

Pharmacists Criticise Exclusion from COVID Booster Campaign



- **Illogical decision will only slow down roll-out of booster vaccines**
- **Call on Department of Health and HSE to reverse major oversight**

IPU 28 October 2021: The Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) has strongly criticised the decision, confirmed this evening, to exclude community pharmacies from the campaign to provide COVID-19 booster shots. The IPU has said that failure to include pharmacies is illogical and will only serve to slow down the rollout of boosters. Pharmacies commenced offering COVID-19 vaccines in June and to date have administered almost 320,000 nationwide

Speaking about the importance of the role of pharmacists Kathy Maher, Chair of the IPU's Pharmacy Contractors Committee said, "Pharmacies have demonstrated their immense capacity to deliver COVID-19 vaccinations nationwide. The inclusion of pharmacies in the vaccination campaign during the summer delivered an immediate impact with many people who would not otherwise have got a vaccine getting it through their local pharmacy, particularly those who could not access a vaccination centre. COVID booster vaccines should continue to be available in local communities, through pharmacies, as doing so will maximise their uptake. "Through the early months of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign community pharmacies were not included

due to the shortage of supply. This is clearly no longer a consideration and so the failure to utilise the pharmacy sector in this latest phase is a major oversight.

“There are over 1,000 vaccinating pharmacies in Ireland located in towns and villages across the length and breadth of the country. As concern grows with rising case numbers it is imperative that booster vaccines are rolled out rapidly. The failure to include pharmacies will only slow down the roll out.”

Ms Maher said the added pressures of the impending flu season offer further reasons to utilise pharmacies. “While administering COVID boosters is vital we also need to maximise uptake of the seasonal flu vaccine. The two could be administered in tandem by pharmacies. Instead, people are expected to book two appointments, go to two locations and receive vaccines on two separate days. Clearly allowing pharmacies to do both would increase uptake of both vaccines.

“Furthermore, as COVID case numbers rise and with the expectation that flu cases may follow suit GPs will once again be under intense pressure. Relying solely on the overstretched GP sector and vaccination centres to deliver boosters is inexplicable. We would hope that the Department of Health and the HSE see sense soon before the booster rollout becomes unduly delayed by this illogical decision.

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