Protocol

Planned public health measures and strategies to limit the impact of COVID-19 surges: an international review

15 August 2022

About the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory authority established to promote safety and quality in the provision of health and social care services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public.

HIQA's mandate to date extends across a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector services. Reporting to the Minister for Health and engaging with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, HIQA has responsibility for the following:

- **Setting standards for health and social care services** — Developing person-centred standards and guidance, based on evidence and international best practice, for health and social care services in Ireland.

- **Regulating social care services** — The Chief Inspector within HIQA is responsible for registering and inspecting residential services for older people and people with a disability, and children's special care units.

- **Regulating health services —** Regulating medical exposure to ionising radiation.

- **Monitoring services** — Monitoring the safety and quality of health services and children's social services, and investigating as necessary serious concerns about the health and welfare of people who use these services.

- **Health technology assessment** — Evaluating the clinical and cost-effectiveness of health programmes, policies, medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic and surgical techniques, health promotion and protection activities, and providing advice to enable the best use of resources and the best outcomes for people who use our health service.

- **Health information** — Advising on the efficient and secure collection and sharing of health information, setting standards, evaluating information resources and publishing information on the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.

- **National Care Experience Programme** — Carrying out national service-user experience surveys across a range of health services, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE.

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1 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 will conduct an international review of planned public health measures and strategies developed to limit the impact of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) surges. The information contained in the review will inform the work of the COVID-19 Advisory Group (CAG) in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2 Process outline

It is important that a standardised approach to the process is developed and documented, to allow for transparency and to mitigate risks.

Three distinct steps in the process have been identified. These are listed below and described in more detail in sections 2.1—2.3:

1. Search of relevant international resources
2. Review and extract relevant information on planned public health measures and strategies to limit the impact of COVID-19 surges
3. Summarise the information and circulate to CAG.

2.1 Search of relevant international resources

Information on planned public health measures and strategies to limit the impact of COVID-19 surges will be identified primarily from government resources (websites, reports and press releases), with representatives from key national-level organisations contacted if required.

This information will be sought from a select number of countries. The following countries have been selected for inclusion in this review:

EU/EEA

- Austria
- Belgium
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Norway

- Portugal
- Spain
- Sweden.

Non - EU

- Australia
- England
- Israel
- New Zealand
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales.

These countries were selected based on a combination of geographical proximity to Ireland, population size, European Union membership and or availability of documents in English. Information will also be sought for Ireland to allow for direct comparison where appropriate. The associated governmental resources that will be searched in relation to each selected country is detailed in Appendix A.

The list of countries may be updated to include additional countries should this information be deemed relevant to the review. Similarly, some countries may be removed from the list if information on public health preparedness plans cannot be extracted due to lack of information, or if a published public policy response to COVID-19 surges cannot be identified. This will be documented.

The list of resources is not exhaustive and will be expanded as necessary should information on specific measures in response to COVID-19 surges be made available elsewhere. Additionally, as public health preparedness plans may currently be under development, and or may become available in time, continual searching for information will be undertaken up until three days prior to CAG report submission.

2.2 Review and extract relevant information on planned public health measures and strategies to limit the impact of COVID-19 surges

The review will extract relevant information on planned public health measures and strategies to limit the impact of COVID-19 surges. These may include, but are not limited to, public health measures related to:

- vaccination policies and or strategies (this will include vaccination against COVID-19 as well as other relevant pathogens, for example influenza)
- test and trace strategies (for example, contact tracing)

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- movement of people (for example, stay at home measures or curfews)
- community healthcare settings (for example, nursing homes or long-term residential care facilities)
- social or mass gatherings
- education
- business activities
- sporting activities
- religious activities
- domestic travel
- use of face coverings.

Within the selected countries, current restrictive measures with no specified end-date may factor into preparedness plans for potential surges and or winter 2022/2023. These data will be extracted using resources from the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and World Health Organization (WHO), where appropriate (Appendix 2). Information on the criteria (or triggers) that will be used in each country to inform a change in public health measures (such as the introduction of additional restrictions or, conversely, the easing of restrictions) will be extracted.

The review is limited to COVID-19 surge and or preparedness plans and therefore national plans aimed at living with COVID-19, such as the "Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19"[1] are considered out of scope. Furthermore, due to the dynamic COVID-19 landscape, previous public health COVID-19 surge plans developed in 2020 and or 2021 will not be included. These surge plans may have been developed without the availability, distribution and or recommendation of COVID-19 vaccinations and boosters, and preceded the arrival of more recent, highly infectious and transmissible COVID-19 variants (such as Omicron and BA.4) and therefore recommendations in regards to public health measures and strategies may have changed.

Planning and management of COVID-19 surges in acute healthcare settings are considered outside the scope of this review. Therefore, seasonal preparedness plans related to the delivery of national health services in acute healthcare settings, such as the HSE "Winter Preparedness Plan October 2021 – March 2022"[2] and the NHS "Winter Preparedness 2021"[3], are considered out of scope. However, surge plans related to planned public health measure implementation in community healthcare settings, including nursing homes and long-term residential care facilities, will be included. To facilitate the identification of COVID-19 surge plans for community healthcare settings, the International Long-Term Care Policy Network has been added as a resource (Appendix 2).

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Any changes to the review will be reflected in the protocol and detailed under version history.

2.3   Summarise the information and circulate to CAG

Planned public health measures and strategies to limit the impact of COVID-19 surges, where available for the included countries, will be documented and presented. The review will be sent as information to CAG.

3 Review and update

Given the rapidly changing environment, this protocol will be regarded as a live document and amended when required to ensure it reflects any changes made to the outlined processes.

References

1.   Government of Ireland. Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19. 2020.
2.   Health Service Executive (HSE). Winter Preparedness Plan October 2021 - March 2022. 2021.
3.   National Health Service (NHS). Winter preparedness in the NHS. 2021.

Appendix 1- List of countries and associated resources

EU/EEA

- Austria
  - https://www.sozialministerium.at/en.html
  - https://www.sozialministerium.at/en/Topics/Care/Services-Social-Services.html
- Belgium
  - https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/
  - https://www.vlaamse-ouderenraad.be/
  - https://www.belgium.be/nl/gezondheid/gezondheidszorg/medische_diensten/rusthuizen
- Czechia
  - https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/measures-adopted-by-the-czech-government-against-coronavirus-180545/
  - https://www.mzcr.cz/
- Denmark
  - https://en.coronasmitte.dk/
  - https://en.coronasmitte.dk/rules-and-regulations
  - https://en.coronasmitte.dk/general-information/corona-strategy
  - https://sst.dk/da/Viden/AEldre
- Finland
  - https://stm.fi/en/frontpage
  - https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en
  - https://stm.fi/iakkaiden-palvelut
  - https://stm.fi/tiedotteet
- France
  - https://www.gouvernement.fr/info-coronavirus
  - https://www.pour-les-personnes-agees.gouv.fr/vivre-dans-un-ehpad/les-differents-etablissements-medicalises/les-ehpad
- Germany
  - https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en
  - https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus.html
  - https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/ministerium/meldungen.html
- Ireland
  - https://www.gov.ie/en/

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- Italy
    - http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/nuovocoronavirus/dettaglioFaqNuovoCoronavirus.jsp?lingua=english&id=230#11
    - https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/news/p3_2_1.jsp?lingua=italiano&menu=notizie&dataa=2022/12/31&datada=2016/01/01
    - https://www.salute.gov.it/portale/news/p3_2_0.jsp?lingua=italiano&id=1040
- Netherlands
    - https://www.government.nl/topics/coronavirus-covid-19
    - https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/coronavirus-covid-19
    - https://www.rivm.nl/coronavirus-covid-19/professionals/buiten-ziekenhuis
    - https://www.rivm.nl/coronavirus-covid-19/actueel
    - https://www.rivm.nl/en/coronavirus-covid-19/frameworks-for-covid-19-measures/generic
- Norway
    - https://stm.fi/en/frontpage
    - https://www.fhi.no/sv/smittsomme-sykdommer/corona/
- Portugal
    - https://covid19estamoson.gov.pt/
    - https://covid19.min-saude.pt/
    - https://www.dgs.pt/em-destaque.aspx
- Spain
    - https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/Paginas/index.aspx
    - https://www.exteriores.gob.es/en/Paginas/index.aspx
    - https://www.sanidad.gob.es/
    - https://www.sanidad.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos.htm
    - https://www.sanidad.gob.es/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov/documentos/COVID19_Fragilidad.pdf
- Sweden
    - https://www.government.se/government-policy/the-governments-work-in-response-to-the-virus-responsible-for-covid-1/
    - http://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/
    - https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/information-till-varden/personal-inom-halso--och-sjukvard/
    - https://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/nyheter-och-press/nyhetsarkiv/

Non-EU

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- Australia
  - https://www.health.gov.au/health-alerts/covid-19
  - https://www.health.gov.au/news/ahppc-statement-on-winter-season-preparedness
  - https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-surge-health-workforce-package
  - https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/operation-covid-shield
- England
  - https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus
  - https://www.gov.uk/search/all?level_one_taxon=5b7b9532-a775-4bd2-a3aa-6ce380184b6c&content_purpose_supergroup%5B%5D=guidance_and_regulation&order=updated-newest
  - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infection-prevention-and-control-in-adult-social-care-settings
  - https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency
  - https://research.ukhsa.gov.uk/
  - https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/
- Israel
  - https://www.gov.il/en/Departments/Guides/ramzor-cites-guidelines?chapterIndex=1
  - https://govextra.gov.il/ministry-of-health/care-covid19/elderly-care-covid19/
- New Zealand
  - https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus
  - https://covid19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/about-covid-19/our-response-to-omicron/
  - https://covid19.govt.nz/traffic-lights/
- Northern Ireland
  - https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19
  - https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/guidance-healthcare
- Scotland
  - https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/
  - https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance/
  - https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-care-homes-visiting-guidance/

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- o https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-adult-social-care-guidance/
- o https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-community-and-residential-care-settings/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-community-and-residential-care-settings-version-22/
- Wales
  - o https://gov.wales/coronavirus
  - o https://gov.wales/care-homes-and-social-services-coronavirus
  - o https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/information-for-health-and-social-care/

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Appendix 2- Additional resources

- ECDC
  - https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19
  - https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/all-topics-z/coronavirus/threats-and-outbreaks/covid-19/prevention-and-control/LTCF-resources
  - https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/infection-prevention-and-control-and-preparedness-covid-19-healthcare-settings
  - https://covid-statistics.jrc.ec.europa.eu/RMeasures
- International Long-term Care Policy Network
  - https://ltccovid.org/international-reports-on-covid-19-and-long-term-care/
- WHO
  - https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
  - https://covid19.who.int/measures