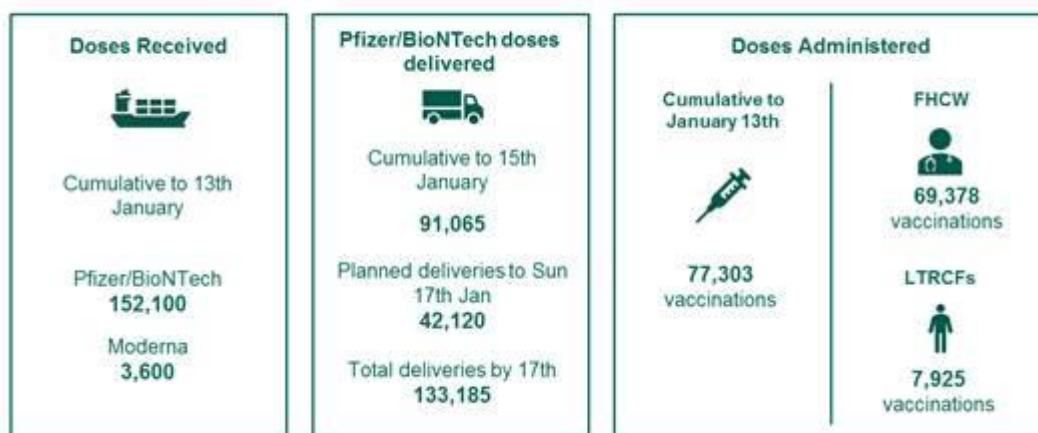


Dear Colleague

Thank you again for your work and commitment to providing healthcare through what has been a very difficult year for all of us. With the rollout of safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19, I know from our experience to date that uptake is high, reflecting enthusiasm among all healthcare workers. I want to assure you that the HSE is committed to offering the vaccine to all of you as quickly as possible. At this point in time, our principal challenge is the limited numbers of vaccine doses available (see figure 1 below). There were updated vaccination of figures released yesterday which showed that by Sunday night we had given 94,000 vaccines – 71,000 to our frontline healthcare workers and 23,000 to residents and staff of long-term care facilities.

Vaccination Programme Headlines to 13th January 2021



The roll out of the vaccination programme is based on the Government's provisional vaccine allocation groups published on December 8. There is a summary table of the allocation groups below for information.

To date vaccine provision has been directed towards the top two tiers of the allocation groups:

- People aged 65 years and older who are residents of long-term care facilities (likely to include all staff and residents on site)
- Frontline healthcare workers

In late December and the first week of January available vaccine was directed mainly to hospital settings. This allowed us to get the vaccine to a large number of healthcare workers as quickly as possible while we were finalising arrangements to vaccinate large numbers of people in over 580 long-term care facilities. Hospitals were able to mobilise staff and teams at pace to vaccinate healthcare workers. Although most of those vaccinated worked in the hospital sector, hospitals also reached out to colleagues in the community who work in frontline services. Last weekend saw a mobilisation of vaccination centres at three locations to vaccinate over 1800 members of General Practice teams. We will continue with our efforts to reach colleagues in all settings based on the sequencing document referred to below.

We are on target to have all long-term care facilities (LTCFs) receive their first dose of vaccine before the end of the month. The potential eligible population in the 589 facilities is over 70,000 and this is occurring at a time of high community transmission and illness from COVID-19 which will make the exercise particularly challenging. The COVID-19 vaccination process requires people to get two doses. This means that most of the deliveries over the coming weeks will be used for the 2nd dose needed to complete the vaccination course for those who received the first dose. There is very little vaccine available to give a first dose to additional frontline healthcare workers outside of residential care facilities until February. I know this is disappointing for colleagues in the frontline who are anxious to know when they will receive the vaccine.

When we complete the vaccination of residential care facilities, vaccine supplies will be directed to frontline healthcare workers. We will give equal priority to frontline healthcare workers working in the community and in hospital. Last week I issued detailed guidance to improve the targeting of the limited supplies available to frontline healthcare workers at most risk. The guidance is available [here](#).

Translating that guidance into practice is not easy and will not be perfect because there are practical challenges in identifying the people at highest risk and getting the vaccine to them, but we are committed to doing this as best as we can. I will update you on our progress as we proceed. I am very optimistic that from February onwards the supplies of vaccine for frontline healthcare workers will improve significantly.

For colleagues who are not frontline, the wait will be longer. As you will see the plan is to vaccinate people over 70 before we reach healthcare workers not in direct patient contact. It is difficult to say when we will be able to get vaccine to you at this stage but it will probably most likely be April. However if vaccine supplies allow we will do everything possible to get to you sooner.

Thank you again for your commitment. Remember the vaccine takes some time to work, and even after you have received the 2nd dose and immunity develops, ongoing infection prevention and control measures remain important in controlling transmission of the virus and reducing the burden of disease.

Dr Colm Henry
HSE Chief Clinical Officer

Group	Provisional vaccine allocation groups
1	People aged 65 years and older who are residents of long-term care facilities (likely to include all staff and residents on site) (about 70 000 people)
2	Frontline healthcare workers (about 150 000 – people)
3	People aged 70 and older (about 500 000 people)
4	Other healthcare workers not in direct patient contact
5	People aged 65-69
6	Key workers
7	People aged 18-64 with certain medical conditions
8	Residents of long-term care facilities aged 18-64
9	People aged 18-64 living or working in crowded settings

10	Key workers in essential jobs who cannot avoid a high risk of exposure to COVID-19. (They included workers in the food supply system, public and commercial transport and other vital services)
11	People working in education sector
12	People aged 55-64
13	Other workers in occupations important to the functioning of society
14	Other people aged 18-54
15	People aged under 18 and pregnant women