COVID-19 Nursing Home Expert Panel – examination of measures to 2021

1. Purpose

1.1. In line with the Terms of Reference, the purpose of the Expert Panel is to report to the Minister in order to provide immediate real-time learnings and recommendations in light of the expected ongoing impact of COVID-19 with regard to Nursing Homes over the next 12-18 months.

2. Terms of Reference

2.1. Provide assurance that the national protective public health and other measures adopted to safeguard residents in nursing homes, in light of COVID-19, are appropriate, comprehensive and in line with international guidelines and any lessons learned from Ireland’s response to COVID-19 in nursing homes to date;
2.2. Provide an overview of the international response to COVID-19 in nursing homes utilising a systematic research process;
2.3. Report to the Minister for Health by end June 2020 in order to provide immediate real-time learnings and recommendations in light of the expected ongoing impact of COVID-19 over the next 12-18 months.

3. Independence

3.1. The Panel is an independent expert Panel.
3.2. It will be assisted and supported as necessary by a Department of Health provided support team.
3.3. The Panel will be responsible for the direction of its work and decisions with regard to the organisation of its work and the content of its final report.
3.4. The Panel may delegate administrative and other relevant tasks and administrative decisions to the Support Team.

4. Membership

- Professor Cecily Kelleher, Chair
- Professor Cillian Twomey
- Ms. Petrina Donnelly
- Ms. Brigid Doherty

5. Terms of Engagement/Operational Arrangements

5.1. The Chair shall:
5.1.1. Set and manage the agenda for each meeting.
5.1.2. Manage declarations of conflict of interest as they arise.
5.1.3. Conclude each meeting with a summary of decisions and/or actions.
5.1.4. Sign off meeting minutes in consultation with Panel members.
5.1.5. Nominate an alternate should the Chair be unable to attend a meeting.
5.1.6. Report to the Minister for Health in line with the terms of reference.

5.2. The Chair will decide the schedule of meetings in consultation with the Panel. It is anticipated that the Panel will meet approximately once per week (this schedule may be subject to change)

5.3. Meetings will be held via Videocall.

5.4. The Panel will undertake closed door meetings itself to deliberate and/or conduct any part of its work in confidence.
5.5. The Department of Health will provide a support team to assist the Panel with its work, including the provision of secretariat support.

5.6. The Secretary will arrange for circulation of relevant documentation, records of meetings, and communications with regard to the convening of meetings.

5.7. Meetings will be documented by the Secretary, including actions to be taken, main points discussed, minutes etc.

5.8. Draft minutes will be circulated to Panel members following each meeting and approved subject to any appropriate amendments at each subsequent meeting [approved minutes will generally be published on the Department of Health’s website subject to limited redaction if required e.g. to protect the integrity of the deliberative process and/or other matters falling under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI)].

5.9. A summary of agreed action points will be circulated to members as soon as possible following each meeting.

5.10. The Chair may invite third parties to participate in meetings to provide expert input and advice. The Chair may ask such persons to prepare discussion documents as appropriate.

6. Communications, Correspondence and Media

6.1. The Support Team will manage correspondence on behalf of the Expert Panel

6.2. In agreement with the Panel, agreed lines of reply will be used by the Support Team to respond to correspondence on behalf of the Panel.

6.3. The Support Team will establish and maintain a correspondence tracker and will report to the Panel at agreed intervals providing a summary of correspondence received, highlighting key issues and correspondence and requesting agreement on the response to be issued to any key items.

6.4. Through the support team and in consultation with the Chair as necessary, the Department of Health’s press office will interface directly with the media on any media queries and requests and the support team will maintain a tracker of such queries.

6.5. Having regard to public and parliamentary interest in the work of the Panel, the Support Team will manage any parliamentary work and Ministerial briefing with respect to the work of the Panel, respecting the deliberative processes.

7. Support Team

The Support Team members are:

- Sinéad Mahon
- Sarah Gibney
- Niamh Carey
- Daniel Sheridan
- Susan Callaghan
- Niall Redmond

A dedicated email address for all communications has been established:

NHExpert_Panel@health.gov.ie