

National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET)
Covid-19 Subgroup on Vulnerable People
Meeting 8 (videoconference)

Note of Meeting and Actions Arising

Meeting Date: Thursday 7th May 2020, 3.45pm

Location: Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, Room 4.28

In attendance:

Department of Health:

Dr. Kathleen Mac Lellan (Chair)

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

Ms. Sarah Cooney, Older Persons Project Unit

Ms Dairearca Ní Néill, Mental Health/Social Inclusion Unit

Mr. Jim Walsh, Drugs Policy and Social Inclusion Unit

Ms Tanya King, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer

Ms Berneen Laycock, Chief Nurses Office

Ms Mairin Ryan, Guidance Subgroup

Ms. Clare Lewis, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer

Ms Noreen Moran, Acute Hospitals Policy

Ms Celeste O'Callaghan Acute Hospitals Policy

Mr. Malachy Corcoran, Scheduled and Unscheduled Care Performance Unit

Ms. Eilis Murray, Communications Unit

Ms Sheila Caulfield, Communications 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

Department of Education and Skills: Mr. Daltan Tattan (Apologies), Mr Eddie Ward

Department of Finance: Ms. Klare Havelin

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government: Mr. David Kelly, Mr Diarmuid O'Leary

Department of Justice and Equality: Ms. Carol Baxter, Mr Michael Kirrane, Dr. John Devlin (Irish Prison Service)

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

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

Department of Defence: Mr. David Buckley

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: Ms. Mairead Emerson

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 Joan Johnston

Public Representative: Ms. Brigid Doherty

Public Health Specialist: Dr Margaret Fitzgerald

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

Mental Health Commission: Ms Rosemary Smyth

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 written public health update was provided to the subgroup setting out the current situation both internationally and nationally. It was noted that official data is available nationally on the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) website at www.hpsc.ie and internationally on the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) at <https://qap.ecdc.europa.eu/public/extensions/COVID-19/COVID-19.html>

5. Updates

I. Gender Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, Carol Baxter (D/Justice & Equality)

The OECD has recommended that policymakers should consider the gender impacts of the pandemic so as to ensure that these differences are taken into account when framing future policy responses. In light of this recommendation the D/Justice is conducting a review of the gender implications of COVID-19 and would welcome the input of the members of this subgroup.

To facilitate this, a template will be circulated to the subgroup members after this meeting and the D/Justice would be grateful if they could be completed and returned by 29 May.

The template is intended to identify the degree to which policymakers have access to data and information on the gender impacts of the pandemic.

II. Community Framework, D/RCD, D/HPLG & D/Health (Diarmuid O’Leary, Bairbre Nic Aongusa & Tanya King)

The Chair welcomed this item, noting that several of the first meetings of this subgroup were focused on identifying models to support vulnerable people accessing basic services, such as shopping or access to medicines, during this period when they may be isolating or cocooning in their homes.

It was noted that a subgroup of the Senior Officials Group, chaired by the D/Housing, Planning and Local Government, was set up to oversee the work of the community call for action and community framework. It included representatives from D/HPLG, D/RCD and D/Health.

The following key updates were provided:

- A €2.5 million COVID-19 Emergency Fund has been made available for community groups participating in the government's Community Call initiative.
- A nationwide network of Community Champions, coordinated by the Wheel and Irish Rural Link are responding to the needs of our most vulnerable.
- Volunteer Centers are the first port of call for organisations or individuals looking to volunteer. They have provided much needed support to the Community Call.
- Systems were put in place to allow people to join the library online without having to physically visit. This resulted in an upsurge in online members with over 30,000 new members joining the library in March 2020 compared to just over 17,000 in March 2019. In recent weeks a book delivery service has been developed for those cocooning (in line with public health guidance).

D/HPLG updated on the work of the Local Authorities. There have been 31,000 calls received to date, and further information can be found online at <https://community-call-covid-19-geohive.hub.arcgis.com/>

The subgroup acknowledged the positive cross Departmental collaboration, the progress made in a short space of time and the significant support this framework has provided nationally. It was noted that the impact of this work should be examined with a view to looking at how this framework can be utilised to provide community supports in the longer term and post COVID-19. D/HPLG and D/RCD noted that an evaluation for this work is planned.

III. Census of Mortality in Long Term Residential Care (LTRC), D/Health

The Chair updated the subgroup on the census of mortality in LTRC settings which was conducted in line with the NPHET recommendation.

It was noted that nationally we collect data on COVID related mortality both lab confirmed and probable, in line with ECDC recommendations, in both hospitals and the community. Most other countries do not report the data in LTRC settings in such a comprehensive manner. The aim of this census was to provide a snapshot of the mortality in LTRC settings over the period January to 17th April 2020 in order for this information to guide our public health actions in this regard.

Data was compared between this census of mortality and other sources of mortality data from the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) and Health Protection and Surveillance Centre (HPSC). It demonstrated that confirmed cases matched closely between these sources. This would suggest that both the HIQA and HSPC sources are robust indicators that capture the COVID-19 mortality rate in LTRC settings.

IV. Nursing Homes Update, D/Health

The Chair updated the group on the situation in nursing homes and current enhanced measures in place to support nursing homes as part of the response to COVID-19. The most current figures in relation to outbreaks of COVID-19 can be found on the HPSC website at www.hpsc.ie. A Temporary Assistance Payment Scheme (TAPS) is also in place for

providers to assist with the financial costs of the response in facilities that have COVID-19 outbreaks.

HIQA also updated the group on the work of HIQA and the current implementation of the regulatory framework for LTRCs. It was noted that HIQA has conducted a number of desktop reviews and site visits as part of this work and they are also engaged with regulatory colleagues across Europe to share learnings.

8. Communications – Sheila Caulfield and Eilis Murray, D/Health

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

- ✓ Updated cocooning advice and poster
- ✓ HSE and D/Health living well and safely message developed
- ✓ Collaboration with the NCCP encouraging people to discuss any symptoms or concerns that have about cancer to their GP

9. A.O.B

- D/Justice informed the subgroup that a meeting regarding Direct Provision was held between Ministers of Justice and Health on 7 May and that there would be further engagement at official level regarding testing and isolation.
- The Chair noted a paper – *Review of international practice in relation to provision of palliative care in long-term care facilities*, which will be circulated to the subgroup, for information.

Actions arising¹

Action 37	Secretariat to circulate public health update to subgroup
Action 38	Secretariat to circulate D/Justice template to subgroup
Action 39	Secretariat to circulate Community Framework papers to subgroup
Action 40	Secretariat to send link to LTRC census data to subgroup
Action 41	Secretariat to send copy of cocooning poster
Action 42	Secretariat to circulate review paper on palliative care

¹ actions 1-8 meeting 1, 9-14 meeting 2, 15-20 meeting 3, 21-25 meeting 4, 26-30 meeting 5, 31-32 meeting 6
33-36 meeting 7