

11th Jan. 2021

Deputy Thomas Gould,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: thomas.gould@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 62557/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health if an outreach programme is planned for delivery of vaccine boosters to vulnerable hard to reach cohorts, for example, homeless persons and those in active addiction.

Dear Deputy Gould,

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 2.4 million additional doses, including over 2.3m booster and ca.104k doses for those with immunocompromised.

The HSE's COVID-19 vaccine communications programme has supported people in Ireland to be informed about and feel confidence in the vaccine and the protection it offers for us all. Each phase of our communications campaign has been rooted in ongoing research and insights, with channels and messages tailored to the group being invited at each stage.

As well as using mainstream traditional, social and digital media, here are some ways that the campaign, guided by the HSE National Social Inclusion Office and the National Immunisation Office, has focused on reaching people with varied language or other specific needs.

Languages

- To support the population who don't speak English as a first language, our vaccine information materials are available in 27 languages (online and print).
- A range of multilingual information videos created in partnership with Translate Ireland were created early in the vaccination programme in a range of languages, and voiced by medical or health professionals working in Ireland. This week, additional and updated videos in the series are in the final stages of completion and will be published in the next week or so.
- A new COVID-19 vaccine information video for pregnant women has also been produced in a range of languages and the videos are now live on the HSE's YouTube channel and being shared on social media. The multi-lingual videos were created by the HSE's National Social Inclusion Office and National Immunisation Office in partnership with Translate Ireland and encourage pregnant women to take up the COVID-19 vaccine. The videos are available here in the following languages: Arabic, French, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Lithuanian and English.

Multilingual targeted advertising

- Social media - our vaccines in pregnancy and our universal vaccine campaigns are translated into a range of languages and going out as targeted adverts on social media platforms.
- Radio campaign - broadcast radio ads on community radio 10 languages (including Italian, Spanish, French, Polish, Punjab, Urdu, and Russian).
- Digital audio - radio advertising is translated and played on digital platforms like Spotify and Podcasts, these respond to language settings on people's phones, or to the language of content being listened to.
- Press ads have also been published in Russian (Nasha Gazeta), Lithuanian (Lietuvis) and Polish (Nasz Glos) language newspapers in Ireland.
- Accessible information: All vaccine information leaflets, for each vaccine product, are available in Easy Read, braille, Irish Sign Language, audio and large print, and updated with any new clinical information as it arises.

Community Leaders and Champions: Additionally, the HSE established the COVID-19 Vaccine Community Network in January 2021, with the first meeting held in February 2021. National organisations were invited to join the network as the vaccine programme progressed through the vaccine allocation groups.

At present, there are 72 organisations on the COVID-19 Vaccine Community Network, which meets monthly.

Each organisation has a dedicated HSE link person to provide support and to hear any questions that they or their members have (many organisations operate telephone help lines). These questions are then brought back to a team for either clinical or operational response.

The purpose of the COVID-19 Vaccine Community Network:

1. To create a network that works together to help communicate and engage people about the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine programme;
2. To keep people in our shared networks informed about the vaccine programme, sharing updates as they are available, creating conversations and channels to support this;
3. To build confidence in the vaccine by sharing information on safety and testing, how the vaccine works, and who is getting it now and who will be getting it next; and
4. To keep public health advice top of mind as we work through this process during 2021.

There are COVID-19 Vaccine Community Network organisations with particular reach to different migrant communities across Ireland, including faith communities. An example of this is the video created by the Dublin City Interfaith Forum with a variety of religious leaders in Ireland supporting the COVID-19 vaccination programme [available here](#). Other partner organisations have also produced and shared information with their communities, and the translated COVID-19 vaccine resources have been helpful in this regard.

The HSE continues to work with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to help ensure that migrant communities in Ireland are provided with the COVID-19 vaccine messages in their native languages. The Department of Justice has an established network of partners and web content.

Dedicated vaccine advocacy and clinics: In addition to working with groups who represent migrant communities, the HSE's National Social Inclusion Office directly supports people from a range of vulnerable groups such as Travellers, people in Direct Provision Accommodation, Homeless groups, people in receipt of Opioid Substitution Treatment (OST), Roma, and Vulnerable Migrants.

Support to access the vaccination programme is provided in partnership with Public Health Directors and Social Inclusion at Community Healthcare Organisation level along with NGOs within the Community/ Voluntary sector.


Our efforts are continuing in this area and it is expected that those who have availed of the COVID-19 vaccine will come forward for their booster once called.

The following pathways/options to booster vaccination have been put in place for all eligible (e.g. those who completed the primary vaccination course > 3 months ago) individuals:

- You will receive an appointment from either a Vaccination Centre or your GP. You should avail of the first appointment offered.
- If you wish to receive your booster vaccine more quickly than option 1, we encourage you to either:
 - Go to one of our Vaccination Centres when they are facilitating 'walk-in clinics'
 - Contact a local participating pharmacy (full list on hse.ie), who will arrange an appointment for you.
 - Self-schedule appointments at selected Vaccination Centres

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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