



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Minutes of Special Meeting of the HSE Board Meeting

Ref: COVID-19

A meeting of the Board of the Health Service Executive was held on Wednesday 25th March 2020 at 5:45pm. The meeting was held via teleconference.

Present: Ciarán Devane (Chairperson), Deirdre Madden (Deputy Chairperson), Aogan Ó Fearghaíl, Brendan Lenihan, Fergus Finlay, Fergus O' Kelly, Fiona Ross, Tim Hynes, Sarah McLoughlin, Yvonne Traynor.

In Attendance: Paul Reid (CEO), Colm Henry (CCO), Anne O'Connor (COO), Geraldine Smith (internal Audit), Stephen Mulvany (CFO), Paul Connors (ND Communications), Dara Purcell (Secretary), John Kelly (Corporate Affairs).

1.0 Governance and Administration

The Chairperson Ciarán Devane, welcomed members to meeting which was called to review response to COVID-19. The Board met in the absence of management at the start of the meeting and agreed the aspects of the COVID 19 overall response that would be the focus for the meeting to include testing and tracing capacity, private hospitals, recruitment – Ireland's call, Procurement of PPE and NPHEE Ethical framework document

2.0 Overall Briefing on COVID-19

The CEO provided an update on key challenges in the response to the COVID 19 pandemic including building testing capability across the country in terms of testing centres and laboratory capacity to process the tests, increasing contact tracing capability to identify close contacts, engage with them and test them where appropriate, Procuring the maximum quantity of PPE for staff and patients as appropriate from all possible sources. He reported over 1,400 public servants, across nine centres, have been trained in contact tracing to complement resources in public health. He confirmed the level of testing was benchmarking well compared to other countries but that NPHEE will redefine the

focus of testing, now that there is confirmed transmission within the community. Focus will be on the at-risk categories of elderly and healthcare workers.

Colm Henry CCO reported that there were 235 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 as of 25/03/2020. This brings the total confirmed cases in the Republic to 1,564. A significant number of confirmed COVID-19 patients are receiving treatment in Dublin Hospitals. 1,775 beds are available in acute hospitals with 152 Critical Care Beds available. At present there are 326 COVID-19 confirmed patients admitted in our acute hospitals. 49 COVID-19 confirmed patients were admitted to Critical Care beds. Work is ongoing on the procurement of additional ventilation equipment and the training of staff to operate ventilation beds.

The Board considered the Ethical Framework for clinical decision making during the pandemic recently published by NPHE. The Board emphasised it expected that it should be engaged with before policy guidance impacting the HSE is put in place and noted correspondence had issued to the Secretary General on this matter.

Prof Madden had reviewed the NPHE document on behalf of the Board and noted that as a Framework it was not directed to clinical staff who will be involved in making decisions regarding the prioritisation of critical care resources in the context of COVID-19. The CCO confirmed that a NPHE sub group is preparing another guidance document applicable to the particular situation where resource scarcity arises and rationing decisions have to be made. This matter will be further considered at the March Board meeting.

In relation to procurement matters the CEO confirmed the general market conditions are unprecedented and highly volatile. It is extremely difficult to operate in markets. The HSE has procured and continues to procure stocks of PPE and spend committed to date is in excess of €60m. Continuity of supply has now been secured through a contract with an established Chinese manufacturer. The total value of this arrangement is in excess of €200m. Work ongoing with Aer Lingus, Department of Transport, the Chinese Embassy, the Irish Embassy in Beijing and Chinese Government officials to secure prompt delivery of the PPE.

Advanced discussions are ongoing to secure quantities of Ventilators in excess of 1,000. Regarding testing kits HSE has secured an additional and ongoing supply of 100,000 per week. In relation to hand sanitiser, in addition to traditional supply routes HSE is trying to be innovative to meet demand and is currently working with Pernod Ricard (supplying alcohol) and Mervue Laboratories (blending and bottling gel) to create supply.

The CEO informed the Board that specific arrangements are being made to record and report on significant expenditure on COVID 19 measures.

Anne O Connor COO reported on the work underway to bring on stream additional bed capacity through the City West campus and the agreement with private hospitals which will ultimately double current acute capacity. It was noted Heads of Agreement are being developed with the private hospital sector and an announcement by the Taoiseach will be made in the coming days.

Anne Marie Hoey reported on the recruitment underway as part of the Ireland on call initiative. The number of applicants is approximately 60,000 which includes nursing, medical, dental, support, health and social care professionals and ambulance. Approximately 27,000 have self-identified as being in relevant work areas, however on further online screening this number significantly reduces. She confirmed the focus is on doctors, nurses, healthcare assistant, domestics/ cleaners, porters, dentists, dental nurses, dental hygienists and are adding new categories as directed.

In response to issues raised by Board members she confirmed arrangements are being put in place with the State Claims Agency and regulatory bodies to ensure appropriate clinical indemnity cover and professional registrations. Registrations processes with the Medical Council, CORU and NMBI were discussed and it was reported that there was good cooperation with these organisations.

Paul Connors responded to Board member's questions in relation to effectiveness of communications during the pandemic. He reported to the Board on the COVID media campaign and advertisements that are being launched on TV, radio, many outdoor locations, with public health messages on staying at home, prevention and symptoms. He confirmed many new resources are being developed and shared on hse.ie

The impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on mental health issues was discussed. Anne O Connor reported that a psycho-social work stream was being led by Dr. Philip Dodd to update mental health supports.

The Chairperson thanked the CEO, and the EMT for their efforts to address the very challenging issues emerging in the crisis situation and the meeting concluded at 7.30 pm

Signed: 
Ciarán Devane
Chairperson

Date: 13/05/2020