



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

14<sup>th</sup> April 2020

Via email to Private Secretary to the Minister for Health

Dear Minister,

Arising from the meeting earlier today of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), I wish to bring to your attention the following recommendation agreed by the NPHE:

1. The HSE is to work with the Department and key experts (including the Irish Epidemiological Modelling Advisory Group) to develop a paper for NPHE to quantify the appropriate pathway needs and capacity to consistently deliver the necessary sampling, testing and contact tracing strategy.
2. The HSE is to put in place a coordinated national process for carrying out prevalence surveys across nursing homes and other residential healthcare settings, with a particular focus on detecting COVID-19 infections in these settings, using approaches such as pooled PCR tests of randomised samples taken at these sites, in accordance with the recommendations of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.
3. The HSE and HPSC are to plan for the roll out of seroprevalence surveys.
4. The NPHE approved the Guidance on the "*Ethical Considerations for PPE Use by Health Care Workers in a Pandemic*". The HSE is to disseminate the guidance to the healthcare system in order to ensure planning decisions are made in a fair and consistent manner.

As previously outlined, the NPHE continues to closely monitor the current epidemiological situation and the deployment of public health measures to address outbreaks and clusters in residential health care and hospital settings to ensure that there is a strong health service focus on the protection of 'at risk' people in these settings.

Officials from this Department have been and will continue to be available to work with relevant HSE staff, other health agency staff and staff across Government on the implementation of these actions.

I would be happy to discuss further, should you wish.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Tony Holohan

Chief Medical Officer

Chair of the COVID-19 National Public Health Emergency Team

c.c. Ms Elizabeth Canavan, Department of the Taoiseach and Chair of the Senior Officials Group for COVID-19