

Video Conference on COVID-19

27/05/2020

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 (20/05/2020) were agreed.

All agreed minutes have been published on the Department's website.

Private Hospitals

Minister Harris noted the volume of clinical activity, in particular day cases, being carried out in private hospitals under the current arrangements.

HSE Chair confirmed that the arrangements permit operation for five months with a break clause built in. The view of the HSE Board is that capacity within the private hospitals is still required at present.

CMO confirmed the NPHET concern at the outset was the need for surge capacity, and that this need remains.

HSE COO confirmed an increase in attendances and admissions to acute hospitals, with an associated volume of ICU admissions for non-COVID illnesses. Delays in transfers of care are also a factor in the ongoing need for capacity.

HSE CEO confirmed that engagement is ongoing with the various stakeholders and that whatever decision is made by Government, clarity for the system will be essential for effective planning.

Non-COVID care

HSE CEO confirmed that a framework document setting out high level national guidance on safe resumption of non-COVID care is in development. Engagement with clinical leads, Hospital Groups, Community Health Organisations and other stakeholders is ongoing. It is intended that the framework will be nationally led and locally implemented. Appropriate prioritisation of services will be necessary.

HSE COO noted that the enabling processes, including ICT, HR and infrastructure requirements, to allow for the framework to be implemented are considerable and are being carried out at pace.

It was agreed that the HSE would liaise with the Department to get feedback on the overall framework prior to finalisation in line with the engagements which is already underway on constituent elements.

HSE CEO confirmed that IPC is a specific risk identified for the HSE.

Nursing Homes

Minister Harris noted the very significant body of work undertaken by the HSE and the Department of Health in supporting the nursing home sector, and thanked the HSE National Director of Community Operations for his work in this regard.

It was noted that the purpose of the review panel announced this week on foot of NPHET recommendation is to take stock, ensure that our approach is as good as possible and do an international scan for experiences and evidence. It is intended to have clear expert view by end June of what needs to be done in advance of winter and the flu season.

Community services

Minister Harris noted his concern in relation to the serious impacts of the present situation on children, including those with disabilities. He also noted the considerable efforts of the HSE Head of Operations, Disability Services and the Department of Education to develop inreach services for families in this regard. A cross-Government support programme will be considered by Government very shortly, designed to provide parents with options over the summer.

Revised Estimates

Secretary General noted that Revised Estimates will need to be finalised shortly. In the context of very significant gross expenditure pressures, net funding requirements will need to be rigorously examined and projects carefully considered.

HSE Chair noted the need to invest differently for a different service and the need to enable change.

Testing

Minister Harris acknowledged the speed achieved in turnaround times by the HSE in the new testing regime.