



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

26 April 2021 Meeting

Updates, decisions and actions from meeting

High Level Task Force on COVID-19 Vaccination

Monday 26 April 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
Liz Canavan, Chair, SOG on COVID-19	Sean Bresnan, National Director of Procurement, HSE
Fergal Goodman, Assistant Secretary, Health Protection Division, DOH	Dr Lorraine Doherty, Clinical Director Health Protection, HSE
Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer, HSE	Dr Ronan Glynn, Deputy CMO, DOH
Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical 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, OGCIO	Mark Brennock, National Director of Communications, HSE
Derek McCormack, Expert on Cold Chain Logistics	Eileen Hearne, Government Information Service
Dermot Mulligan, Assistant Secretary, Innovation and Investment Division, DETE	Damien McCallion, National Director, HSE
Dr Nuala O'Connor, ICGP	Deirdre McNamara, General Manager, Quality & Patient Safety, Acute Hospitals Division, HSE
Lorraine Nolan, Chief Executive, HPRA	Minister Stephen Donnelly TD, Minister for Health
Paul Quinn, Government CPO and CEO, OGP	Anna Conlon, Special Advisor
Paul Reid, Chief Executive Officer, HSE	Deirdre Gillane, Special Advisor
Derek Tierney, Programme Director	Brian Murphy, Special Advisor
B. Additional attendees in support	Keiran Barbalich (PWC), Programme Office
Dr Lucy Jessop, SRO WS2, Director, NIO	Yvonne Mowlds (PWC), Programme Office
David Walsh, SRO WS4	Fiona Smith (PWC), Programme Office
Dr John Cuddihy, SRO WS5	
Fran Thompson, SRO WS6	

Apologies: Prof Karina Butler, Chair, NIAC; Dalton Philips, Chief Executive Officer, DAA; Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive Officer, IDA

2. Updates, decisions and approvals by Task Force

At the meeting, the Task Force:

- Noted that this was the biggest week to date for the vaccination programme and that 25% of the adult population has received a first dose; supply continues to be the biggest issue with the biggest supply to date expected this week; and that NIAC recommendations and a Government announcement are awaited this week.
- Reviewed open actions and near-term issues, including completion of a workforce reporting template; finalisation of the approach to vaccinating minority communities and vulnerable groups and confirmation of cohort population sizes; and progress in relation to the role of pharmacists in the adjusted vaccination programme for which the outcome of NIAC considerations will also be important.
- Heard a communications update: the Public Information Campaigns include a national and local radio and digital campaign focusing on the easing of restrictions, including high-level messaging on the vaccination programme; registration of those aged 65-69 and those aged 60-64; ongoing daily publication of vaccine stats and high traffic to vaccine-related content on the HSE website and gov.ie; an updated HSE TV campaign is to commence soon, while the outcome of NIAC considerations and a Cabinet decision on the easing of restrictions are expected this week, with post-Cabinet statements continuing as well as daily updates. News coverage has included vaccinations for those that are housebound, while research is continuing to show steady vaccine uptake attitudes.
- Heard a programme update: 1,385,753 vaccines had been administered to 24 April; this was the biggest week for the vaccination programme to date, with over 175,000 vaccinations administered, ca. 25% of the adult population having received Dose 1 and ca. 10% of adults being fully vaccinated; there were daily highs on three days last week, with over 41K vaccines administered on 23 April; administration of vaccines is ongoing across cohorts 1-7, with strong registration for cohort 5; dose 1 for fHCWs is substantially complete with vaccine administration ongoing for new staff; dose 1 is substantially complete for the over-70s also, with a small number for completion this week; completion of dose 1 for cohort 4 is expected by late May; and there is ongoing monitoring of the numbers registering vis-à-vis expected cohort size, as well as monitoring of uptake. The HPRA has published its sixth safety update, with a positive overall safety profile; the next update is expected on 22 May.
- Reviewed current issues, including expected NIAC recommendations on AZ and Janssen, and on dose interval, which will form the focus of operational programme adjustments; supply volatility in Q2 and supply certainty for Q3/Q4.
- Discussed planned activity for w/c 26 April, including administration of 160-180K vaccines and operationalisation of expected NIAC recommendations. Reviewed a programme status report, noting that supply volatility remains a key risk with a compounding impact, and that work remains ongoing across all workstreams: focus on impact and scenario analysis (WS1); vaccine delivery schedules and GP supply

(WS2); feedback from EU Vaccine Steering Board and Janssen delivery schedules (WS3); focus on stabilisation of the programme (WS4); extension of COVAX, registration of 60-69 year-olds, scheduling of VCs, planned deployment of new scheduling software, and ongoing integration of GP systems (WS6).

- Heard an update on Integrated Operational Planning, which included the Q2 adjusted plan for cohorts 1-7, which may change again depending on any NIAC recommendations; a VC overview, with 26 operational since 22 April and four to open this week with most of the remainder to open in early May; and a workforce update, with ongoing confidence in having sufficient resources and a sufficient pipeline of resources to meet demand. There was a discussion on standby lists for VCs, the estimated maximum capacity of VCs and the ongoing significant role of GPs.
- Heard a very positive update from WS5 on the impact of the vaccination programme to date, comparing cases and deaths throughout January to those in recent weeks:

	January (weeks 1-4 of prog)	Last 4 weeks (weeks 12-15 of prog)
Deaths (over-85s)	75	7
Nursing home cases	251 outbreaks 2,769 cases (non-HCW)	4 outbreaks 0 cases
Nursing home deaths	530 linked to outbreaks	9
fHCW cases	10,782 (11.4% of all cases)	362 (2.8% of all cases)

- Discussed vaccine supply and forecast, with an estimated 4.5m vaccines expected in Q2; 225,200 AZ doses expected in April but with well over half due to arrive on the last day of the month; and a significant reduction in the expected supply of Janssen in April due to regulatory issues. The TF considered supply for the next 10 weeks, noting very little regularity across weeks in the volumes expected, and many figures representing rough estimates. The need to maintain programme efficiency and maximise disease control, as well as to maximise VC efficiency, was discussed and remains under ongoing review by the HSE. Q3/Q4 supply was also reviewed, and it was noted that all deliveries in this time-frame are unconfirmed.
- Discussed medium-terms issues, including vaccine certificates – it is expected that a policy paper on certificates will be advanced for Government consideration shortly – and a presentation on variants, noting current variants of concern, variants of interest and variants under investigation; the prevalence of variants of concern in Ireland; evidence in relation to variants and vaccines; and ongoing monitoring of variants. It was agreed that further updates will be given as information becomes available.
- Reviewed the operational performance scorecard and a graph illustrating the impact of the programme in vaccinated cohorts (presentation on impact outlined above).

- Noted, in summary, that NIAC guidance on AZ, Janssen and Pfizer is awaited; Q3/Q4 supply uncertainty and the 10-week lookahead; and the update on vaccination centres and workforce.
- Agreed that the next meeting of the HLTF will not take place on the Bank Holiday Monday (3 May); a provisional date of 4 May is to be confirmed.

New actions agreed by Task Force – 26 April

#	Action	Owner
1	HSE to provide feedback from VCs on length of time taken per vaccination and implication for throughput in resource model.	Damien McCallion, David Walsh
2	WS5 to provide weekly reports on vaccine uptake and impact for circulation to HLTF.	Dr. John Cuddihy