



**National Public Health Emergency Team – COVID-19  
Meeting Note of ad hoc teleconference**

<b>Date and Time</b>	Sunday, 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2020 (Meeting 6) at 8.30pm
<b>Location</b>	This meeting was held via teleconference
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Tony Holohan, Chief Medical Officer
<b>Members via teleconference</b>	Dr Cillian de Gascun, Laboratory Director, NVRL and Expert Advisory Group Chair Dr John Cuddihy, Acting Director, HSE HPSC Dr Kevin Kelleher, Asst. National Director, Public Health, HSE Mr Paul Connors, Communications, HSE Dr Ronan Glynn, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH Dr Colette Bonner, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH Ms Deirdre Watters, Communications Unit, DOH
<b>Apologies</b>	N/A
<b>In Attendance</b>	Ms Aoife Gillivan, Communications Unit, DOH
<b>Secretariat</b>	Ms Rosarie Lynch and Ms Sarah Treleaven, Patient Safety Surveillance Unit, NPSO, DOH

### **1. Welcome and agenda**

The Chair welcomed the group and thanked all for joining the teleconference. As this was an ad hoc teleconference, the group agreed that agenda as per items 2 to 7 inclusive below.

### **2. Review of the official data**

The HPSC presented a summary of the current epidemiological figures, including the recent increase in cases in some regions of Italy.

It was noted that the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) are undertaking an update of their risk assessment on an ongoing basis and continue to monitor the evolving situation so as to provide scientific and case definition advice to member states. The ECDC are monitoring the case definition on an ongoing basis to see if it needs to be updated according to the information on geographical region and / or symptoms.

ECDC published brief threat assessment on Italy today on their website. Index case not yet identified. The assessment report describes the measures in place there, including the PPE and IPC measures, and includes options for response. Other areas with increased spread include South Korea, Japan, Iran and Singapore. The number of locations where third generation transmission may have occurred is not clear from the data so far.

ECDC threat assessment has been revised and currently states “The risk of the occurrence of similar clusters, similar to the ones in Italy, associated with COVID-19 in other countries in the EU/EEA and the UK is currently considered to be moderate to high.”

### **3. Planning assumptions**

It was noted that planning assumptions are already an agenda item for discussion at the NPHET meeting on Tuesday, 25th February 2020. This should include planning across short, medium and long term horizons and looking at the Irish response should there be a similar scenario to Italy. The data from Italy will help with planning. Latest ECDC paper is also likely to be helpful in this regard.



Update due at the NPHEM meeting (25th February 2020) by HPSC on considerations for home testing and self isolation at home. Current model of care is hospital based. Incubation generally accepted to be 4 to 6 days with a range of 1 to 14 days.

Other areas to consider:

- How to deal with high levels of detection and diagnosis.
- The model of care required to deal with increased numbers of cases.
- Nature of the public health advice, how / if it needs to change and how to disseminate further.
- Travel advice and increased awareness for travellers.
- Prioritisation of tasks for both further work and immediate completion.
- Consequential impact of more potential cases, including the hospital system and testing capacity.
- Potential impact on the system of larger numbers of cases / clusters should they arise.

#### **4. Public health / travel advice**

Current advice is to ask returning travellers to contact the health services but not automatic self isolation. This is to be considered further at the NPHEM meeting on Tuesday, 25th February 2020.

**Action: Discuss advice on self isolation for people returning from affected areas at the NPHEM on Tuesday (25<sup>th</sup> February 2020). HSE / HPSC to work on considerations for approach to this between now and Tuesday to allow for this discussion at the NPHEM.**

There was also discussion on the dissemination of travel advice for those returning / entering the country from abroad.

**Action: Dissemination of public health advice for travellers arriving will be worked up by the NPHEM to see how best to target information for the airport / ports / points of entry passengers. Discussion to be had on Tuesday at NPHEM (25th February 2020).**

Also need to consider wider travel advice for those contemplating travel. ECDC risk assessment currently suggests good hand hygiene, respiratory practice, avoid contact with sick people and to follow the advice of the local authorities in the region visited. No specific statement to avoid travel. ECDC paper still outlines a containment phase, next phase is local transmission which is the direction currently seen for Italy and can involve cancellation of mass gatherings.

**Action: Mass gatherings discussion planned for NPHEM on Tuesday (25<sup>th</sup> February 2020) and should include considerations of large planned public events.**

#### **5. Review of agenda for Tuesday**

No additional items identified at this time.

**Action: If anyone on the call has an additional item forward by the end of the morning (Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020) for inclusion on the agenda.**

#### **6. Key immediate priorities for the week ahead**

Some pieces of work already in train, now need to be worked through with greater priority to inform preparedness planning, including containment, self isolation, mass gatherings, home testing, planning assumptions, capacity of acute services and testing capacity.



Discussion on the potential impact of the management of suspect cases and testing capacity should a similar scenario to Italy arise here.

**Action: NVRL to do planning work around provision to increase testing capacity and how this could be done, should it be needed. Further discussion planned at NPHE on Tuesday (25<sup>th</sup> February 2020)**

There was discussion on the need to continue to engage as needed with other Government Departments and Embassies as required. Latest information to be provided tomorrow via the HTCG comms co-ordination subgroup.

**Action: To be discussed at the HTCG Subgroup on Communications Co-ordination due to meet tomorrow (Monday 24th February).**

Discussion on the latest ECDC paper which also mentions swabbing of asymptomatic individuals. Agreed it would be helpful to have input from the ECDC Scientific Advisory Group, which is due to teleconference tomorrow (Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020).

**Action: HPSC to send a question to the ECDC Scientific Advisory Group to see if there is a common European approach to this. Update to be provided at the NPHE on Tuesday (25<sup>th</sup> February 2020).**

## 7. Comms

The HTCG Subgroup on Communications Co-ordination are due to meet tomorrow (Monday 24th February). There are requests in from a number of media outlets for spokespeople.

**Action: Press release to issue this evening after the meeting.**

Close monitoring of the situation continues, much work is already underway and a number of other questions and topics are under consideration and will be discussed at NPHE on Tuesday (25<sup>th</sup> February 2020).

Public health advice remains in line with the ECDC advice as it has been to date as they provide the scientific assessment and is underpinned by the current ECDC case definition.

## 8. AOB

HSE NCMT due to meet next Tuesday (25<sup>th</sup> February 2020). They are to continue to work on surge capacity planning and reallocation of resources.

**Action: HSE NCMT to continue to work on surge capacity planning and reallocation of resources to ensure planning for both containment and mitigation phases is in place. Update report to NPHE on Tuesday meeting (25th February 2020).**

## 9. Date of next meeting

Tuesday, 25th February 2020 at 3:00pm.