



8th February 2021

Dr Colm Henry
Chief Clinical Officer
Health Service Executive

By email only: sabrina.doyle@hse.ie

RE: Covid-19 immunisation in Mental Health Services

Dear Dr Henry,

Thank you for your swift reply (22/01/21) following my letter re above, and once again I commend you and your office's continued good work and now resilience when confronted with what is at times an uncertain vaccine supply. A specific example of your good work was included in your letter, which was the attached explanation of the Government's Provisional Vaccine Allocation Groups and programme of delivery. However, while your letter addressed the main programmatic intention it is still unclear how our main concern is being or can be addressed which is the operationalising of the vaccine for the 'Provisional Vaccine Allocation Groups'.

Ascertaining where mental health staff and patients are on the allocation groups with estimated dates of vaccination is problematic at regional, local and community levels. This continues to be the main concern and not requesting a move up priority lists. For instance, long term care facilities for those with mental illness should be part of Group 1, however, members inform us that vaccination has not taken place in these units despite vaccinations being given to other long-term facilities on the same hospital site. Additionally, it is unclear and unknown when they will receive vaccination. It is the lack of information on when they will be vaccinated despite being in this first priority group that is of concern.

There appears to be a number of different systems operating whereby the vaccinations are being rolled out. These include hospital-based systems and community health organisation systems. To our knowledge, unfortunately these have not been linked via IT thereby enhancing anomalous and confusing situations whereby a psychiatrist with access to acute psychiatric beds in a general hospital may be vaccinated as part of the acute hospital system but his/her team may not be vaccinated as they are based in the community. We ask that details of vaccination should be provided at regional and local levels allowing for transparency in the process, demonstrating clear governance and most importantly clear accountability arrangements.

The session with the Oireachtas Committee on Health on Friday 29th January, provided great detail and clarity around the Vaccination Programme and indeed the enormous work and tasks that have been and continue to be undertaken and certainly creates reassurance for us as professionals but for the public too I hope.

Would it be possible, if not already in place this week, for Mr David Walsh ETC to clearly communicate and provide clarification to the Chief Officers of the CHO areas and CEOs of the acute



hospitals as to the prioritisation of the vaccination roll out? This would be very time efficient for senior clinical personnel who are spending inordinate amounts of time trying to ascertain whether and when they and their patients are likely to be vaccinated.

Again I want to commend your resilience, which is greatly contributing to the rollout of the vaccination programme and giving hope to everyone in the Mental Health Services.

Yours sincerely,

Dr William Flannery
President