

01/04/2021

Deputy Marian Harkin
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

RE: PQ 17557/21

Dear Deputy Harkin,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to your above referenced Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health. The question concerned was referred by colleagues in Parliamentary Affairs to Chief Clinical Office in the HSE for review and direct response.

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Minister for Health the reason contact tracers that are working from home have received the vaccine while gardaí, postal staff, teachers and other frontline workers have not yet been prioritised; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Response:

The COVID-19 Vaccine Allocation Strategy sets out a provisional priority list of groups for vaccination once a safe and effective vaccine(s) has received authorisation from the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The Strategy was developed by the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) and Department of Health, endorsed by the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE), and approved by Government on 8 December 2020.

The HSE has set out an agreed sequence for the vaccination of healthcare workers. Contact tracers, who work in the HSE's Contact Management Programme, and other healthcare workers, have registered for vaccinations in line with this agreed sequence.

The Contact Management Programme (CMP) was set up by the HSE in March 2020 to support the work of Departments of Public Health, by notifying results to people tested for COVID-19 (or a nominated person), and to identify and manage close contacts of people known to have COVID-19, in order to disrupt the transmission of the disease. This role is carried out under relevant legislation as set out below. Contact tracers work across sites in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Limerick with a very small number of these essential workers working remotely at this time due to specific vulnerabilities to the disease and in accordance with related public health/Government requirements. The work



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carried out by all staff in the CMP is entirely focused on the management and control of COVID-19 as part of the HSE's response to this global pandemic.

The Directors of Public Health and Specialists in Public Health Medicine in Departments of Public Health implement the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) legislation. The Medical Officer of Health (MOH) has the responsibility and authority to investigate and control notifiable infectious diseases and outbreaks, under the Health Acts 1947 and 1953; Infectious Disease Regulations 1981 and subsequent amendments to these regulations.

All staff working in the Contact Management Programme are carrying out functions under this legislation.

Staff of Public Health and the CMP have been classified as category 2(g) in the HSE's vaccination sequence as 'Statutory/Regulatory workers' and 'Critical management posts particularly on COVID response teams who provide on-going daily support to multiple locations'.

The relevant extract from the HSE's vaccination sequence is set out below for further information.

2(g) All other healthcare workers without direct patient care but working in a healthcare facility with the potential to meet patients/service users, who are not captured in 2a – 2f

- Examples are Laboratory staff, pharmacists, catering, household staff, general support staff, ICT, maintenance staff.
- Statutory/Regulatory workers e.g. HIQA inspectors, EHOs and others
- Critical management posts particularly on COVID response teams who provide on-going daily support to multiple locations.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact this office on 01 6352041 or via email strategicplanning@hse.ie.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Ryan
Business Manager
National Office Strategic Planning and Transformation and Contact Management Programme
Health Service Executive