

Video Conference on COVID-19

20/05/2020

Attendance: Minister Harris, Secretary General, CMO, HSE Chair, HSE CEO, HSE COO, Ms J Lonergan, Ms E Scanlon (minute taker)

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting (13/05/2020) were agreed.

It was agreed that minutes would be published on the Department of Health website, once approved.

Testing

Minister Harris noted the HSE's considerable achievement in building a large scale testing and tracing operation from a zero base.

HSE COO confirmed that a testing strategy paper will go to NPHET this Friday for consideration. It will address the approach to be taken in respect of priority groups and settings.

CMO noted new ECDC guidance in relation to long term residential settings, and that guidance in this area changes frequently.

Secretary General noted that further update of Government on testing and tracing would take place on Friday. Very useful engagement had taken place between the Department and HSE earlier in the week and outstanding queries could be answered. They could be incorporated in the updating of Government, to potentially include revised financial estimates. The CEO undertook to follow up.

Nursing Homes

HSE COO confirmed that the number of nursing homes that there are serious concerns about is very significantly down to six. There are a further 90 of less serious concern. Support continues to be provided to almost 800 facilities but the situation is stabilising.

The unparalleled ongoing and significant support provided to private facilities in terms of HSE staff and PPE, as well as the financial supports in place, was noted, as was the favourable international comparison regarding the supports offered here. Private nursing homes will be able to apply for financial supports for non-NHSS residents from this week.

Meat Processing Plants

The HSE's outbreak control arrangements at national and local level were noted. The question of testing would be considered by the National Clinical Director for health protection. The importance of gathering as much international intelligence and communicating public health advice to workers in appropriate languages was agreed.

HSE CEO noted an instruction has issued not to communicate individual test results directly to employers. Such communication was not general practice and there would be an assessment of the

circumstances in which it had occurred and the reasons for same. The potential involvement of the DPC was noted with regard to GDPR as was the importance of doctor/patient confidentiality.

It was agreed that CMO and HSE CCO would engage on next steps.

Non-COVID care

HSE COO confirmed that ED attendance is up, GP footfall is up and that 75% of ICU beds now in use are for non-COVID related care. Community sites are examining priority services like childhood immunisation.

It was agreed that the HSE would develop an integrated plan at a high level for resumption of non-COVID care across both acute and community services for the period ahead. The plan will be developed by the HSE, discussed with the Department (SG and CEO to arrange) and agreed by the HSE Board in the next two weeks. HSE would communicate publicly on this basis while recognising that such planning would be iterative.

Screening

Minister Harris noted that the decision to pause screening services during this time was correct and in line with international practice.

It was agreed that screening services would be comprehended within the integrated plan for resumption of non-COVID care. Like other services prioritisation and revised operations were likely to be needed.

HSE will engage with stakeholders, including the Irish Cancer Society.

Private Hospitals

HSE CEO confirmed that there will be an update to the HSE Board this evening in relation to how the current arrangement is working. Consideration of how best to move forward can then be undertaken, linked to the plan for resumption of non-COVID care. The Minister advised that this would be an important input to wider cross government consideration on the part of the Department and ultimately Government decisions.