



**National Public Health Emergency Team – COVID-19
Meeting Note**

Date and Time	18 th February 2020 (Meeting 5)
Location	Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, Dublin 2
Chair	Dr Tony Holohan, CMO
Members in Attendance	Dr Cillian de Gascun, Laboratory Director, NVRL and Expert Advisory Group Chair Dr John Cuddihy, Acting Director, HSE HPSC Ms Tom McGuinness, Asst. National Director, Office of Emergency Planning, HSE Mr David Leach, Communications, HSE Dr Jeanette McCallion, Medical Assessor, HPRA Mr Sean Egan, Head of Healthcare Regulation, HIQA (via teleconference) Dr Ronan Glynn, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH Dr Colette Bonner, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH Mr Eddie O'Reilly, Communicable Diseases Policy Unit, DOH Ms Deirdre Watters, Communications Unit, DOH Dr Vida Hamilton, National Clinical Advisor and Group Lead, Acute Hospitals, HSE
Apologies	Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer (CCO), HSE Dr Kevin Kelleher, Asst. National Director, Public Health, HSE Mr Paul Connors, Communications, HSE
In Attendance	Ms Aoife Gillivan, Communications Unit, DOH
Secretariat	Ms Rosarie Lynch and Ms Sarah Treleaven, Patient Safety Surveillance Unit, NPSO, DOH

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed the group and introductions were made.

2. Conflicts of Interests Declarations

Verbal pause and no declarations made.

3. Note of Previous Meeting

The note of the previous meeting was circulated to members via email prior to Meeting 5 (on 17th February 2020). These were taken as agreed and will be published on the website.

4. Matters Arising

DOH advised the group that Government was being updated in COVID-19 via a Memo for Government for the Cabinet meeting scheduled for later this evening (18th February 2020).

DOH advised of a new item to the agenda. Update was provided on the development of a communications protocol between DFAT, HPSC and DOH. DOH have liaised with HPSC on this matter, the protocol is drafted and will be discussed with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Action: DOH to share protocol on port health and public health advice with DFAT.

HSE updated the group on their engagements regarding the procurement of translation services.



5. Situational Report and Governance

The HSE's COVID-19 Report to NPHE (No. 2) was tabled. The format of which included consideration of the feedback provided last week. The Chair thanked the HSE for providing this document to the NPHE and the work undertaken in refining the format. Further observations on the format of this report from DOH can be sent to HSE.

Action: It was agreed that this report would form the basis of the updates provided at each NPHE meeting.

It was noted that an HSE COVID-19 Governance paper is due to be tabled at next week's NPHE meeting (25th February 2020) and will include considerations of the feedback submitted last week (following meeting 4).

Action: HSE to further consider format of the weekly COVID-19 Report to NPHE and revert.

6. Updates on current situation (for information and discussion)

a. Current Assessment / Epidemiology

As above, the HSE's COVID-19 Report to NPHE (No. 2) was tabled. The HSE presented the preparedness update contained within. Discussions included acute and community capacity, accommodation options, isolation requirements and modelling approach to inform further planning. Communications and procurement updates were also provided.

Action: HSE to consider the current protocols and pathways for the isolation of suspected cases of COVID-19, including settings for isolation and testing, and revert to NPHE with a paper on the matter next week (25th February 2020).

The HPSC presented the current epidemiological figures.

It was noted that the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) are currently undertaking an update of their risk assessment and continue to monitor the evolving situation so as to provide scientific and case definition advice to member states. It was noted that the ECDC's scientific advisory council was meeting concurrently with the NPHE meeting.

It was noted that DOH continues to engage with counterparts in London and Belfast.

b. Preparedness

HSE/HPSC

The HSE noted that they have established a group that will focus on preparedness assumptions, modelling and forecasting short- and medium-term planning needs. Given that the understanding of COVID-19 is evolving, it was recognised that these assumption and planning forecasts need regular review. It was agreed that this modelling Group will function as a subgroup of, and report to, NPHE.

Action: HSE (HPSC) to prepare short 'forecasting' report for next week's NPHE, setting out likely developments and required actions within the HSE and across sectors within the next week, next month and next three months.



Action: Modelling subgroup to commence work on Monday 24th February. Agreed that this work would inform future iterations of the HPSC's weekly 'forecasting report' which will, in turn inform necessary actions with the HSE and across sectors

The matter of guidance for gatherings of large numbers of people was discussed.

Action: HPSC to consider WHO guidance for large gatherings and develop guidance for Irish settings.

DOH

DOH advised that an update would be provided as a standing item on the agenda.

DOH updated the group on the progress on the development of two statutory instruments (SIs) in the Infectious Diseases Act 1947 and Amendments. COVID-19 is currently notifiable under the 'novel category' but this updated SI will provide specificity.

It was noted that the Minister for Health attended the recent meeting of the Ministerial Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) on Thursday last, 13th February 2020.

HPRA

The HPRA updated the group and noted that work continues at national and European levels in relation to regulatory issues, supply of medicines and vaccination development.

NVRL

NVRL provided a brief update on testing over the previous week and their links with Northern Ireland.

c. Expert Advisory Group (EAG)

It was noted that the EAG met last week and was due to meet again tomorrow (19th February 2020). No questions were submitted to the EAG.

7. Interaction with Government Departments / Agencies

DOH updated the group on their interactions with the Department of Social Protection (DSP).

Action: DOH to share recent correspondence with the DSP to the HSE for their information.

The issue of business continuity planning guidance was discussed. It was noted that guidance prepared for pandemic influenza and international guidance may be informative. It was also noted that containment phase guidance for employers has been developed and is available on the HPSC's website.

Action: HPSC to examine the pandemic business continuity planning guidance document and ensure that it is technically correct from the perspective of Covid-19. This will then be shared with other Government Depts via the HTCG.

It was noted that the Health Threats Coordination Group (HTCG) had met last week and that a planned meeting of the Government Taskforce on Emergency Planning is scheduled for tomorrow (19th February 2020). HTCG has previously discussed the matter of accommodation of large numbers of asymptomatic suspected cases and will raise at to the Government Taskforce meeting.



8. Communications Planning

A Cross Government Coordination Communications Group has been established, chaired by DOH, and met for the first time this week. It was noted that all government departments have been requested to share any planned communications on COVID-19 with DOH Communications.

Action: Materials to be finalised by DOH Communications and HSE Communications for use by government departments and agencies. (This includes two posters: one for the public visiting government offices and one for government office staff.)

It was noted that RTE Primetime may air a segment on COVID-19 this coming Thursday (20th February 2020). Spokespersons will be made available as needed.

9. AOB

Consistency in nomenclature for COVID-19 was discussed. As the name change is recent, the HSE advised that it has decided to use both “COVID-19” and “Coronavirus” in their communications/reports to ensure that the public can recognise the subject of these documents when they are made available online.

10. Date of next meeting - Tuesday, 25th February 2020 at 3:00pm