



Outhouse LGBT Centre, 105 Capel St., Dublin D01 R290

E: info@ghn.ie

W: www.ghn.ie

Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20078454

08 August 2022

Ref: 115328

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Gay Health Network (GHN) calls on the Irish Government to urgently speed up the monkeypox vaccine acquisition and ensure the roll-out is inclusive, equitable, ethical and transparent.

Gay Health Network is extremely concerned about the slow roll-out of the monkeypox vaccine in Ireland. While GHN understands that the numbers of vaccines are currently 'low and limited', we do urge the Government, in particular the Department of Health, to prioritise this public health emergency.

GHN calls for a transparent, equitable and ethical roll-out of the vaccine and ask the HSE and the government to continue to work closely with community partners when devising the roll-out strategy, including identifying high-risk groups. As this current outbreak in non-endemic countries is primarily seeing the virus spreading among sexual networks of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) through close contact with someone that has monkeypox, we ask that organisations advocating on behalf of gbMSM communities are consulted in the process and any relevant information is provided to help make safe and informed decisions. Additionally, we ask that those who self-identify as most at risk, outside of the HSE model, be given the opportunity to obtain the vaccine at the earliest possible opportunity.

Bill Foley, Secretary of Gay Health Network states: "The gbMSM community has had the benefit of a good information campaign on the signs symptoms and risk factors associated with monkeypox. We are therefore in a good position to self-identify as at risk and priority for vaccination. We would call on the HSE to roll out the vaccine programme on this basis. Providing vaccination early on in a potential epidemic is essential in preventing its spread. We call on the HSE to invest in a vaccine programme that in the long term provides a vaccine to all those who need it."

We acknowledge the hard work done by the Incident Management Team (IMT) and the HSE so far in this current monkeypox outbreak. GHN is represented on the IMT by the man2man programme, a joint GHN and HSE initiative, and has been involved in the communications response along with our community partners. While monkeypox continues to spread in the community, anxiety levels remain high. Especially in light of large-scale roll-outs currently happening in the UK, the need for a clear plan, timeline and approach for the monkeypox vaccine roll-out to be communicated is now essential.

WHO ARE WE

Founded in 1994, GHN is a network of organisations and individuals working at the frontline of HIV and STI service agencies. We are an expert network providing a national resource, response, and support for the promotion HIV prevention, and sexual health and wellbeing, for gay and bisexual men and men who have sex with men (gbMSM).

CONTACT: For further information please email Pádraig Burke, GHN Comms Director, at padraig@ghn.ie or 087 0572635. Alternatively Contact Bill Foley, GHN Secretary, at bill.foley@outlook.com or 087 2813605.