



**Health
Information
and Quality
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An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Protocol

**Policies relating to healthcare personnel
who do not avail of COVID-19
vaccination: an international review**

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Purpose and aim

The purpose of this protocol is to outline the process by which the Health Information and Quality Authority's (HIQA's) Health Technology Assessment (HTA) directorate identifies and reviews relevant SARS-CoV-2 evidence. This review will inform advice that is provided to the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The advice will take account of expert interpretation of the evidence by HIQA's COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group.

This review relates to policies and guidelines relating to healthcare personnel (including both healthcare workers [HCWs] and frontline health administrative staff) who do not avail of COVID-19 vaccination (due to vaccine refusal or potential contraindication to the vaccine). The following policy question was outlined by NPHE:

"What policies, mitigation actions or initiatives have been implemented internationally relating to healthcare workers who do not avail of COVID-19 vaccination that could be considered by the Irish Health Service?"

The following research question (RQ) was formulated to inform this policy question:

"What international policies and guidelines exist relating to healthcare personnel who do not avail of COVID-19 vaccination?"

Process outline

Given the policy question under consideration, two elements will contribute to this evidence synthesis, namely:

- a review of international public health guidance and policy
- input from HIQA's COVID-19 EAG.

Four distinct steps in the process have been identified. These are listed below and described in the following sections:

1. Review of international public health guidance and policy
 - 1.1. Search relevant sources
 - 1.2. Screen sources
 - 1.3. Data extraction.
2. Summarise the findings of the international review.
3. Present findings to HIQA's COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group for input.

4. Provide findings and advice to NPHE for consideration.

1. Review of international public health guidance and policy

1.1 Search relevant sources

A search will be conducted to identify relevant policy and guidance documents relating to healthcare personnel who do not avail of COVID-19 vaccination. The following three broad categories will be searched:

- i. public health agencies and governmental health departments
- ii. professional bodies
- iii. occupational health agencies.

In terms of national and international public health agencies, a range of sources will be searched based on their applicability to the Irish context (in terms of geography, healthcare system similarity or guidance to date). Only guidance relating to healthcare personnel will be included. The following sources will be searched:

- Australia (<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert>)
- Austria (<https://www.sozialministerium.at/Informationen-zum-Coronavirus.html>)
- Belgium (<https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/faq/>)
- Czechia (<https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/measures-adopted-by-the-czech-government-against-coronavirus-180545/>)
- Denmark (<https://coronasmitte.dk/en>)
- ECDC and European Union (<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/covid-19-vaccination-and-prioritisation-strategies-eueea>; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content>)
- Finland (<https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en>)
- France (<https://www.gouvernement.fr/info-coronavirus>)
- Germany (<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en>)
- Italy (<http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/nuovocoronavirus>)
- Netherlands (<https://www.government.nl/topics/coronavirus-covid-19>)
- New Zealand (<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>)
- Norway (<https://www.fhi.no/en/id/infectious-diseases/coronavirus/>)
- Portugal (<https://covid19.min-saude.pt>)

- Spain (<https://www.mscbs.gob.es/>)
- Sweden (<https://www.government.se/government-policy/the-governments-work-in-response-to-the-virus-responsible-for-covid-19/>)
- Switzerland (https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/en/home/das-bag/aktuell/medienmitteilungen.html?dyn_startDate=01.01.2016UK)
- United Kingdom:
 - England (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>)
 - Northern Ireland (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>)
 - Scotland (<https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine>)
 - Wales (<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>)
- USA (CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations.html>)
- WHO (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>)

In terms of professional bodies, only guidance from a select number of countries relating to physicians and nurses will be included. The following sources will be searched:

- Australia/New Zealand
 - Royal Australasian College of Physicians (<https://www.racp.edu.au/>)
 - Australian College of Nursing (<https://www.acn.edu.au/>) and College of Nurses Aotearoa (NZ) (<https://www.nurse.org.nz/>)
 - The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (<https://www.racgp.org.au/>) and the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (<https://rnzcgp.org.nz/>)
- Canada
 - Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (<https://www.royalcollege.ca/rcsite/home-e>)
 - Canadian Medical Association (<https://www.cma.ca/>)
 - College of Nurses of Ontario (www.cno.org)
- Ireland
 - Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (<https://www.rcpi.ie/>)
 - Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (<https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/>)
 - Irish College of General Practitioners (<https://www.icgp.ie/>)
 - The Irish Practice Nurses Association (<https://irishpracticenurses.ie/>) and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (<https://www.nmbi.ie/>)
- UK

- Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK (Edinburgh, Glasgow and London) (<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/federation-royal-colleges-physicians-uk>)
- Royal College of Surgeons of England (<https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>), Edinburgh (<https://www.rcsed.ac.uk/>) and Glasgow (<https://rcpsg.ac.uk/>)
- Royal College of General Practitioners (<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/>)
- Royal College of Nursing (<https://www.rcn.org.uk/>).

In terms of occupational health and safety agencies, only policies from a select number of countries relating to healthcare workers will be included. The following sources will be searched:

- National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, USA (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/index.htm>)
- Occupational Health and Safety Administration, USA (<https://www.osha.gov/>)
- The Society of Occupational Medicine, UK (<https://www.som.org.uk/>)
- Health and Safety Executive, UK (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/>)
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (<https://osha.europa.eu/>).

1.2 Screen sources

The above sources will be screened for information relating to policies relating to healthcare personnel who do not avail of vaccination. No restriction will be placed on language and non-English documents will be translated via Google translate. However, this method will be noted as a limitation given potential inaccuracies in the interpretation of direct translation.

1.3 Data extraction

Only data relevant to the policy question will be considered. The data extraction template for this element is provided in Appendix 1.

2. Summarise findings

A descriptive report of the findings from this review will be prepared and an interpretation provided.

3. Present findings to COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group for input

The findings of this review will be presented to the HIQA COVID-19 Expert Advisory Group (EAG) for consideration, clinical interpretation and input.

4. Provide findings to NPHEt for consideration

A document outlining the key findings of the review, expert input from the EAG and the resultant advice will be provided to NPHEt for consideration.

5. Timelines

This review will be conducted in line with the processes and timelines outlined for Phase 2 of HIQA's COVID-19 response. Work commenced on 8 March 2021 and it is anticipated that a final draft will be circulated to HIQA's COVID-19 EAG for review and input on the 25 March 2021, with a view to providing advice and recommendations to NPHEt prior to their meeting on 1 April 2021. However, this timeframe is contingent on agreement of the protocol. Should delays be encountered then this timeline will be amended.

Appendix 1. Data extraction template

Source	Description of context Description of HCW roles	Policy recommendations
Organisation Guidance title URL Date published/updated		