

Pharmacists call for urgent clarity on when they can begin vaccinating against COVID-19



29 March 2021: Pharmacists across the country are still in the dark as to when they can begin administering the COVID-19 vaccine. This is according to the Irish Pharmacy Union which has called on the Minister for Health and the HSE to urgently clarify when pharmacists can begin vaccinating the public.

IPU Secretary General Darragh O’Loughlin outlined the concerns of community pharmacists, saying, “Pharmacists are increasingly frustrated at the complete lack of clarity on when they can begin vaccinating their patients and the broader public.

“The Government has set ambitious targets on providing one million vaccines per month from April. We have over 1,850 community pharmacies in Ireland, most of which will play a vital role in helping to achieve this target. However, despite being ready and waiting to vaccinate people within their local communities, they still have no information on when they will begin vaccinating.

“The Irish Pharmacy Union is concerned that any further delay in rolling out the service will lead to a failure to meet our vaccination targets. We are urgently calling on the Minister for Health and the HSE to clarify when pharmacists can begin vaccinating.

“When all they are seeing is delay after delay, pharmacists’ patients and the people in the communities they serve are getting increasingly frustrated.

“Pharmacists are trained, experienced and ready to start vaccinating in every town, village and

community around the country. They, and the people in their communities, urgently need clarity on when they can start vaccinating.”

Mr O’Loughlin also highlighted the significant disparity in the vaccination of pharmacy staff from region to region and called for this situation to be addressed immediately. “While a significant number of pharmacy staff, as essential frontline workers, have thankfully now been vaccinated, for some reason there are areas of the country where there has been little, if any, movement on vaccination of this key cohort. If there isn’t rapid progress on this, there could be a serious knock-on impact on the rollout of vaccinations in those areas. Failing to protect pharmacy teams could therefore slowdown vaccine administration to the wider population in the affected parts of the country. Nobody wants to see that.”