



14th September 2022

Deputy Neasa Hourigan,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: neasa.hourigan@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 43625/22

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the way in which, in general, non-patient-facing HSE managers including managers with involvement in the roll-out of the Covid vaccine to patients and frontline staff in their local CHO, were notified of the dates on which they could avail of a first dose vaccine in 2021; if they were notified in writing or by phone as a rule; the exceptions that there would be for these communications; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

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 has successfully implemented the Covid-19 Vaccination Programme in line with original government direction and the many required changes throughout the past two years. The Covid-19 Vaccination Programme has seen over 11 million Covid-19 vaccinations administered encompassing primary doses, additional doses, first and second boosters.

In December 2020, the government published a COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy and Implementation Plan. This document provided the provisional sequencing in which group were to be vaccinated.

In March 2021, the government approved an update to the COVID-19 Vaccination Allocation Strategy. Based on clinical, scientific and ethical frameworks produced by the National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) and the Department of Health, this update set out the groups to be prioritised for vaccination to best achieve the Vaccination Programme's objectives of preventing serious illness, hospitalisation and death.

The plan, which was communicated clearly to all areas and within the public domain, consisted of the following Groups to be vaccinated in sequence:

- **Group 1.** People aged 65 years and older who are residents of long-term care facilities (likely to include all staff and residents on site)
- **Group 2.** Frontline healthcare workers
- **Group 3.** People aged 70 and older
- **Group 4.** People aged 16-69 with a medical condition that puts them at very high risk of severe disease and death



- **Group 5.** People aged 65-69 whose underlying condition puts them at a high risk of severe disease and death
- **Group 6.** Other people aged 65-69 Key workers essential to the vaccine programme
- **Group 7.** People aged 16-64 who have an underlying condition that puts them at high risk of severe disease and death.
- **Group 8.** Residents of long-term care facilities aged 16-64.
- **Group 9.** People aged 64 years and younger in the following order:
 - 64-55 years
 - 54-45 years
 - 44-35 years
 - 34-25 years
 - 24-16 years

The date on which public servants were offered access to a Covid-19 vaccine was dependant on their alignment to the sequencing guidelines rather than their employment as a public servant, given the broad spectrum of those employed within the public service these dates would vary.

HSE vaccination clinics were directed to follow the scheduling in the Government Strategy. Additional guidance was put in place by the Chief Clinical Officer in scheduling appropriate staff taking into account their risk of exposure to Covid 19 in their work setting rather than their grade. This documentation can be viewed at the following link:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/covid-19-vaccine-materials/sequencing-of-covid-19-vaccination-of-frontline-healthcare-workers.pdf>

Both the Chief Clinical Officer and the Chief Executive Officer communicated with all areas regarding the requirement to adhere to sequencing and that deviation from sequencing would be an unacceptable practice. The implementation of these plans was undertaken locally and a combination of national and local messaging used to achieve maximum efficiency within the programme.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eileen Whelan'.

Eileen Whelan
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme