

**National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET)**  
**Covid-19 Subgroup on Vulnerable People**  
**Meeting 6** (videoconference)

**Note of Meeting and Actions Arising**

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**Meeting Date:** Wednesday 15 April 2020, 2.30pm

**Location:** Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, Room 5.22

**In attendance:**

Department of Health:

Dr. Kathleen Mac Lellan (Chair)

Mr. Colm Desmond, Corporate Mental Health, Drugs Policy and Food Safety Division

Ms. Berneen Laycock, Nursing Policy Unit

Ms. Sarah Cooney, Older Persons Project Unit

Ms. Sheila Caulfield, Comms Lead Health and Wellbeing

Ms Dairearca Ni Nheill, Mental Health/Social Inclusion Unit

Mr. Jim Walsh, Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit

Ms. Clare Lewis, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer

Ms Louise Carrigan, Finance Unit

Mr. Andrew Conlon, Primary Care Unit

Ms. Eilis Murray, Communications Unit

Dr. Alan Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer

Mr. Malachy Corcoran, Scheduled and Unscheduled Care Performance Unit

Ms. Niamh Richardson, Secretariat, NPHET Vulnerable People Subgroup

Mr. Dave O'Connor, Secretariat, NPHET Vulnerable People Subgroup

Health Service Executive:

Dr. Caitriona Mc Carthy, National Cancer Control Programme

Mr. Jim Ryan, HSE Head of Operations Mental Health

Dr Philip Crowley, HSE Chief Clinical Officer's Office

Department of Education and Skills: Mr. Daltan Tattan

Department of Finance: Ms. Klare Havelin

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government: Ms. Mary Hurley, Mr. David Kelly

Department of Justice and Equality: Ms. Carol Baxter, Mr Michael Kirrane

Department of Rural and Community Development: Ms. Bairbre Nic Aongusa

Department of Children and Youth Affairs: Mr. Albert O'Donoghue

Department of Defence: Ms Margaret Stanley

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: Ms. Klare Havelin

Disability Federation of Ireland/National Federation of Voluntary Bodies/ Not for Profit Association: Dr. Joanne McCarthy, Disability Federation of Ireland

Alone: Mr. Séan Moynihan

Dublin Region Homeless Executive: Ms. Eileen Gleeson

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Support Ireland: Ms. Suzanne Mc Cormack, Ms Joan Johnston

Public Representative: Ms. Brigid Doherty

Public Health Specialist: Dr Margaret Fitzgerald

Health Information and Quality Authority: Ms. Máirín Ryan, Ms Susan Cliffe, Ms Mary Dunnion

### **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed the members and thanked everyone for their ongoing work and commitment in the response to COVID-19 and as part of this sub-group.

### **2. Conflicts of Interest Declarations**

Members were requested to advise the Secretariat of any updates to their Conflicts of Interest Declarations as they arose, and any outstanding Conflicts of Interest Declarations should be signed and returned as a matter of priority.

### **3. Minutes from Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted.

### **4. Public Health Update – Dr Alan Smith**

A public health update was provided to the subgroup setting the current situation both internationally and nationally. At this time ECDC data is showing 1.9m cases worldwide cases – 827,000 cases in the EU region and approx.609,000 cases in the USA.

Nationally we have 11,475 cases (median age 48 with 18% of cases hospitalised). There are early indications of slowing down of cases to ICU which is encouraging.

There have been 406 deaths nationally. with an age range from 30 years to 105 years, and a median age of 82. The median age 82, with those over 70 most at risk. It was noted that the Health Surveillance and Protection (HSPC) website is the official source of all data on COVID-19 ([www.hspc.ie](http://www.hspc.ie)).

### **5. Updates from last meeting**

The role of this subgroup is to provide assurance that all Departments and State Agencies have plans in place to support vulnerable people as part of the National response to COVID-19. In order to support this assurance role the following updates were provided:

- **Updates from Departments**

The Chair thanked Department's for providing updates which are being collated by the Secretariat. The Chair asked that if Department's wish to raise a particular matter for the subgroup for discussion, please email the Secretariat in advance of each meeting (48 hours' notice if possible).

- **Updates on operational issues from HSE**

There were a number of meetings held by the HSE to bring forward operational issues that affect vulnerable groups and the following updates were provided for information to the group.

- ✓ ***HSE Community Capacity – Jim Ryan, HSE***

The HSE provided an update to the group on the following in relation to community capacity for the COVID\_19 respond for vulnerable people:

- To note a Covid-19 Working Group on for Vulnerable Groups is established in the HSE, with membership across Primary Care, Social Inclusion, Disability Services, Older Persons Services and Mental Health Services.

- HSE is working across care groups and with other departments and agencies to identify locations for those who can't self-manage in isolation. A telecall was held with DJE, DHPLG, Dublin Regional Housing Executive (DHRE), DOH on this issue.
- HSE is working closely with Irish Wheelchair association in relation to local transport options.

✓ *Update on issues related to Roma community and undocumented migrants – Colm Desmond, Jim Walsh, DOH*

It was noted that approx. 300-500 people have been identified as part of work to support this cohort of vulnerable people. HSE noted that from a public health perspective tracking of outbreaks in Roma and Traveller communities is underway and issues around social distancing and self-isolation are being examined.

DoH, DPHLG and DJE are all working closely, along with the HSE to address any issue in relation to appropriate access to isolation facilities and related accommodation issues. Other issues in relation to accessing health services, such as GPs, are also being examined.

DRCD noted the significant role that voluntary, and representative organisations, can make to supporting vulnerable groups during this period and spreading important public health measures. The Chair welcomed the close collaboration across Government Departments and Agencies and NGOs to support vulnerable people as part of our national response to COVID-19.

- **Mental Health – Colm Desmond, DOH**

The ongoing work taking place to support those members of society currently accessing mental health services, including those currently residing in mental health facilities and community residences, was noted. The Mental Health Commission (MHC) has developed a COVID-19 risk assessment framework which is currently being finalised with a view to implementation.

## **6. Long Term Residential Care (LTRC) – DOH Update**

The Chair outlined the considerable work that is being undertaken to support some of our most vulnerable members of society who currently reside in long term residential care settings. This includes older people, people living with a disability and those currently residing in mental health facilities and community residences.

A series of enhanced measures have been agreed by NPHE that are applicable to LTRC settings and these have been circulated to the subgroup. It was also noted that support for staff, and guidance is available on the HSE website at <https://hselibrary.ie/covid-19-evidence-sources/>

The important role of HIQA during the current crisis, working with HSE and DOH, was noted. An infection control hub is now in operation by HIQA which is linking in with Nursing homes and supporting them to manage outbreaks.

The issue of access to PPE equipment was raised and the Chair noted that all long term residential care settings should have equal access to PPE and testing based on the agreed criteria.

## **7. Mental resilience and wellbeing Plan – Kate O'Flaherty, Healthy Ireland**

An update was provided to the subgroup regarding a new initiative for mental well-being, launched this week - [www.gov.ie/together](http://www.gov.ie/together)  
Covid-19 is a significant source of stress for people, and the focus of the initiative is on coping, staying at home, looking after mental well-being. The DOH is working with media to gain awareness country wide, including a focus on RTE TV and radio for those who cannot access online media. Many resources have been made available, such as apps, on the theme of 'keeping connected'.

Presentation slides will be circulated to the subgroup.

### **8. Communications –Sheila Caulfield, D/Health**

Work is ongoing on the communication plan with a coordinated approach between the Department and HSE Comms. Key milestones since the last week include:

- ✓ National advertising campaign –social distancing – hand washing – cocooning
- ✓ Press campaign – shopping – community response – TV ads
- ✓ National advertising (TV/Radio/social media) on the 'Still Here' campaign on domestic violence supports
- ✓ Research is being looked at, especially about cocooning, and will be shared with members.
- ✓ A number of materials have generated high demand, including easy read guides.
- ✓ A number of Dementia resources have also been developed

### **9. A.O.B**

The Chair informed the subgroup that a NPHE research stream has been developed. Subgroup members were asked to submit any proposals/suggestions to the subgroup secretariat.

Triona Mc Carthy provided feedback in relation to cancer patients and queries regarding cocooning guidance, which are being fed in to HSPC, who will issue clarification.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the group will be scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> April.

### **Actions arising<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Action 31</b>	Departmental updates will be collated and circulated to the subgroup
<b>Action 32</b>	Healthy Ireland presentation will be circulated to the sub-group

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<sup>1</sup> actions 1-8 meeting 1, 9-14 meeting 2, 15-20 meeting 3,21-25 meeting 4,26-30 meeting 5