

‘The light at the end of the tunnel’ as Castleross receives Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine

The following press release was issued by the HSE:

After months of hope and anticipation, the COVID-19 vaccines arrived at Castleross Nursing Home over the weekend.

The excitement was palpable there on Friday Carrickmacross on Friday, when 77-year-old Mary Hegarty became the first resident to receive the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination. Mary has been living in the care of the Castleross team for the past seven years and was delighted to be the first in the nursing home to receive the vaccination.

She said: “I wish to thank those involved in giving us the COVID-19 vaccine, which I received with thanks early this morning. Also, I want to thank the nurses, carers and management of Castleross who have looked after us so well, especially during this pandemic. Their kindness means so much to all of us. And to my family, I am proud to get this vaccine today, to be spared for you and my grandchildren who I love very dearly. May God bless each and everyone of us and look after us all.”

There was a queue of Castleross Nursing Home residents and staff waiting their turn to be vaccinated. The first staff member to be given the vaccination was Household Coordinator, Aoife Kindlon who has been working in Castleross for 14 years. She said: “I am honoured to be the first of my many colleagues to be vaccinated, all of whom are delighted to be in a position to receive it.”

Jane Foy, General Manager of Castleross Nursing Home said: “Our dedicated team have been planning for this day since the announcement by the HSE that the COVID-19 vaccinations were to be rolled out.”

Castleross Nursing Homes are part of the Grace Healthcare Nursing Home Group, and is one of seven nursing homes based in Monaghan, Cavan and Dublin within the aforementioned group.

Dr Augustine Pereira, Director of Public Health North East said: “This represents an important moment with the vaccine protecting residents and staff in our nursing homes from this virus. It is a great day for the residents and staff of Castleross Nursing Home and we are delighted that we can start rolling out the vaccine for our community.”

“With cases of COVID-19 continuing to increase in the region, this achievement comes at a critical time and will help to protect those on the frontline, our healthcare providers, as well as our most vulnerable individuals living in nursing homes.”

“While today offers us hope, it is important we acknowledge the path ahead is not straightforward and we are urging people to continue to adhere with the public health guidance including social distancing, good hand hygiene, and wearing a mask to reduce the risk of transmission and protect our communities. This is important even if you are vaccinated,” he said.

“As supplies of COVID-19 vaccines increase in the weeks and months to come, we hope that our most vulnerable population would be vaccinated by the end of March.”

Dr Pereira said: “Our team are urging nursing home residents and staff to ensure they avail of the vaccine in order to protect themselves and colleagues from a virus that has detrimentally transformed our lives over the past year. Vaccination is critical in bringing this unprecedented pandemic to an end.”

Castleross can accommodate 125 Residents in their state-of-the-art facility that resembles a small village. Made up of four main houses, including one catering for those with Dementia and Alzheimer’s, each home has its own front door, cosy dining and sitting room areas and boasts a Village Square that has a Hairdresser, Coffee Shop, Oratory and lots of areas to sit with family and friends.

Worldwide, vaccines save at least 2-3 million lives each year – and protect many more from crippling and lifelong illnesses. Only COVID-19 vaccines that have been authorised by the European Medicines Agency, having met stringent safety and effectiveness standards, will be used in Ireland.

All COVID-19 vaccines will be carefully monitored over time and updated safety data and information will be published and shared by the HSE, on the website and in printed information materials.

Everyone can find factual, up-to-date information, based on scientific evidence on:

www.hse.ie/covid19vaccine;
www.gov.ie/covid19vaccine;
www.hpra.ie and www.who.int

From January 4th, the programme is being rolled out to long term residential care facilities for older people. This will be aligned with further and ongoing deliveries of the vaccine, over a six-week rolling programme throughout all 582 nursing homes, public and private, all over the country. The HSE’s vaccinator teams will be giving vaccines at each of those locations, making two separate visits, three weeks apart.

In the later phases of the programme that will focus on the next priority groups, people



Mary Hegarty, 77 years old, receiving Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine at Castleross Nursing Home.



Aoife Kindlon, Household Coordinator of Castleross Nursing Home receiving the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

may be vaccinated through mass vaccination clinics, GP surgeries and community pharmacies. This will be done by qualified and trained healthcare workers, including hospital doctors, community medical officers, nurses, GPs and pharmacists. More information will be given about the later phases when they have been agreed and implemented.

Ireland has approximately 580 nursing homes, 80% of which are privately owned, and the vaccination of their residents is a highly complex process requiring the cooperation of all stakeholders.

Each CHO (Community Health Organisation – within the HSE) is working with their local nursing home providers to

finalise their schedules. This requires each provider to assure themselves that they can register each staff member and resident who wishes to take the vaccine and collect the required 55 individual pieces of information on each person who wishes to be vaccinated several days before the vaccination team is due to arrive.

Each provider must also ensure that each staff member and each resident (and their families where appropriate) understand and give informed consent to the vaccine.

The target completion date for all 580 public, private and voluntary nursing homes is February 28th next, bearing in mind that COVID outbreaks may interrupt vaccination.