



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

27<sup>th</sup> July 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 it 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 8,791 cases have been reported in the 7 days to 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021 (cases to midnight 25<sup>th</sup> July), which is a 25% increase from last week when 7,059 cases were notified in the 7 days to 19<sup>th</sup> July, and a 267% increase from the last NPHE meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> June when 2,396 cases were reported in the 7 days to 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021.
- As of 26<sup>th</sup> July, the 14-day incidence rate per 100,000 population has increased to 333; this compares with 228 a week ago and 96 on 27<sup>th</sup> June.
- Nationally, the 7-day incidence/100,000 population as a proportion of 14-day incidence/100,000 population is 55%, demonstrating that there have been more cases in the last 7 days compared with the preceding 7 days.
- The 5-day rolling average of daily cases is 1,271 as of 26<sup>th</sup> July, which is an 11% increase from that of a week ago (1142) and a 261% increase from that of 27<sup>th</sup> June (352).
- Of cases notified in the past 14 days, 87% have occurred in people under 45 years of age; and 3% were aged 65 years and older. The median age for cases notified in the same period is 23 years. Disease incidence remains highest in the 19-24-year-old age group.
- Of the 15,850 cases reported in the last 14 days, 3% (409) were healthcare workers and 5% (837) were determined to be travel related.



- Data on COVID-19 cases is currently sourced from an extract from the Covid Care Tracker (CCT). The CCT includes self-reported data on vaccine status (if a person reports having received a vaccine and if so, how many doses). This data is self-reported by cases during their contact tracing call, does not include timing of doses and is not verified. Caution is therefore required in interpretation of this data. Of the 8,791 cases reported in the last 7 days: 13% reported having received two doses of vaccine; 17% reported having received one dose of vaccine; 54% reported having not received any vaccine; and the vaccine status was unknown for 16%. To note, there has been a significant impact on COVID-19 surveillance systems due to the cyber-attack on the HSE in May 2021. A full and accurate assessment of vaccination status in cases will be possible when the relevant surveillance systems have been restored and integrated with each other.
- Over the 7-day period 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July, there have been approximately 136,662 laboratory tests completed (data from acute hospital labs is incomplete). This compares with 132,560 laboratory tests in the previous 7-day period (12<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> July). The positivity rate for the latest 7-day period was 6.6%.
- From the 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July, there were c.108,912 community referrals. This total has increased by 2% compared to the same time period the previous week. From 19<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> July, the group with the largest number of referrals was the 21-30 years age group, making up 23.5% of all referrals. The detected rate for the 21-30 years age group was 14%.
- According to the Contact Management Programme (CMP), from 19<sup>th</sup> July to 25<sup>th</sup> July, the total number of close contacts was 24,995, an increase of 24% compared with 20,462 the previous week. The average number of cases managed per day increased from 1,052 to 1,303.
- According to the HSE, from 19<sup>th</sup>– 25<sup>th</sup> July, of those tested with close contacts (i.e. excluding those with zero close contacts), the average number of close contacts per case was 3.7.
- There were 142 confirmed COVID-19 cases in hospital this morning, compared with 101 on 19<sup>th</sup> July. There have been 29 newly confirmed cases in hospital in the 24 hours preceding this morning.
- There are currently 27 confirmed cases in critical care, compared with 21 on 20<sup>th</sup> July. There were 5 new admissions in the previous 24 hours.
- Of the 134 COVID-19 patients admitted to ICU between 25<sup>th</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2021, vaccination status was known for 131. Of those, 20 had received one dose of vaccine and 6 had received two doses of vaccine. Of the 6 patients who received two doses of vaccine prior to ICU admission, one person had a date of COVID-19 diagnosis more than 14 days after receiving the second dose of vaccine.
- As of 21<sup>st</sup> July, a total of 5,026 COVID-19 related deaths have been reported to the HPSC.
- In total, 1,833 cases of Delta (B.1.617.2), 74 cases of Beta (B.1.351) and 30 cases of Gamma (P.1) have been confirmed in Ireland through whole genome sequencing.
- Other cases of variants of note/under investigation that have been confirmed in Ireland: 208 Kappa (B.1.617.1), 74 Eta (B.1.525), 15 Zeta (P.2), 11 Iota (B.1.526), 7 Epsilon (B.1.429), 233 B.1.1.318, and 2 A.27.
- Taqpath S-gene PCR target results by specimen week show that the prevalence of S-gene positivity (proxy for Delta) has increased from 90.3% in week 28 to 93.1% in week 29 (note week 29 refers to partial week to 20<sup>th</sup> July).



Outbreaks and associated cases are based on those reported up to midnight on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Week 29 refers to 18<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021. Due to the cyber-attack on system networks, data are limited to an aggregate summary of outbreaks reported weekly to HPSC.

Healthcare setting outbreaks:

- There were no new nursing home or community hospital/long-stay unit outbreaks reported in week 29.
- There were 4 new acute hospital outbreaks with 10 confirmed linked cases reported in week 29 of 2021.
- There were no new outbreaks reported in residential institution settings in week 29

Vulnerable Groups/ Key Populations outbreaks:

- There was 1 new outbreak reported involving members of the Irish Traveller community in week 29 with 12 linked cases.
- There was 1 new outbreak in a Direct Provision Centre with 2 linked cases.

Outbreaks associated with school children and childcare facilities:

- There were 11 outbreaks newly reported in childcare facilities in week 29.

Workplace outbreaks:

- There were 35 workplace outbreaks reported in week 29 across a variety of settings. Of these, 5 were in the construction sector, 4 were related to food production and processing settings, 23 were in “other” workplace types with 3 additional workplaces with unspecified type.

Outbreaks associated with hospitality settings:

- There were 11 outbreaks reported related to hotels/guesthouses compared to 8 in week 29.
- There were 7 outbreaks associated with restaurant/café settings reported in week 29 (4 in week 28) and 4 associated with a public house (1 in week 28).

Other Locations:

- The remaining 16 outbreaks in week 29 were across a number of other locations:
  - 6 related to social gatherings;
  - 7 associated with sporting activity/fitness;
  - 3 related to other recreational activities and settings.

Incidence is currently high with a very uncertain pattern. The national 14-day incidence rate has increased from 228 per 100,000 population on 20<sup>th</sup> July to 333 per 100,000 population as of 26<sup>th</sup> July, while the 5-day moving average of daily cases has increased from 1,142 to 1,271 cases per day over the same time period. The incidence in those aged 16-18 and 19-24 years old is very high. Although there has been some suggestion that disease incidence in these age groups has not increased further in recent days, this will continue to be closely monitored.



Test referrals are at high levels and the 7-day average national test positivity rate has increased and is particularly elevated in those aged 19-24 and 13-18 years old. The absolute number of cases related to travel continues to be high, representing 5% (837) of all cases reported over the two-week period to 26<sup>th</sup> July.

Growth rate of new cases remains high and uncertain and is currently estimated at between 4% and 6% per day. Reproduction number is estimated at 1.2-1.4 with a doubling time of 10-35 days. The total number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in hospital is increasing, while the 7-day average of daily COVID-19 admissions to ICU is also increasing.

In summary, the epidemiological situation in Ireland indicates increasing disease incidence and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in hospital. The average number of daily COVID-19 admissions to ICU continues to increase. There continues to be relatively low mortality related to COVID-19. This is set against a background of the dominance of Delta in Ireland, a variant which is significantly more transmissible and less susceptible to vaccines than previous variants. This poses a very substantial threat, particularly to those who are not yet fully protected through vaccination.

The NPHET held an initial discussion on future planning for the next phase of the pandemic response with a view to being in a position to provide advice to you on this matter following its meeting planned for Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> August. The NPHET noted that the public's engagement with the Vaccination Programme to date is impacting positively on the risk profile of the disease. Accordingly, it is timely to give detailed consideration to planning for a new phase within the management of the pandemic, while acknowledging the need for continued high levels of vaccine uptake and the continuing risk posed by variants of concern.

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,

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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