

## **Evidence shows that elderly mental health residents receiving Covid-19 vaccination**

### **Despite five additional deaths, MHC also reports decline in case numbers**

**Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021:** Data produced by the Mental Health Commission (MHC) shows that people aged 65 and over across in-patient mental health facilities are receiving their Covid-19 vaccination, as per assurances provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) recently.

Evidence gathered by the MHC Covid-19 monitoring hub has also revealed that case numbers for both residents and staff in mental health services have decreased from the previous week, although five additional deaths referencing Covid-19 were reported.

The MHC contacted a sample of services last week, following assurances provided by the HSE last month that residents in services providing long term care to people aged 65 and over will receive a Covid-19 vaccination by the end of January. This cohort of people was included in the first allocation group for Covid-19 vaccinations published by the government prior to Christmas.

In total, 46 services providing care to people aged 65 and over were contacted, consisting of 26 long-stay services; seven acute services; and 13 community residences. In relation to residents, only four of the 26 long stay services had not yet vaccinated residents, although those four all had a scheduled date for vaccination. Of the seven acute services, three had not vaccinated residents and of those, one had a concrete plan for same. Of the 13 community residences, residents had been vaccinated in 10 and of the remaining three, one had a concrete plan and the other two were impacted by positive Covid-19 cases.

In relation to staff, 31 of the 46 services contacted reported that all or some staff members had been vaccinated. Ten services reported no staff vaccinations and no current plan to vaccinate staff.

“The evidence shows that the majority of residents and staff in services providing care for people aged 65 and over have been vaccinated, thereby indicating that the HSE is currently adhering to the planned roll-out policy in respect of the Covid-19 vaccination,” said the Director of Regulation for the MHC, Gary Kiernan.

“This is positive news. We will continue to monitor and gather information from services over the coming weeks. Apart from ensuring that the vaccination roll-out is maintained and completed for residents across all services, we also need to see evidence that staff who have not already been inoculated receive their vaccination in a timely manner.”

The MHC continues to provide the Department of Health and the HSE with a weekly report that includes a summary of notified cases and any concerns identified as part of its risk monitoring of in-patient mental health centres and 24-hour community residences. Combined, these 183 facilities care for more than 3,900 mental health patients and residents across the country.

“It is reassuring to see evidence that vaccinations have taken place, while the fact that overall case numbers for both residents and staff are declining is encouraging,” said the Chief Executive of the Mental Health Commission, John Farrelly. “Sadly, there was an additional five deaths, and we express our sincerest sympathies to the families and friends of all the people who died.”

The Commission provided the following metrics to health authorities on Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>:

- There were five new deaths referencing Covid-19 reported to the MHC during the week relating to four centres. The MHC has now been notified of a total of 28 deaths of residents of mental health services since the commencement of data compilation in April 2020.
- There were 46 services (out of a total of 183) reporting suspected or confirmed cases (compared to 57 the previous week).
- There were 84 suspected or confirmed cases relating to residents (compared to 109 the previous week). 72 of these 84 cases are confirmed (compared to 87 the previous week).
- There were 170 suspected or confirmed cases relating to staff (compared to 196 the previous week). 158 of these 170 cases have been confirmed (compared to 182 the previous week).

### **Notes to the Editor:**

#### **About the Mental Health Commission (MHC)**

The Mental Health Commission is an independent statutory body. The primary functions of the MHC are to foster and promote high standards of care and good practice in the delivery of mental health services and to ensure that the interests of those involuntarily admitted are protected, pursuant to the Mental Health Act 2001. The MHC also has statutory responsibility for the Decision Support Service (DSS) under the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.

#### **MHC Covid-19 Support & Risk Escalation Framework**

The MHC has been in regular contact with the approved in-patient mental health units since the beginning of March 2020 in relation to plans to deal with the virus. It was requested by the Department of Health at the start of April 2020 to risk-rate these units, along with the 24-hour community residences.

There are currently 183 services being monitored by the MHC, comprising of 66 in-patient units (services that have always been and continue to be regulated by the MHC), and 117 (unregulated) community residences. Combined, these facilities care for more than 3,900 service users.

Since April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, the MHC has been supporting the HSE by identifying risks at these facilities, through its data information systems, to ensure that the health service is in possession of the correct information and can, if necessary, take immediate and effective action.

The MHC developed a standardised regulatory support framework and is working over the phone with all services to determine their risks in relation to staffing, equipment, premises, specialist support and vaccination. The MHC continues to monitor all residential mental health services in relation to the pandemic and provides data to the Department of Health and the HSE on a weekly basis, with any identified issues escalated as appropriate.