

REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM - DUBLIN NORTH EAST

FÓRAM RÉIGIÚNACH SLÁINTE - BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH AGUS AN TÓIRTHUAISCEART

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 27TH JULY, 2020, AT 2:00PM

IN THE SOLSTICE ARTS CENTRE, NAVAN, CO. MEATH.

Members Present

Cllr. Daryl Barron
Cllr. Séamus Coyle
Cllr. Michelle Hall
Cllr. Howard Mahony
Cllr. Brian McKenna
Cllr. John Sheridan

Cllr. Tom Behan
Cllr. Kieran Dennison
Cllr. Adrian Henchy
Cllr. Brigid Manton
Cllr. Aisling O'Neill
Cllr. Trevor Smith

Cllr. Mary Callaghan
Cllr. Aiden Fitzpatrick
Cllr. Deirdre Heney
Cllr. David Maxwell
Cllr. Patricia Roe
Cllr. Gillian Toole

Apologies

Cllr. Christy Burke
Cllr. Colm O'Rourke

Cllr. Sean Kelly
Cllr. Emer Tóibín

Cllr. Ray McAdam

Not in Attendance

Cllr. Craig Lovett
Cllr. Eoghan O'Brien

Cllr. Séamas McGrattan
Cllr. Niamh Souhan

Cllr. Ruairi Ó Murchu
Cllr. Aoibhinn Tormey

Officials Present

Ms. Mellany McLoone, Chief Officer, CHO Dublin North City & County
Ms. Aoife O'Sullivan, Lead Manager, Regional Health Office
Dr. Sean Denyer, Acting Director of Public Health, North East
Mr. Cathal Hand, Network Manager, Monaghan Primary Care Services
Mr. Joe Ruane, Head of Primary Care, Midlands Louth Meath CHO
Ms. Mairead Lyons, Head of Disability Services, Midlands Louth Meath CHO
Ms. Anne-Marie Keown, Chief Operating Officer, IEHG
Ms. Dymphna Bracken, Communications Manager, Midlands Louth Meath CHO
Ms. Katherine Kellett, Regional Health Office – HSE DNE
Ms. Lorraine Timmons, Regional Health Office – HSE DNE
Ms. Anitha Anthonycruze, member of public

Cllr. Adrian Henchy, Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the Annual Meeting of the Forum, the first meeting of the Forum since February and the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chairperson thanked the Solstice Arts Centre for the opportunity to hold the meeting in person.

Cllr. Henchy introduced Aoife O'Sullivan, Lead Manager of the Regional Health Office. Ms. O'Sullivan welcomed members and introduced senior management present. Ms. O'Sullivan outlined safety measures and informed that the event was being held in line with public health guidance and had been risk assessed with measures implemented to safeguard the health and wellbeing of everybody in the room.

1. Amendment to Standing Orders

Cllr. Adrian Henchy, Chairperson, outlined the background stating that it has become apparent that the current Standing Orders of the Regional Health Forum, whilst not the intention or spirit, have the potential of hindering the facilitation of valid meetings of the Forum and there needs to be greater flexibility in scope to allow for alternative options in exceptional circumstances.

Such alternative options may include a different building and location and may also include use of video and/or telephone conferencing. Such exceptional circumstances may include, but not limited to, Covid-19 Travel and Isolation Requirements, Red Weather Warnings, etc.

Cllr. Henchy proposed to amend Standing Orders 12.6 with immediate effect as follows:-

“Pursuant to Regulations 14(5) of the Forum Regulations, the meetings shall be held at a venue fixed by the Executive. The designated venue for the Forum meetings is the HSE Offices, Kells, Co. Meath, or, in exceptional circumstances, and where agreed by the HSE Lead Manager and Chairperson, the meetings may be held either in an alternative location / venue or by telephone/video conference.”

The amendment was agreed on the proposal of Cllr. Gillian Toole and seconded by Cllr. Kieran Dennison.

2. Election of Chairperson

Cllr. Adrian Henchy, Chairperson, sought nominations for the position of Chairperson of the Forum.

Cllr. Adrian Henchy was nominated for the position on the proposal of Cllr. Deirdre Heney and seconded by Cllr. Howard Mahony.

As there were no other nominations for the position of Chairperson, Cllr. Henchy was declared re-elected as Chairperson.

3. Election of Vice Chairperson

Cllr. Adrian Henchy, Chairperson, sought nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson of the Forum.

Cllr. David Maxwell was nominated for the position on the proposal of Cllr. Séamus Coyle and seconded by Cllr. Kieran Dennison.

As there were no other nominations for the position of Chairperson, Cllr. Maxwell was declared re-elected as Vice Chairperson.

4. Adoption of minutes of meeting held on Monday, 27th January, 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 27th January, 2020 were adopted by the Forum on the proposal of Cllr. Gillian Toole and seconded by Cllr. Adrian Henchy.

5. Health Service Executive Updates

Ms. Aoife O'Sullivan, Lead Manager, Regional Health Office gave a report to the meeting which dealt with the following:-

- Covid-19 Response Updates;
- Covid Tracker App;
- World Hepatitis Day 2020;
- Builders, farmers and outdoor workers urged to be SunSmart due to their high risk of skin cancer;
- Life-saving, innovative 24/7 text service launches in Ireland;
- HSE HPSC Cautions to Be Aware and Prepare to Prevent Legionnaires' Disease.

Members raised the following queries and concerns:-

- i. Staff Bank - explanation for volume of nurses and HCAs rejected;
- ii. Query that assistance offered by a home care company was rejected;
- iii. Cottage Hospital, Drogheda – clarification on where work is being carried out, whether the day hospital will continue when it will resume;
- iv. New text-based mental health service – concerns on duplication of services / dilution of funding;
- v. Costs associated with the City West facility;
- vi. Staff absenteeism – need for targeted sequential testing of healthcare professionals for rostering purposes, etc.;
- vii. Questions on Covid-19 Updates.

Ms. Aoife O'Sullivan and senior management responded to the queries as follows:-

- i. Response to be provided in relation to the staff recruitment bank;
- ii. The statement will be examined;
- iii. A response will be provided;
- iv. A presentation will be organised on the new text service;

- v. A response will issue;
- vi. Serial testing in respect of nursing homes also includes testing of healthcare workers. Targeted testing staff in long term residential centres has been on-going with positive cases low. Guidance from the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) will determine next steps. The HSE provide comprehensive training, advice and support to staff on what they can do to keep themselves, clients, families and communities safe;
- vii. Member to submit questions for response.

The report was noted by the Forum.

6. Presentations on Covid-19

Dr. Sean Denyer, Acting Director of Public Health, North East, gave a presentation to members on Covid-19.

A discussion took place where members raised the following issues:-

- i. Target for testing – numbers per day/week;
- ii. Cohort being tested and process of requesting a test;
- iii. Target of two days from test to result - not happening in some areas;
- iv. Query around those who are not checking in on the Covid Tracker App;
- v. Information on follow up for people who have recovered and on-going effects from the virus;
- vi. Concerns in relation to high number of cases in County Monaghan;
- vii. Advice in relation to the flu vaccine with the onset of Winter – possibility of administration through pharmacies;
- viii. Number of cases in nursing homes;
- ix. Statistics on ethnicity and prevalence of Covid;
- x. Concerns around Covid-19 in Termonfeckin due to a nursing home and farm workers living in the same accommodation;
- xi. Risks if schools reopen without requirement for students to wear face coverings;
- xii. Plans for antibody testing;
- xiii. Concerns in relation to e-cigarettes and vapes in social gatherings and the hospitality sector - vapour lingers in the air and travels over two metres;
- xiv. Follow up testing in the agriculture and horticultural sectors where clusters have taken place;
- xv. Use of spare capacity from community pharmacists for testing and targeted testing before next phase.

Dr. Denyer and senior management responded to the questions and comments from the members as follows:-

- i. Capacity for testing at present is approximately 15,000 per day - everyone that is referred can be tested. There is sufficient capacity to deal with a larger volume as required. Demand has reduced but may increase as restrictions ease;
- ii. Testing criteria is reviewed and set by NPHE, there are various referral methods. If a person has symptoms, they ring their GP and where they

- meet the current criteria, are referred for a test and receive a text with appointment date, time and location. After they attend, a text message is issued outlining the result. Another method involves contact with a confirmed case, a person may be showing no symptoms, are contacted by HSE and asked to go for a test – there is no contact with their GP. There have been a number of no-shows of contacts of a confirmed case for testing. Members were asked to encourage those with an appointment for a test to attend. The National Ambulance Service (NAS) also provide home testing, where the GP determines someone cannot leave the home;
- iii. At present, an appointment can be organised within a day of referral. If a result is not received, they should contact their GP. The timeframe has improved overall and the HSE remain vigilant on the matter;
 - iv. It is not necessary to check-in every day on the Covid Tracker App. If you have been in contact with a case, the App will give a notification and process commences from there;
 - v. Community Assessment Hubs are a very good example of follow-up. Anyone who tested positive, with an underlying health condition, were referred to these hubs. Hubs are still live throughout the country and are well attended. Follow-ups are also provided by GPs;
 - vi. The rates for Cavan Monaghan are not significantly higher than other rural counties. However, there have been particular issues around outbreaks in meat processing plants and mushroom farms in these counties;
 - vii. There will be a campaign to encourage people to obtain the flu vaccination this year. All healthcare staff, home care staff and private and voluntary providers will be encouraged to avail of the vaccine. The vaccine will also be available to children aged 2-12 for the first time;
 - viii. Learning from outbreaks will assist with future planning. Improvements and measures, such as restricting staff movement among various settings, have been implemented in residential care. Repeat testing is taking place with numbers of new cases being consistently very low;
 - ix. Information has not been collected in this format and there is likely not enough data to give a definitive answer. It has been observed that more outbreaks occur in areas of poor social conditions and crowded accommodation;
 - x. It is acknowledged that where large numbers live in one setting, this poses a risk due to difficulties in socially distancing;
 - xi. Any policy or guidance is subject to rigorous review of available evidence;
 - xii. A person can pay to have an antibody test done privately. There is a seroprevalence study underway in Sligo and Dublin to investigate COVID-19 Infection in People Living in Ireland, however, there are currently no plans to test nationally. It is not known how immune people who have had the virus will be to a future infection or how long immunity might last;
 - xiii. Concerns will be raised with the relevant authorities. It is known that vaping is not a harmless activity and can lead to inflammation of the lungs, with increased likelihood of significant effects from a coronavirus infection;
 - xiv. There are no long term plans for follow up of positive cases. This may change in the future as more is learned about the long term effects of the virus. However, the HSE continue to engage with clients who have encountered problems due the effects of the virus;

- xv. Community pharmacists are an indispensable part of the health system and were kept in place as they were needed at the time.

7. Regional Health Forum – Annual Report 2019/2020

The report was noted by the members.

8. Consideration of Committee(s) of Forum

It was agreed that the Forum would continue with one Committee.

9. Motions

To call on the HSE to confirm that there will be NO reduction in services to people with intellectual disabilities in CHO 8. If anything, there will be an increase in services to support the emotional/ mental health of people with intellectual disabilities. Person-centred care will be risk assessed, planned and delivered as a matter of urgency for service users & their families.

Cllr. Gillian Toole

It was agreed that Cllr. Toole would submit additional questions and feedback for response.

10. Questions

The responses to the Questions were noted.

Cllr. Séamus Coyle requested that responses to Questions be included in the Minutes for that meeting.

It was agreed that this matter would be examined.

11. Chairperson's Correspondence

The Chairperson expressed a vote of sympathy on the death of Cllr. Mags Murray, former Forum member.

Sympathies were also extended to the family, friends and colleagues of Dr. Syed Waqqar Ali who worked in the Mater Hospital and Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, who passed away recently.

Cllr. Henchy also sympathized with everyone who has been affected or lost loved ones over the past number of months.

The Chairperson also informed the meeting that Meath County Council have nominated Cllr. Aisling O'Neill as a replacement for Cllr. Darren O'Rourke on the Forum.

12. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the Regional Health Forum - Dublin North East will take place on Monday, 28th September, 2020.

A discussion took place in relation to physical and virtual meetings. It was agreed that virtual meeting(s) will be arranged where a suitable venue cannot be sourced.

Signed:

Chairperson