

19th Jan. 2022

Deputy Claire Kerrane,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: claire.kerrane@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 60321/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the difficulties posed to children and adults with autism and other conditions when it comes to availing of the Covid-19 vaccine (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Kerrane,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response and wish to apologise for the delay in responding to same due to the current demands of the Covid-19 pandemic.

All HSE Vaccination clinics for the 5-11 year old age cohort have been modified to ensure that they are child friendly, which includes those children with additional needs. For example, the appointments are now 15 minutes long and if a child is identified (ahead of time via HSE Live or on the day of vaccination) as having additional needs, there is guidance in the Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) for Vaccination Centres (CVC) specific for these children. Please see some of the measures and accommodations below which can be applied in circumstances where children / adults with additional needs attend a CVC:

- Additional assistance to attend the CVC for vaccination. For example additional time in the appointment slot or a quieter, less crowded time for their appointment. CVCs try to accommodate these children/adults at the start of the clinics or during other quiet periods.
- Room/cubicles with additional space away from the main CVC hall, near an exit door, in case a child/adult with additional needs becomes distressed and needs to go outside.
- Seating alternatives such as a mattress, yoga ball etc. that may help to make a child/adult with additional needs feels safer and more comfortable in the environment.
- Arrangements for a quieter environment during vaccination, where extractor fans are turned off, lights are dimmed etc.
- Materials for stimulation and distraction where needed such as toys, posters, colourful walls and space to run around if required.
- Arrangements for children/adults with additional needs and parents to be brought in through a different entrance, preferably close to the room/cubicle where they will be vaccinated, and not in the general queue system
- CVCs have been made aware that when scheduling a child/adult with additional needs, extra time may be required as well as multiple attempts on the same day or a return visit the following day if required.

Parents can request these accommodations by **free phoning HSE Live on 1800 700 700** in order to alert the CVC when scheduling and prior to the appointment. Those aged 12 and over can also request these accommodations by contacting HSE Live.

In addition to the accommodations that are recommended for all CVCs where possible, there are also a number of specialist clinics available in parts of the country (e.g. Citywest CVC). Any children (or adults) who are unable to leave their homes to receive a vaccination will be able to receive their booster vaccine in their own homes.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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