
COVID-19 NPHEM Subgroup - Vulnerable People

3rd Meeting Report - 18th March 2020

NPHEM Meeting 22/03/2020

COVID-19 NPHEM Subgroup - Vulnerable People

1. NPHEM COVID-19 Subgroup – Vulnerable People

The NPHEM Subgroup - Vulnerable People was established to provide oversight and assurance with regard to the specific preparedness, measures and actions that need to be taken to protect vulnerable groups and individuals in society. An integrated cross government approach is being taken by the Subgroup.

The Subgroup held its third meeting by teleconference on Wednesday 18th March 2020 and will continue to meet weekly or more often if necessary. The ToRs for the subgroup and an updated membership list is set out in Appendix 1.

2. Meeting (3) 18th March 2020

See Minutes (Appendix 2).

2.1 Terms of reference 1 and 2 focused on identification of vulnerable people and State Agencies responsible for service provision

A list of Vulnerable People/Responsible Department/Agency was agreed at the last meeting of the subgroup (please see related minutes).

2.2 Term of reference 3 focused assurance of measures in place across Government Departments and State Agencies

A written update from Subgroup members (Departments and State Agencies) on preparedness plans was requested in advance of this group and a report of the responses is attached - Appendix 3.

2.3 Communications with Vulnerable People

- Communications to provide information and assurance to vulnerable people is a consistent theme during the meeting.
- A dedicated team has been established and a stream of communications focused on vulnerable people is being developed
- A communication plan has been designed and implementation has commenced.

2.4 Community Support

- The Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) has established an Advisory Group to the NPHEM Subgroup Vulnerable People on its community response to vulnerable people. DRCD published an Action Plan 20th March 2020 which identified three key actions for immediate priority. DRCD have committed to putting in place the required funding and resources in place immediately and to work with key partners. These three key actions include:
 - Encourage and facilitate volunteering – in partnership with Volunteer Ireland, 22 Volunteer Centres and 7 Volunteer Information Services, supported by Local Development Companies
 - Provide community supports for older people – in partnership with ALONE (The Department of Health is also supporting ALONE to scale up its services)
 - Establish a helpdesk facility for local community groups – in partnership with the 31 Public Participation Networks nationwide.
- A framework for community support is being drafted which will be presented to SOG.
- A large volume of support is being offered from various bodies such as the GAA and An Post.

2.5 Guidance sought

- Guidance on a range of matters related to service delivery is being sought across all NPHEM Subgroups. These requests are being provided to the Guidance Subgroup for review and consideration.
- HSE is in the process of developing COVID-19 Advice for At-Risk Groups.

2.6 Community capacity - health and social care

- In line with the Government's National Action Plan in response to COVID 19 the Department is in contact with the HSE with regard to delivery of actions.
- The importance of ensuring continuity of service and stabilisation of nursing homes during this period was noted and this issue has been escalated to the HSE. A short life interagency working group has been established to support the HSE in this work.

Appendix 1 Terms of Reference and Membership

Terms of Reference

1. Identify categories of vulnerable people
2. Identify State Agencies responsible for service provision
3. Design a standardised checklist to provide assurance that measures are in place, updated in line with NPHEH directions, approved at appropriate senior level¹ and implemented. Such measures are likely to include:
 - Guidance for service users, families and staff
 - Communications plan
 - Compliance with data protection regulations
 - Preparedness plan to include containment measures; mitigation measures; hand hygiene, personal protective equipment (PPE) and waste management; environmental cleaning; patient/people placement where relevant - moving of patients/people in the facility, visitor access
 - Capacity Contingency Plan
 - Business Continuity Plan.
4. Establish communication processes for completed standardised checklist to the Subgroup
5. Design the Subgroup Assurance Framework
6. Agree Subgroup Modus Operandi
7. Report to NPHEH:
 - Progress Updates
 - Escalation of high risks as appropriate.

Subgroup Membership List

Department of Health (Chair)	Kathleen Mac Lellan
Department Justice and Equality	Dr John Devlin, The Irish Prison Service
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Albert O'Donoghue, Principal Officer
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	Ms Mary Hurley, Assistant Secretary Graham Hopkins David Kelly (Alternates)
<i>Local Government Management Agency,</i>	<i>Ms Eileen Gleeson, Director of the Dublin Region Homeless Executive Mary Flynn (Alternate)</i>
Department of Education and Skills	Mr Daltan Tattan, Assistant Secretary
Department of Defence	Clare Tiernan,
Department of Rural and Community Development	Bairbre Nic Aonghusa A/Sec,
Community Operations - Health Service Executive	Jim Ryan, Head of Operations Mental Health.
Public Health Specialist	Dr Margaret Fitzgerald, National Public Health Lead Social inclusion and Vulnerable groups.
Voluntary Sector	Sean Moynihan, CEO
Patient Representative	Brigid Doherty
Health Information and Quality Authority	Ms Mary Dunnion, Susan Cliffe (Alternate)

¹ Responsibility to ensure that all content and actions are in line with NPHEH directions lies with the relevant Departments/Agencies.

National Cancer Control Programme	Dr Caitriona Mc Carthy
Chronic Disease (COPD) Representative	Prof. J.J. Gilmartin
HSE Chief Clinical Officer's Office	Dr. Philip Crowley
Department of Health	Berneen Laycock, Chief Nurses Officer
Department of Health	Sarah Cooney, Principal Officer, Older Persons Projects
Department of Health	Andy Conlon, Principal Officer, Primary Care
Department of Health	Celeste O'Callaghan, Principal Officer. Acute Hospitals
Department of Health	Dave Maguire, Mental Health Unit,
Department of Health	Rachel Kenna, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer,
Department of Health	Louise Carrigan, Accountant, Finance Unit
Department of Health	Malachy Corcoran, Governance and Performance Division
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform	Mairead Emerson, Civil Service HR
Department of Finance	Klare Havelin, Civil Service HR
Disability Umbrella Groups Representative	Ms Joanne Mc Carthy Mr Seán Abbott
Department of Health/HIQA	Ms Máirín Ryan

Appendix 2

National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE)

COVID-19 Subgroup on Vulnerable People

Meeting 3 (teleconference)

Note of Meeting and Actions Arising

Meeting Date: Wednesday 18 March 2020, 11am

Location: Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, Room 5.22

In attendance:

Department of Health:

Dr. Kathleen Mac Lellan (Chair)

Dr. Alan Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer

Ms. Berneen Laycock, Nursing Policy Unit

Ms. Ciara Mellett, Slaintecare Programme Implementation Office

Mr. Andrew Conlon, Primary Care Policy Unit

Ms. Sarah Cooney, Older Persons Project Unit

Ms. Celeste O'Callaghan, Acute Hospital Policy Division

Ms. Sheila Caulfield, Comms Lead Health and Wellbeing

Ms. Eilish Murray, Communications Unit

Ms Dairearca Ni Nheill, Mental Health/Social Inclusion Unit

Mr. Malachy Corcoran, Scheduled and Unscheduled Care Performance Unit

Health Service Executive:

Dr. Margaret Fitzgerald, Public Health -Social Inclusion & Vulnerable Groups

Dr. Caitriona Mc Carthy, National Cancer Control Programme

Department of Education and Skills: Mr. Daltan Tattan

Department of Finance: Ms. Klare Havelin

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform: Ms. Mairead Emerson

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government: Mr. David Kelly

Department of Justice and Equality: Dr. John Devlin, Irish Prison Service

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

Department of Defence: Ms. Margaret Stanley

Health Information and Quality Authority: Ms. Máirín Ryan

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. Suzanne Mc Cormack

Patient Representative: Ms. Brigid Doherty

Apologies:

Albert O Donoghue, DCYA
Susan Cliffe, HIQA

1. Welcome

The Chairperson welcomed the members and noted that future meetings will be held by teleconference with those in person at the venue ensuring adherence to social distancing norms and guidance. The Chair thanked members for all of the work that has been done so far on all workstreams.

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 all new and outstanding Conflicts of Interest Declarations to be signed as a matter of priority.

3. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted.

4. Matters Arising - Updates and Discussion

The Chair updated the group on progress in respect of the actions arising from the previous meeting and a number of additional actions to be progressed by the Subgroup were identified – see Table below.

5. Assurances update

The Chair thanked colleagues around the table on the written updates received and noted that they will be circulated to the Group after the meeting and will be provided to NPHE as part of the weekly update from this group.

6. Public Health Update - Alan Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, D/Health

Alan Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer at the Department of Health, gave an update on the Covid-19 emergency with particular reference to the number of cases confirmed and deaths worldwide, in EU and UK and in Ireland. The number of confirmed cases is rising in Ireland in line with projections and the spread of virus internationally.

7. NPHE Update - Kathleen Mac Lellan, Chair, Subgroup.

The Chair advised that a report of the Subgroup was provided to NPHE.

8. Update on Guidance and Model of Care –Mairin Ryan and Triona McCarthy

Mairin Ryan, HIQA, updated the group on the significant work being progressed on the development of public health guidance in relation to COVID-19 and the associated HSPC governance framework linked to the NPHE Expert Advisory Group (EAG). Work is ongoing to set up a single point of contact for all queries on guidance which will provide information on all current guidance in place and the timeline for the development of any further guidance.

Triona McCarthy advised the group that the HSE Chief Clinical Officer (CCO) and Clinical Advisory Group have developed guidance for at-risk groups which can be tailored, if required, for different vulnerable or at-risk groups.

There was a general discussion on guidance.

10. Communications –Sheila Caulfield, Communications Lead, D/Health

Sheila Caulfield, Communications Lead D/Health updated the group about the communication plan being developed for Vulnerable Groups. To note:

- DOH has developed a Covid-19 stakeholder mailing group to communicate updates and advice.
- Various television, radio and social media ads are running and are scheduled to run, and a short booklet with general information on Covid-19 will be posted to every household in the coming days.
- DOH Comms acknowledge the need for more specific information for certain groups and will continue to engage with stakeholders to tailor messaging.
- Communications on Covid-19 are now being managed in line with the Government Information Service (GIS).

9. DRCD Update – Bairbre Nic Aongusa, A/Secretary, D/Rural & Community Development

Bairbre Nic Aongusa gave an update on the work to date of the DRCD Advisory Group on the Community Response to Vulnerable People, which has been established to encourage and facilitate community engagement in response to Covid-19. It was noted that:

- DRCD are finalising an Action Plan to support a community response to COVID-19 and an information pack will go out to DRCD network.
- Groups such as the GAA and Credit Unions have come forward with offers of assistance. DRCD are continuing to consider how best to mobilise and oversee such engagement.
- DRCD are aware of many informal groups forming to provide Covid-19 related assistance. DRCD noted the importance of guidance for such groups including on sustainability.

Actions arising²

Action 15	Circulate summary document with Subgroup member updates
Action 16	Agree working process between NPHEP Subgroup on Vulnerable People and HSE Subgroup on Vulnerable People (Sarah Cooney and Jim Ryan)
Action 17	Progress guidance processes
Action 18	New short-life interagency working group to report to NPHEP Subgroup on Vulnerable People chaired led by Niall Redmond PO on nursing homes/other long stay facilities
Action 19	DRCD to share Action Plan with the Sub-group
Action 20	As a follow to the meeting, individuals to follow up with counterparts as required

9. A.O.B

Next meeting: Wednesday 25th March 2020 at 11.00; Department of Health (teleconference).

² actions 1-8 meeting 1, 9-14 meeting 2.

Appendix 3: Summary of updates from Departments/Agencies on Subgroup

NPHET Subgroup on Vulnerable People

Quality Assurance Framework

Updates from Departments/Agencies on Subgroup

18 March 2020

The NPHET Subgroup - Vulnerable People was established to provide oversight and assurance with regard to the specific preparedness, measures and actions that need to be taken to protect vulnerable groups and individuals in society. An integrated cross government approach is being taken by the Subgroup.

The term vulnerable people is being used to include older people, people with a disability, mental health service users, those with an underlying illness or condition, children in care and those accessing social inclusion services (not an exhaustive list). Services to vulnerable people are provided through a range of settings and are under the remit of a number of Government Departments. These settings include long and short-term care, primary care, respite, day services, prisons and youth detention centres, direct provision and care in individual homes (not an exhaustive list).

The relevant Departments and State Agencies are responsible for ensuring that appropriate plans are in place for vulnerable groups within their remit, in the range of associated settings. These plans must address the needs of these groups and set out actions to be taken to mitigate impact on these groups.

A preparedness checklist was circulated to subgroup members and filled out on behalf of their Department/State Agency. In addition, as part of this assurance framework, the following updates have been received to date:

Organisation	
HSE Community Operations	Update received
Department of Education and Skills	Update received
Irish Prison Service	Update received
HIQA	Update received
ALONE	Update received
Department of Housing Planning and Local Government	Update received
Dublin Regional Homeless Executive	Update received
Social Inclusion Issues (HSE)	Update received
Department of Defence	Not yet received
Department of Children and Youth Affairs	Not yet received
Department of Rural and Community Development	Update received

Department of Rural and Community Development

The Department of Rural and Community Development has published an Action Plan to lead the whole of Government effort to encourage and facilitate a community response to COVID-19 that will help us to protect our older and vulnerable neighbours and keep them safe, well and supported during the coming weeks.

This Action Plan, which has been put together in partnership with the Department of Health, other Government Departments, State Agencies, Local Authorities, Local Development Companies and our extensive network of community and voluntary organisations, sets out three key actions for initial focus in supporting a community response to COVID-19.

Three Key Actions

The Department of Rural and Community Development has identified three key actions for immediate priority. We will put the required funding and resources in place immediately and will be working with our partners to implement the measures on the ground as quickly as possible. Work in this regard has already commenced.

- Encourage and facilitate volunteering – in partnership with Volunteer Ireland, 22 Volunteer Centres and 7 Volunteer Information Services, supported by Local Development Companies
- Provide community supports for older people – in partnership with ALONE
- Establish a helpdesk facility for local community groups – in partnership with the 31 Public Participation Networks nationwide.

Along with this Action Plan, a Communications Pack for members of the public will contain advice and guidance on:

- How can I volunteer?
- Sensible volunteering – Dos and Don'ts
- Advice for local community groups – how can we get volunteers?
- Advice for vulnerable people who need supports
- How to guard against fraud and generate trust
- Information leaflet for distribution to communities – “You, Your Community and Covid-19” – encouraging people to look out for vulnerable neighbours.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Homeless

The Department is working closely with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) and local authorities nationwide to coordinate the response to Covid-19 among users of emergency accommodation and rough sleepers. The DHRE:

- is working closely with the four Dublin Local Authorities and Homeless Service Providers in coordinating the response to COVID-19 related public health concerns among users of emergency accommodation and rough sleepers.
- with local authorities and NGO partners have introduced a range of precautions aimed at minimising the risk of infection among service users and staff. Contingency facilities are being prepared, including facilities that were not yet open and strategic use of housing stock due to come on stream.
- has been consulting with our service provider partners regarding contingency plans across Homeless Services and have introduced a range of precautions aimed at minimising the risk of infection among service users and staff, including hygiene arrangements and limiting the need for travel and movement between services.
- Director is a member of HSE COVID Working Group for Vulnerable Persons. Coronavirus (COVID- 19) guidance for Homeless and Vulnerable Groups has issued.

Traveller Community

In relation to the Traveller community, the Department is engaging with the local authorities, the HSE and the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee (NTACC) on measures that need to be taken to protect Travellers.

Prisons

The Prison Service are in the process of preparing and implementing contingency arrangements for the COVID crisis to ensure the wellbeing of those in accommodation, and that there are clear communication and care pathways in place in as much as is possible.

HSE

A Covid-19 Response for Vulnerable Groups was established within the HSE under the auspices of the HSE Integrated National Operational Hub. This Group is working closely with the Department of Health taking an integrated approach across CHOs and relevant Section 38 and Section 39 organisation all vulnerable care groups.

CHOs have an agreed or contact point with the various service providers as effective co-ordinated communication between the service providers is required so that decisions that have to be made are done in unison with CHOs.

The HSE is targeting vulnerable people in their services including disability, older people, mental health, social Social Inclusion services are continuing to work with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Department of Justice to ensure there are clear pathways for the target groups. A guidance document on infection control/self-quarantine for the Homeless and Vulnerable Group settings has been added to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre guidance.

Palliative Care services have issued guidance to services on the following

- Symptom Management for End of Life Care for Nursing Homes and GP's
- Remote working checklist
- Telephone Triage – identifying when a visit is essential to homes
- Interim Homecare nursing plan
- Organised a weekly telecall with Palliative Mental Consultants who will disseminate the information to the system.

Department of Education and Skills

The Department of Education and Skills has supported an agreement working with the HSE Special Needs Assistants to volunteer in local disability services. This is intended to provide critical back-up support to frontline HSE-funded disability services.

In addition, the National Council for Special Education is currently reviewing its professional development resources to see what usefully can be put online to assist teachers and parents of students with complex needs.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) has produced advice for parents and schools on talking to children and young people about Covid-19. Link to this and other education resources is available here – www.education.ie/covid19. Further guidance for young people on Covid-19 is being prepared by NEPS.

HIQA

HIQA has advised that it is temporarily suspending its routine programme of monitoring inspections in hospital based services. This suspension will also extend to inspections of all ionising radiation undertakings

HIQA has offered the use of its channels of communication with registered providers as a means of disseminating Covid-19 guidance to the system including placing notices on our Portal or utilising our email lists for direct delivery of information.

HIQA has offered to share information in relation to capacity in the system which may be of benefit

HIQA has offered to share information it holds to facilitate any risk assessment of designated centres

HIQA has offered its services as a conduit of communication between designated centres and Public Health

- Communication with services that we regulate and monitor is ongoing, copies of latest communications attached. In essence the Chief Inspector has now cancelled all routine inspections of designated centres until further notice with the exception of inspections required to respond to risk.
- A list of centres deemed to pose a particularly high transmission of infection risk to residents living there have been communicated to the Department of Health and shared with the HSE.
- Nursing homes were contacted on 13 March to clarify available bed vacancies on that date and this information was relayed to the Department of Health
- Centres requiring inspection for the purpose of registration are prioritised and we are in constant contact with providers where we know that there are new centres or additional beds coming on stream.
- HIQA has redeployed staff to participate in contact tracing in our Dublin and our Cork office.
- HIQA has engaged with the Department of Health in relation to proposed emergency legislation

ALONE

ALONE Support line is 7 days a week.

- The focus is Contact, information , medication , heat, food and other practical support
- We are getting 100's of calls a day.
- All calls are logged and the issues followed up and closed out
- Some people are moving on to getting daily phone calls from us
- Data Reports with locations issues and gaps and blocks now going to HSE

Building a national response to practical supports

- Our Daily Q&A sheets are signed off now by department of health communications team and we circulated to 100 plus agencies
- These will now going to the wheel , Irish rural link to distribute so we all align our messages across the sector.
- Pobal looking to use our information to training private provides and then they will refer the need for practical supports back to us
- Pobal are considering how they fast track pendant alarms to support people that are identified as needing it
- We are looking at a model of operating with DCC that will activate and link us to PPN & Garda for practical supports
- This model could then be copied for other LA across the county
- We are working on protocols for those providing practical support that will keep the older people, agencies and volunteers safe