



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

Date and Time	Tuesday 24 th March 2020 (Meeting 16b) at 8am
Location	Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, Dublin 2 via teleconference
Chair	Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer, DOH
Members via Teleconference	Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer (CCO), HSE Dr John Cuddihy, Acting Director, HSE HPSC Prof Philip Nolan, President, National University of Ireland, Maynooth Dr Kevin Kelleher, Asst. National Director, Public Health, HSE Dr Cillian de Gascun, Laboratory Director, NVRL and Expert Advisory Group Chair Mr David Walsh, National Director, Community Operations, HSE Mr Tom McGuinness, Asst. National Director, Office of Emergency Planning, HSE Mr David Leach, Communications, HSE Mr Phelim Quinn, Chief Executive Officer, HIQA Dr Alan Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH Dr Eibhlin Connolly, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH Dr Siobhan O’Sullivan, Chief Bioethics Officer, DOH Ms Tracey Conroy, Assistant Secretary, Acute Hospitals Division, DOH Mr Fergal Goodman, Assistant Secretary, Primary Care Division, DOH Mr Paul Bolger, Director, Resources Division, DOH Dr Breda Smyth, Public Health Specialist, HSE Dr Jeanette McCallion, Medical Assessor, HPRA Dr Máirín Ryan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Health Technology Assessment, HIQA
Members in Attendance	Dr Darina O’Flanagan, Special Advisor to the NPHET Dr Ronan Glynn, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH Dr Kathleen MacLellan, Assistant Secretary, Social Care Division, DOH Ms Deirdre Watters, Communications Unit, DOH Ms Marita Kinsella, National Patient Safety Office, DOH
In Attendance	Mr David Keating, Communicable Diseases Policy Unit, DOH Mr Colm O’Conaill, Policy and Strategy Division, DOH Ms Aoife Gillivan, Communications Unit, DOH
Secretariat	Ms Rosarie Lynch, Ms Sarah Treleavan, Ms Clodagh Murphy, Ms Sarah Murphy, Ms Pauline Dempsey, NPSO, DOH

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed the group and thanked all for joining the teleconference. As this was a follow on meeting from the previous evening’s NPHET meeting, the agenda as per items 2 to 4 inclusive below were discussed. The meeting was recommenced following the adjournment late last evening, Monday, 23rd March 2020.

2. Review of Existing Policy

The issue of testing was discussed last evening (23rd March 2020) by the group. The HSE had advised that the plan is to increase to approx. 16,000 tests per day over the next five weeks and that orders for consumables are being pursued. It was noted that Ireland’s level of testing to date is high in comparison with other jurisdictions.



NPHET noted that testing continues to form part of Ireland's core COVID-19 control strategy to in accordance with ECDC guidelines. The case definition would be changed to align with the latest WHO case definition and will apply prospectively from today's date. The HSE and the Department of Health will engage directly with the IGCP and the IMO in relation to communicating the above changes to their members. The HPSC will update the algorithms according to the new case definition.

3. Future Policy

The group discussed existing policy and public health measures and noted the support and positive engagement from the public to date for their introduction. It was agreed that geographical data was important to ascertain differences and clusters across regions and areas.

Having reviewed existing policy and public health measures in light of recent guidance from the ECDC on social distancing and following on from the discussion last evening (23rd March 2020), the NPHET recommends the augmentation of existing public health measures across a number of areas.

Action: The NPHET now recommends the augmentation of existing public health measures, in line with the latest ECDC guidance, with the following:

- All theatres, clubs, gyms/leisure centres, hairdressers, betting shops, marts, markets, casinos, bingo halls, libraries and other similar outlets are to close;
- All hotels to limit occupancy to essential non-social and non-tourist reasons;
- All non-essential retail outlets are to close to members of the public and all other retail outlets are to implement physical distancing;
- All cafes and restaurants are to limit supply to take-away food or delivery and implement physical distancing measures in respect of queuing;
- All sporting events are to be cancelled, including those behind closed doors;
- All playgrounds and holiday / caravan parks are to close;
- All places of worship are to restrict numbers entering at any one time to ensure adequate physical distancing;
- Significantly raise the amount of money available on cashless card transactions;
- All organised social indoor or outdoor events of any size are not to take place;
- Social distancing, in as far as is practicable, is to be ensured between the clients/patients in confined settings, such as:
 - long-term care facilities, either for the elderly or persons with special needs;
 - psychiatric institutions;
 - homeless shelters;
 - prisons;
- Measures applicable to public transport include:
 - cleaning schedules on public transport are to be improved;
 - people should not to use public transport unless it is absolutely necessary;
 - transport companies are to apply social distancing measures and limit the numbers permitted on public transport at any one time;
- Gardaí are to increase interventions where venues / outlets are not in compliance with, or where groups of people are not adhering to recommended social distancing measures;
- All household contacts of a suspect case (i.e. a person who is awaiting a test or test result) should restrict movements until the test is reported negative or for 14 days, whichever is shorter);



- **Individuals should work from home unless attendance at workplace it is absolutely essential;**
- **Social gatherings of individuals outdoors should be no more than four persons, unless all are from the same household;**
- **All non-essential indoor visits to other persons' homes should be avoided;**
- **All crowded places, including public amenities, should be avoided;**
- **All scheduled cruise ship travel to cease.**

The need to keep the public health measures, and timeframe for same, under review and the importance of continuing to plan forward should further measures be required was reiterated.

4. Timeframe for recommendations

A discussion was held on the recommended timeframe for the augmented public health measures. The NPHET agreed that these recommendations, along with existing measures (as implemented on 21st March 2020), should remain in place until 19th April 2020 and will be kept under review as to whether further measures are required.

5. AOB

The Chair of the Pandemic Ethics Advisory Group noted that amendments had been made to the *Ethical Framework for Decision - Making in a Pandemic* (discussed at the NPHET meeting of 16th March), following discussion at the Medical Leaders Forum meeting last Saturday on 21st March 2020. The final framework was approved by the NPHET and would now be made available.

Action: The *Ethical Framework for Decision-Making in a Pandemic* is approved by the NPHET.

The Irish Prison Service and An Garda Síochána are seeking NPHET approval for the implementation of new WHO interim guidance on how to deal with COVID-19 in prisons and other places of detention. It was agreed that this issue would be discussed at the next NPHET meeting.

Remaining agenda items would be considered at the next meeting of the NPHET which will now be brought forward from the scheduled date of Tuesday 31st March 2020 to the end of this week.

6. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 26th March at 10am via videoconference.