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25th January 2021

Deputy Michael Healy-Rae,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ 2372/21

“To ask the Minister for Health if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding vaccinations; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Details supplied: “Minister, it has come to my attention that people in psychiatric institutions in Co. Kerry are not on any schedule for any vaccination to be provided to them, neither are people working in facilities dealing with mental health issues. I am aware that persons in acute unit of UHK have been vaccinated but nobody in the Kerry Mental Health services have been vaccinated, When will this happen?”

Dear Deputy Healy-Rae,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

As of yesterday, Sunday 24th January, the Pfizer BioNtech vaccine will have been offered to all residents of private and public nursing homes in Kerry, and the staff who care for them. This is a tremendous achievement and has been carried out in little over two weeks by teams working seven days a week.

In relation to other frontline healthcare workers (including staff in mental health residential settings), they are being vaccinated as part of the second provisional Vaccine Allocation Group i.e. frontline healthcare workers. We understand and share the eagerness of healthcare workers to be vaccinated (in line with and adhering to the Government’s Vaccine Allocation Groups) but this programme is currently dependent on supply of the vaccine. It will take time for all frontline healthcare workers to be vaccinated, but we will vaccinate all frontline healthcare workers as quickly as possible, as vaccine supplies arrives. We expect that vaccinations of some frontline healthcare workers will continue this week, including some staff in mental health residential settings and disability residential settings

The roll-out from week commencing today, Monday 25th January, will immediately move to residents aged over 65 in other long-term residential facilities, including disability and mental health facilities, with supply of the vaccine the only limiting factor. In relation to patient and residents of mental health services aged under 65, we expect that they will be included in the Government Vaccine Allocation Group Seven (which is people aged 18-64 with certain medical conditions) or Government Vaccine Allocation Group Eight (which are residents of long-term care facilities aged 18-64).

We are adhering to this Government policy in rolling out the vaccination programme. Timeframes for the vaccination group are not yet available, but we are hopeful that the vaccination of this group (and all groups) will progress as swiftly as possible, in line with the Government's Provisional Vaccine Allocation Groups. Increased vaccine supply will lead to an acceleration of the entire programme.

I trust this information is of some assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Priscilla Lynch', written in a cursive style.

Priscilla Lynch