



11<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2022

Deputy Róisín Shortall,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2

*Issued via email to: [roisin.shortall@oireachtas.ie](mailto:roisin.shortall@oireachtas.ie)*

**PQ Number: 2831/22**

**Question: To ask the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to ensure that Covid-19 booster vaccines are administered before they expire following media reports that 400,000 to 500,000 doses are due to go out of date over the next two weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Shortall,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The Vaccination Programme is no longer constrained by supply as was the case at the early stages of the programme. Current vaccine inventory levels remain strong with high levels of accessibility to vaccines through existing manufacturer supply channels.

There are two stock expiry challenges as set out below:

- Vaccines received in the country which are stored in our central distribution depot which typically have expiry periods of up to 7 months. This can be redistributed to other countries if identified with sufficient shelf life.
- Vaccines distributed to the vaccination channels (i.e. GPs, pharmacies, hospitals and Vaccination Centres) which have a shelf life of 30 days. This cannot be distributed to other countries as it has insufficient shelf life.

The first of these challenges is managed by our logistics team in conjunction with the National Immunisation Office (NIO) and the Department of Health. As part of this process we have made donations to developing countries.

The second of these challenges is managed in conjunction with the GPs, pharmacies, hospitals, NAS and Vaccination Centres, who place their orders based on anticipated demand. Unfortunately, once vaccine stock is distributed to the various channels it must be used within 30 days.

We saw unprecedented demand as part of our accelerated programme during Christmas and the New Year. Unfortunately we saw this demand fall exponentially in early January. This led to expiry of vaccines due to lower uptake of both of the mRNA vaccines and we have seen over c.500k vaccines expire in the last week due to reduced uptake. This is despite the best efforts of our GPs, pharmacies, hospitals and Vaccination Centres. Over 1300 GP practices, 800 pharmacies and 32 Vaccination Centres participated in the accelerated programme.

A number of initiatives have been put in place to drive an increase in demand thereby minimising the amount of stock that will expire and increasing the overall protection from the virus in the population.


These include:

- Public communications on the risk of expiring stock due to lower uptake trends
- A range of options for access to vaccines (multiple channels, self-scheduling, walk-in clinics, targeted SMSs etc.)
- Active management of stock in VCs to ensure first in first out
- Geo-targeted advertisements over the coming weeks and a refreshed HSE Booster media campaign
- Rollout of GP led pop up clinics in 3<sup>rd</sup> level institutions (Athlone IT, DCU, IT Carlow, GMIT, UCD, UCC and WIT)
- Launch of Immunocompromised Booster programme w/c 17<sup>th</sup> January (c.50k become eligible in Jan.)
- Assessment of Local Electoral Areas with poor uptake and pop up clinics to support these areas

This will remain a challenge for the duration of the Booster Programme as we maintain access through the Pharmacies, GPs and Vaccination Centres for people who are unvaccinated. This will be a particular challenge for the completion of the booster programme as people who have had prior infection become eligible three months after their infection.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,



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**Damien McCallion**  
**National Director**  
**National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme**