



Deputy Holly Cairns TD
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

23.09.22

Re: PQ 43910 / 43911

To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to make the monkeypox vaccine freely available and widely accessible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Holly Cairns

To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to communicate public health advice and information on vaccines concerning monkeypox to the groups in society most at risk; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Holly Cairns

Dear Deputy Cairns,

The HSE is working to expand the monkeypox vaccination programme. While vaccine supplies in Ireland are limited, the recent approval by the European Medicines Agency of interdermal administration of the vaccine, will allow the HSE to offer the vaccine to more people than initially anticipated, within the current limited supplies.

The HSE estimates that around 6,000 people may be at heightened risk of monkeypox infection in Ireland. The first phase of the vaccine programme, which is underway, is offering the vaccine to around 600 people. This proposed second phase, using the new method of administration is expected to allow for vaccination of 40-50% of the estimated number in need.

The HSE is finalising a range of operational issues in advance of the commencement of the second phase of the vaccine rollout.

Currently, the number of new monkeypox cases in Ireland, week on week, is stable.

The first phase of the vaccine roll out commenced in September and is active and ongoing. Vaccines are being offered to close contacts of monkeypox cases and people who have had early infectious syphilis (EIS) between December 2021 and July 2022. This group were identified as including some of those at the highest risk, apart from close contacts of a confirmed case.

The HSE sought the advice and guidance of clinical and ethical experts to develop a plan for the initial offer of the limited supply of vaccines currently available. The HSE has also engaged closely with advocacy and support groups to seek their input.

At this time, supplies of vaccine in Ireland and in the EU are low and limited. Ireland, along with other EU countries is actively exploring options to increase our medium to long-term supply of vaccines. Separately, the HSE will ensure that it maintains a supply of vaccine which will be available for those intermediate and high-risk contacts of a confirmed case.



Based on current indications in relation to global supplies of vaccines, Ireland is likely to have increased vaccine supplies later this year and into next year.

In terms of public and community engagement, please be aware that the HSE has undertaken the following initiatives (in collaboration with our public representative partners):

- An MPX awareness campaign was created by MPOWER and Man2Man with oversight from the HSE. A number of communications approaches were employed to ensure a broad range of gbMSM received the campaign messaging. These include washroom posters in LGBT+ pubs and clubs across Ireland; social media advertising; advertising on popular gay dating apps; online and print adverts in the LGBT+ press and in the Dublin Pride Guide; and video content about different aspects of MPX testing and care.
- MPOWER and Man2Man.ie invited LGBT+ community leaders, venue managers and pride organisers to a community stakeholder meeting with the purpose of informing key members of the community of the emerging situation and to encourage them to support awareness and prevention efforts.
- MPOWER developed an outreach plan which sees 20 trained peer volunteers engaging with gbMSM in LGBT+ bars and clubs in Dublin. Outreach workers leaflet patrons in community venues and start conversations about the symptoms of MPX and how to access testing and care if needed. Extensive outreach took place during Pride month of June.
- MPOWER and Man2Man.ie held a very well attended community discussion event online in collaboration with Gay Community News. This had speakers from the IMT give an update on the situation, included two men who had a lived experience of MPX and allowed for Q&A with community.
- Adam Shanley, MPOWER Programme Manager was invited to present on the campaign to ECDC, WHO and a meeting of the European Commission Health Directorate General. The campaign is considered a best practice example for risk communication and community engagement on MPX by ECDC and the WHO, and is included in guidance documents for member states.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ciaran Browne'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr. Ciaran Browne
Acute Operations – HSE
National Crisis Management Team Lead (MonkeyPox)