Health Budget Oversight Group Minutes

4th June 2020. 2:30pm

Health Service Executive:	Stephen Mulvany, Tim Cummins, Colum Maddox, Angela Fitzgerald, Nigel O'Keefe, Damien McCallion, Mark O'Connor, Helen Byrne, Pat Healy, Tony Patterson.
Department of Health:	Paul Bolger, Fiona Prendergast, Greg Dempsey, David Smith, Kevin Colman, Fergal Goodman, Caoimhe Dolan, David Bolger, Denise McCarthy, Eoin Halpin, Matthew Dignam, Sharon Gilligan, Aidan Gilchrist, Shane Corr, Rhona Broderick.
D/Public Expenditure & Reform:	Ronnie Downes (Chair), David Owens, Terry Jennings, Patrick Moran, Deirdre Collins, Robert Scott, Cian McCarthy, Albert Morris.

1. **Minutes & Agenda**

Minor suggestions to the previous HBOG meeting from 28.05.20 were requested and agreed.

2. **Pay and Numbers staffing update**

An overview on staffing numbers since March was presented to the Group by the HSE. The increase in staffing came as a direct response of anticipated pressures in the healthcare setting due to COVID-19. There was an increase in recruitment, certain specialities recruitment dates were brought forward, interns were hired and some retirees returned to support the system during the pandemic. The increase in overtime and absenteeism during this time also put additional pressure on system, as well as requirement for extra services.

The modelled cost of absenteeism to the end-April has now been included in the latest Flash report and can be more accurately monitored going forward with the use of absence codes for COVID-19.

A review of fixed term and permanent posts will assess the system requirements going forward using end-May figures to reform a 2020 PNS. A body of work within the HSE has commenced on the requirement for staff to be maintained after current sanctions. This projected work-stream will run alongside the recovery plan.

Action: The HSE to present permanent staffing numbers to the HBOG as soon as available.

3. **Update on HSE COVID-19 Action Plan**

The offline meetings in regards the weekly Flash Report shows have proved fruitful this week. This meeting will continue to take place every fortnight or as necessary.

The difficulty in meeting savings projections for 2020 discussed.

Action: DPER to update and send revised queries to HSE via D/Health. Some outstanding queries were noted.

4. **COVID-19 Reporting and Monitoring**

- **Private Hospitals**

There was a query re private Consultant contracts in light of the Government Decision to discontinue the current arrangements with private hospitals.
Action: HSE to revert with definitive answer on query above.

- **Private Nursing Homes – uptake and legal advice**

The news that 61 outbreaks of COVID-19 in nursing homes have been closed off was welcomed by the Group. A review is underway on the temporary assistance scheme (TAPS) which runs until end-June. Analysis will be undertaken over the coming weeks. A presentation of this and further discussion will take place in this forum in two weeks.

- **GP revised contract**

The issue in relation to the GP COVID payment and GMS clients was discussed. There is one week remaining of the 13 week GP COVID arrangement. D/Health is drafting a submission for the Minister on the future of this arrangement. The need to make contact with PER in good time was mentioned.

- **Procurements (PPE, ventilators, other – IT contracts)**

PPE
Good progress has been made on seeking further detail on PPE procurement. D/Health is progressing a review of the future requirements/costs of PPE for the HSE.
Action: D/Health and D/PER to meet to discuss early next week.
A memo on PPE is planned to go to Government on Friday two weeks.

Testing
There continues to be good engagement between the HSE and DoH in regard to testing. Lab negotiations have progressed and a range of issues are being examined, including minimum volumes, price, break clauses and turnaround times. Once D/Health and HSE agree and finalise this, it will be shared with the Group.

It is hoped that this will be finalised this week and a memo brought to Government next week.

- **Citywest**

A decision on the continuation of the current arrangement with Citywest is required by 26 June. All are working together to have this ready in good time for review and to achieve maximum value on the remainder of the period. This will be discussed further between HBOG meetings.
Action: D/Health to send letter outlining its position on this as soon as possible.

- **Community Assessment Hubs**

The HSE is working on a plan regarding the reduction in number of community hubs in line with the developing public health situation. This plan is a work in progress and a paper will follow soon to be shared with the Group. A decision will need to be made by mid-June in this regard.

5. **Health Budget Profile and Monitoring**

To be discussed at future HBOG meeting.

6. **AOB**

Query on information being provided at testing centres on what the test results means and how they should be interpreted. Continual engagement with SCA.

Next meeting is scheduled for 11th June, 2:30pm.