

Meeting of Pandemic Ethics Advisory Group Minutes

- **Attendees (via Microsoft Teams):**
 - Dr Siobhán O’Sullivan (Chair);
 - Dr Barry Lyons;
 - Dr Joan McCarthy;
 - Dr Andrea Mulligan BL;
 - Dr Louise Campbell;
 - Prof. David Smith;
 - Dr Simon Mills SC;
 - Mr Mervyn Taylor
- **Apologies:**
 - Mr Stephen McMahon;

1. Minutes from previous meetings

- The minutes from 22nd June were agreed.

2. Update from NPHE

- The Chair informed members that there has been continued progress in suppressing the overall incidence of COVID-19 infection with downward or stable trends in all key parameters being sustained over the past 7 days. Nonetheless, it was noted that almost a fifth of new cases were occurring in people aged 24 years or younger and globally the pandemic was continuing to accelerate. Thus, NPHE had reiterated its advice to all Irish residents against all non-essential travel overseas and that all persons entering the country from overseas should restrict movements for 14 days.
- The Chair noted that NPHE had advised Government, that given the current epidemiological situation in the country that consideration should be given to reducing public health restrictions in accordance with Phase 3 of Government’s Roadmap for Reopening Ireland.

3. Discussion of draft Procedural Values paper

- The Chair thanked members for their valuable feedback on the document which had now been incorporated into the final version. She indicated that the intention was to bring the paper to NPHE for approval at its next meeting. The group agreed that the paper now read well and the changes made to the graphics had assisted with clarity, especially the box which guides the reader through a series of questions aimed at supporting procedural just decision-making.

4. Discussion of the PEAG output paper

The Chair gave a brief introduction of the paper, which had been circulated to members for their observations. It was agreed that while the primary purpose of the paper was to catalogue the work of the group, the reflection section of the paper was an important element. It was agreed that it would be premature to embark on a “lessons learned” at this stage, but that there were several elements that would be worth noting at this stage. These included the value placed on

care by our society and how we organise that care; the importance of promoting ethical discourse amongst the general public as the ethical questions under consideration e.g. allocation of scarce resources are questions not only for experts or authorities but for society as a whole. The question of pandemic preparedness was discussed, and it was noted that while planning is essential and valuable, there are elements that arise in the given context that cannot be anticipated, and that ethical frameworks need to be flexible for this reason. A question was raised about the reach of the ethical guidance produced by the group and the importance of having trained clinical ethics committees available to support clinical staff in interpreting and applying the guidance.

The Chair undertook to integrate the comments into the document and to circulate the final version for review in the coming week. The intention is to send to paper to NPHE for noting and inform NPHE that the group was standing down as it had met its remit. It was observed that ethical issues will likely continue to arise in the context of the pandemic, and that ethics expertise may be required, in which case it would be possible to reconvene the group.

5. AOB

- As this was the last scheduled meeting of the PEAG, the Chair expressed her sincere thanks and appreciation for the time and expertise so generously extended by the members of the group. The members expressed their thanks to the Chair for her expert stewardship of the process.