



National Public Health Emergency Team – COVID-19

Meeting Note

Date and Time	Friday 7 th August 2020, (Meeting 46) at 11:00am
Location	Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, Dublin 2
Chair	Dr Ronan Glynn, Acting Chief Medical Officer, DOH
Members via videoconference	<p>Dr Darina O’Flanagan, Special Advisor to the NPHE</p> <p>Dr Kevin Kelleher, Assistant National Director, Public Health, HSE</p> <p>Prof Philip Nolan, President, National University of Ireland, Maynooth and Chair of the Irish Epidemiological Modelling Advisory Group (IEMAG)</p> <p>Dr Lorraine Doherty, National Clinical Director Health Protection, HSE</p> <p>Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer (CCO), HSE</p> <p>Dr Máirín Ryan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of HTA, HIQA</p> <p>Ms Tracey Conroy, Assistant Secretary, Acute Hospitals Policy Division, DOH</p> <p>Mr Fergal Goodman, Assistant Secretary, Primary Care Division, DOH</p> <p>Dr John Cuddihy, Interim Director, HSE HPSC</p> <p>Dr Breda Smyth, Public Health Specialist, HSE</p> <p>Prof Colm Bergin, Consultant in Infectious Diseases, St James’s Hospital</p> <p>Dr Michael Power, Consultant in Anaesthetics / Intensive Care Medicine, Beaumont Hospital</p> <p>Dr Siobhán Ní Bhriain, Lead for Integrated Care, HSE</p> <p>Mr Phelim Quinn, Chief Executive Officer, HIQA</p> <p>Dr Eibhlín Connolly, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH</p> <p>Dr Mary Favier, President, Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP)</p> <p>Mr David Leach, Communications, HSE</p> <p>Dr Cillian de Gascun, Laboratory Director, NVRL and Expert Advisory Group (EAG) Chair</p> <p>Ms Yvonne O’Neill, National Director, Community Operations, HSE</p>
‘In Attendance’	<p>Mr David Keating, Communicable Diseases Policy Unit, DOH</p> <p>Mr Colm O’ Conaill, Policy & Strategy Division, DOH</p> <p>Ms Laura Casey, Policy and Strategy Division, DOH</p> <p>Ms Marita Kinsella, Director, NPSO, DOH</p> <p>Ms Sarah Treleaven, CMO Division, DOH</p> <p>Ms Lyndsey Drea, Communications Unit, DOH</p> <p>Mr Gerry O’ Brien, Resources Division, DOH (alternate for Paul Bolger)</p> <p>Mr Niall Redmond, Social Care Division, DOH (alternate for Kathleen MacLellan)</p> <p>Dr Trish Markham, HSE (alternate for Tom McGuinness)</p>
Secretariat	Dr Keith Lyons, Ms Sarah Murphy, Ms Sorcha Ní Dhúill, Ms Ruth Brandon, Mr Liam Robinson, DOH
Apologies	<p>Dr Siobhán O’Sullivan, Chief Bioethics Officer, DOH</p> <p>Dr Colette Bonner, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH</p> <p>Dr Alan Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, DOH</p> <p>Mr Tom McGuinness, Assistant National Director for Emergency Management, HSE</p> <p>Mr Colm Desmond, Assistant Secretary, Corporate Legislation, Mental Health, Drugs Policy and Food Safety Division, DOH</p> <p>Ms Kate O’Flaherty, Head of Health and Wellbeing, DOH</p> <p>Dr Kathleen MacLellan, Assistant Secretary, Social Care Division, DOH</p> <p>Ms Deirdre Watters, Communications Unit, DOH</p> <p>Mr Paul Bolger, Director, Resources Division, DOH</p> <p>Mr Liam Woods, National Director, Acute Operations, HSE</p>



1. Welcome and Introductions

a) *Conflict of Interest*

Verbal pause and none declared.

b) *Matters Arising*

There were no matters arising at the meeting.

2. Epidemiological Assessment

a) *Evaluation of Epidemiological data: (incorporating National Data Update, Modelling Report and International Update), including testing and contact tracing*

The DOH, HPSC, and IEMAG provided an overview of the latest epidemiological data regarding confirmed cases, including the current information on hospitalisation, critical care, mortality, as well as sampling, testing, and contact tracing. Specific consideration was given to the epidemiological data in Kildare, Laois and Offaly. The data presented were as follows:

Incidence and Newly Confirmed Cases

- The number of confirmed cases stands at 26,303;
- The 5-day rolling average of cases was 52 cases;
- 1,768 deaths due to COVID-19 have been notified to date;
- The epidemiological incidence for the past 14 days is 9.6 per 100,000 population (11.5 per 100,000 population by notification date). 549 new cases have been notified to the HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) in the last 14 days;
 - In Kildare, the epidemiological incidence for the past 14 days is 61.6 per 100,000 population (67.4 per 100,000 population by notification date). 150 new cases have been notified in the last 14 days;
 - In Laois, the epidemiological incidence for the past 14 days is 62.6 per 100,000 population (64.9 per 100,000 population by notification date). 55 new cases have been notified in the last 14 days;
 - In Offaly, the epidemiological incidence for the past 14 days is 46.2 per 100,000 population (46.2 per 100,000 population by notification date. This is expected as all cases notified in Offaly in the last 14 days were noted as having arisen in that time). 36 new cases have been notified in the last 14 days;
- The median age of cases notified in the last 14 days is 31 years. Over 75% of all cases were in those aged under 45 years. In Kildare, 75% of cases were in people aged under 45 years. In Laois, 93% of cases were in people aged under 45 years and in Offaly, 65% of cases were in people aged under 45 years.

Mode of Transmission

- In the last 14 days, 81% of the newly confirmed cases have had their mode of transmission confirmed and 52% of newly confirmed cases have been reported as having been associated with an outbreak;
- In Kildare, Laois, and Offaly multiple outbreaks associated with workplaces and residential institutions have been reported and cases associated with these outbreaks continue to emerge;
- In Kildare, 94% of all cases notified in the last 14 days were confirmed as having been transmitted as a result of close contact with a confirmed case;
- In Laois, 91% of cases were confirmed as having been transmitted as a result of close contact with a confirmed case;
- In Offaly, 71% of cases were confirmed as having been transmitted as a result of close contact with a confirmed case;



- There are currently few cases in Kildare, Offaly, and Laois attributed to community transmission.

Hospitalisations

- There were 11 confirmed cases in hospital on 6th August 2020;
- The number of confirmed COVID-19 patients requiring critical care on 6th August 2020 was 5, with no new admissions in the previous 24 hours;
- As of 6th August 2020, there were 69 new confirmed cases and 5 deaths. There were 5 confirmed cases in ICU, with 1 being ventilated. There were 11 suspected cases in ICU. There was 1 discharge from ICU. There were 11 cases in hospital. There was 1 new hospital admission.

The DOH summarised the key messages as follows:

- There has been an increase in the incidence rate and in the number of cases overall, particularly concentrated in counties Kildare, Offaly, and Laois;
- There were multiple significant outbreaks in workplaces and in residential institutions;
- New cases are largely concentrated in younger age groups.

The HPSC provided an update and noted the following:

- There have been 98 cases reported so far on 7th August 2020:
 - 35 cases are located in Kildare, 26 in Offaly, 6 in Wexford, 5 in Laois, 5 in Dublin, and 21 are spread across 10 other counties (Carlow, Cavan, Donegal, Kilkenny, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Westmeath, and Wicklow).
 - There were 3 ongoing outbreaks in workplaces causing particular concern in Kildare, Laois, and Offaly. The first outbreak accounts for 44 out of the 98 cases reported so far today. The second accounts for 5 cases, but approximately 200 test results are still pending, and the third outbreak accounts for 1 of the 98 cases.

3. Future Policy

a) Paper on advising Government in relation to the reintroduction of public health restrictive measures for certain counties

In light of the current epidemiological profile of the disease across the country, and particularly in relation to Kildare, Laois, and Offaly, the DOH presented a draft deliberative paper “*Advising Government in Relation to the Reintroduction of Public Health Restrictive Measures for certain counties*”, which formed the basis of the NPHE’s consideration.

The paper considered a series of indicators and the potential application of public health restrictive measures to areas of particularly high incidence, namely Kildare, Laois, and Offaly.

The NPHE expressed significant concerns in relation to the epidemiological situation in Kildare, Laois, and Offaly with regard to a number of indicators including: the existence of multiple clusters with secondary spread, an increase in the 14-day cumulative incidence, and related indicators that are showing a significant and increasing level of disease. While indicators in relation to the incidence of cases in residential healthcare settings, admissions to hospital and critical care, and the number of deaths are not currently showing worrying trends, it was noted that due to the age profile of the cases, there may be a delay before changes to these indicators become apparent. Also, given the scale of the current outbreaks, NPHE cautioned that there is now a significant volume of infection in the region of Kildare, Laois, and Offaly, with an increased risk



of community transmission as a result, although at present few cases are being classified as community transmission.

The NPHET also had due regard to the European Centre for Disease Control's (ECDC) Rapid Risk Assessment of COVID-19 (11th Update). This update advised that Europe is seeing an increase in the number of cases and hospitalisations recently after a decline in those figures in May-June 2020 and subsequent relaxation of measures in many countries. While the update shows that, as of the 2nd August, Ireland (7.3/100,000 population) has a relatively low incidence rate as compared to other countries in Europe and the European average (21.5/100,000 population), there has been a significant increase in cases in Ireland in recent days. The draft risk assessment advises that *"Countries that now observe an increase in cases after they have lifted their control measures following a temporary improvement of the epidemiological situation, they should consider re-instating selected measures through a phased, stepwise and sustainable approach. Assessment of risk at local level is important, taking into consideration the epidemiological situation, local services and lessons learned regarding the impact of previous measures."*

The NPHET agreed to the application of a suite of public health measures to apply to Kildare, Laois and Offaly, which it considered a proactive and proportionate response to the current situation and were required to disrupt the current pattern of disease transmission and contain ongoing outbreaks. The NPHET was cognisant of the impact that these measures would have on people, not only in these counties, but across the country.

The criticality of maintaining low levels of community transmission in order to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable and to enable the recommencement of essential societal services such as education, health, and social care services for all was reiterated by the NPHET. The importance of the testing, contact tracing, and case management system was also highlighted by the NPHET as a key instrument in enabling a rapid and robust public health response to cases and outbreaks. Accordingly, the HSE confirmed that it would ensure that enhanced testing and contact tracing capacity would be put in place for the region immediately.

The NPHET also emphasised the importance of proactive testing in high-risk population groups and high-risk workplace settings and noted that the serial programme of testing in nursing homes would recommence as planned on Monday 10th August, with Kildare, Laois, and Offaly being prioritised. Furthermore, the NPHET noted that the HSE's newly established National Oversight Group for the food processing industry was considering the most appropriate and proactive approach to surveillance and testing within that industry.

The NPHET also noted the need for immediate activation by all State agencies and other bodies (including transport companies) of all necessary processes, plans, supports, and measures to ensure that the necessary services are available to the population of these counties, including health and social care services.

Action: In light of the current epidemiological status of COVID-19 in Kildare, Laois, and Offaly, and cognisant of ECDC advice, the NPHET advises that the Government give consideration to the application of a number of enhanced public health measures for these counties. The NPHET further recommends that these measures are applied for 2 weeks, at which point the situation will be reviewed.

4. Meeting Close

a) Agreed actions

The key actions arising from the meeting were examined by the NPHET, clarified, and agreed.



b) AOB

There was no other business raised at the meeting.

c) *Date of next meeting*

The next meeting of the NPHE will take place on Wednesday 12th August 2020 at 3.30pm via video conferencing.