

16th Dec. 2021

Deputy Sean Crowe,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: sean.crowe@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 59843/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he is satisfied with the current system of walk-in appointments for vaccine boosters; his views on the long queues in inclement weather that have been seen in recent days; if a move away from walk-ins and towards a scheduled system has been considered; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Crowe,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The HSE COVID vaccination programme has to date administered over one million additional doses, including booster and immunocompromised vaccines. The programme is currently in the top four in Europe in terms of the number of people vaccinated per 100,000 people.

In order to give people maximum opportunity to get a booster, and to use all capacity in the programme, we are using vaccination centres, GPs and pharmacies as vaccination channels. In the vaccination centres, we are offering a flexible model for the administration of booster doses through scheduled appointments and the addition of walk-in clinics to encourage uptake and allow greater flexibility.

Following NIAC guidelines, the HSE is now offering one booster dose of an mRNA vaccine to people aged 40 years and over, all pregnant women aged 16 and over, healthcare workers, and people aged 16 to 49 with an underlying condition as well as those living in a nursing home or a long-term healthcare facility. If you are age 70 or over, you will be invited for your vaccine by your GP. If you are under 70, you will receive a text message from the HSE with a vaccination centre appointment when your booster is due but there will also be the opportunity to attend dedicated walk-in clinics. People can also receive their booster dose at a local participating pharmacy or their GP if they would prefer. The list of participating pharmacies can be found on the hse website and have included the link below for information:

<https://www2.hse.ie/Apps/Services/PharmaciesServiceList.aspx>

We are trying to encourage people to take their appointment when it is offered if at all possible, and if not to let the HSE know if you do not wish to take up your appointment and are attending a walk in service at either a vaccination centre or a pharmacy instead.

The public have three options to cancel appointments as follows:

1. Text message stating NEW (if you want to reschedule) or REJECT (if vaccinated or do not want to take up the booster)
2. Complete an online form at <https://www2.hse.ie/services/booster-enquiries/cancel.html>
3. Telephone HSELive

We will continue to use scheduled appointments and walk-in clinics. We do appreciate the difficulties for some people queuing for walk-ins, particularly during inclement weather, however the public have responded very favourably to the walk-in centres despite the need to queue. To indicate this we saw a large volume in attendance through walk-ins over the last week.

Given the uncertainty and potential risk of the Omicron variant the HSE has essentially opened up access to all channels to try and maximise the take-up and ensure we provide protection as early as possible to people, their families and wider society.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme