

2nd Dec. 2021

Deputy Jackie Cahill,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: jackie.cahill@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 57495/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health his plans to publicly promote the Covid-19 vaccination booster campaign in order to tackle the lower levels of uptake of the booster vaccine particularly in the older age groups and those with underlying health conditions both of which would be considered higher risk categories; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cahill,

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'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 for their vaccines at each stage. Our work ensures that the HSE is open about the facts and the process, includes all communities, and keeps people up to date with answers about the vaccines that they can trust.

Our communications campaign has been active across the full range of media channels. This includes news media and the HSE website which have been our primary source of advice with over 20 million visits to vaccine content in 2021, and on all social media channels, through our over 1 million followers. Our marketing campaign has been live since the first days of 2021, on TV, radio, print, digital and search, and our messages and images have represented and included diverse groups and partners within our community.

Our communications team, working hand in hand with our specialist services and our network of partner organisations, has also planned for the information needs of diverse communities, shared weekly messages and earned valuable support as we rolled out the vaccine across the population.

Our COVID-19 vaccine booster campaign began in October 2021 with national press and radio advertising, reaching over 81% of our audience, along with an extensive social media campaign, and detailed web content to answer people's questions about why and how to get their booster campaign.

Increased campaign activity began this week, from November 20th, as more people aged 60 and over, and healthcare workers, are invited for COVID-19 vaccine booster doses.

The purpose of the campaign – entitled ‘Boost your protection’ - is to stress the importance of the booster dose in protecting people from severe illness and hospitalisation from COVID-19. It also invites people to take up their appointment as soon as it is offered.

Our current messaging is for those currently being offered boosters, those aged 60 and over and healthcare workers. Our campaign also lets people aged 50 and over, and people with conditions that put them at higher risk from COVID-19, know that they will be invited for their booster vaccine next, and they will be sent a text message from the HSE with their appointment and don’t currently need to take any action.

The current campaign is live this week and next on both national and local radio stations, and on all relevant social media channels. It will also include advertising on national weekend press and 57 local press titles commencing the week of November 29th. Out of home advertising began on Monday 22nd November and will be extended next week. As always, clear and easily understood advice and information for the public about their booster vaccine is available on the HSE website and includes information on when and how they’ll be offered their appointment.

When the next cohort of people begin to be offered appointments, which is due to commence during December 2021, further messages will be added to the campaign on press, radio and social media, ensuring that people are kept informed and included.

As the programme is only operational for a short period and there are specific eligibility criteria it would be premature to conclude low take up at this point, notwithstanding this we continue to progress all the actions set out above to minimise the risk.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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