

Scaling up contact tracing in Ireland

Background

Anticipating a substantial increase in the number of cases identified as COVID-19 positive, the HSE developed a national rapid, large scale system operating initially in three steps, and now four:

- Step 1 / Case: Rapid notification to a person of a COVID-19 confirmed (detected) or not detected result and provision of advice
- Step 2 / Contacts: Rapid identification of contacts of confirmed cases of COVID-19
- Step 3 / Control: Rapid public health management of contacts of confirmed cases (see process map on next page)
- Step 4 / Follow-up: Active follow-up of contacts for 14 days from last contact with confirmed case; this includes daily text messages and arranging testing as required for contacts.

The CMP is designed and built to have the capacity to communicate with thousands of contacts per day.

Rationale

The rationale for developing a national process is to allow the Departments of Public Health to be freed up to focus on and respond to complex public health issues, making best use of scarce and critical public health expertise. Routine contact tracing therefore is done by a national team, coordinating a series of decentralised physical and virtual call-centres. People working in the HSE, wider public service, educational sectors, and others, have been identified to work in Contact Tracing Centres (CTC) in a variety of roles.

Aim	The aim of the CMP is to notify results to people tested (or their nominated person) and to identify and manage contacts of people with COVID-19, commencing 13 th March 2020.
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To rapidly identify and close down chains of transmission of COVID-19 • To release time for Public Health Departments to undertake high value public health expert activity including surveillance/enhanced surveillance and complex control activity • To slow the progress of the COVID-19 epidemic in Ireland and delay and lessen the impact on health services delivery capacity. • To save lives through slowing the progress of COVID-19 in Ireland

CTC Team Training and Support

The CMP Induction programme consists of 3 parts:

Part 1 – A series of self-directed learning audio presentation and video role-plays;

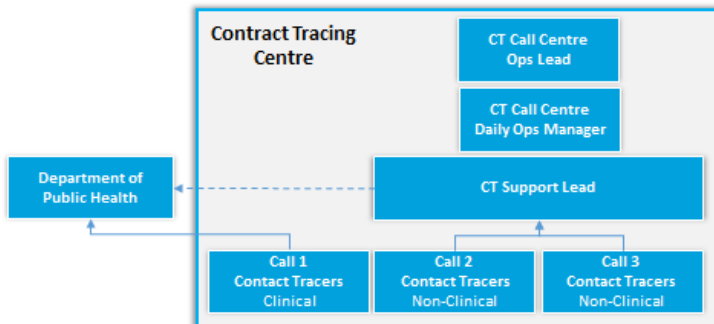
Part 2 – A facilitated virtual learning session where call scripts, FAQs and scenarios are discussed;

Part 3 – A series of introduction videos on how to login and navigate the Covid-19 Case Tracker system.

Having completed all 3 parts of the induction programme, trainees commence work in a Contact Tracing Centre where they receive more “on-the-job” training. The CTC callers have access to a team support lead and public health specialist for advice and queries.

CovidCare Tracker CMP Module

The CovidCare Tracker is the online platform which supports key aspects of care given to COVID-19 patients. The solution supports clinical teams across different COVID-19 care pathways. The CMP contact tracing component which is a major element of the platform has been developed in partnership with public health and the Chief Information Officer's team. It incorporates collection of surveillance data, demographic data on cases and their contacts, and it enables automatic notification of negative results, referral for testing and active follow up communication. It also allows for reporting on CMP.



Contact Tracing Centre (CTC) Process

In the days and weeks to come, the HSE will continue to scale up and scale down this process as required:

