 65 years and older remains very low, while the incidence in those aged 50-64 years is now reducing as vaccination takes effect in these age cohorts. Incidence in children of school-going age has also decreased markedly since the beginning of June. However, incidence in those aged 19-24 years is high, three times that of those aged 25-34 years. Test positivity rates in public health laboratories have remained stable at less than 4% since early April. Key measures of population mobility have continued to increase over recent weeks. Growth rate is at -3% per day (with high levels of uncertainty, confidence interval -1% to -6%), while the latest estimate of the reproduction number (R) is less than 1.

In summary, the current epidemiological situation in Ireland continues to give rise to a broadly positive outlook. However, it is important to acknowledge that some uncertainty still remains. In this regard, there is a need for caution over the coming weeks and months due to the threat posed by variants, in particular as a large proportion of the adult population has yet to be fully protected through vaccination.

For your information, the NPHET agreed to hold its next meeting on 1st July (date provisional). This meeting will focus primarily on our epidemiological readiness to progress the planned further easing of public health measures in July. It will also review and consider current advice in a number of areas, including social distancing and mask wearing requirements, and advice in relation to return to workplaces.

The NPHET, of course, remains available to provide any further advice and recommendations that may be of assistance to you and Government in relation to ongoing decision-making processes in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, I would be happy to discuss further, should you wish.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Holohan', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Tony Holohan
Chief Medical Officer
Chair of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team

cc. Ms Elizabeth Canavan, Department of the Taoiseach and Chair of the Senior Officials Group for COVID-19