



National Policy ☐ National Procedure ☒ National Protocol ☐ National Guideline ☐
National Clinical Guideline ☐

HSE National Procedure for Ireland's online PEPSE assessment pathway

I. DOCUMENT GOVERNANCE¹

Document Owner (post title):	Clinical Lead, HSE Sexual Health Programme
Document Owner name:	Prof Fiona Lyons
Document Owner email contact: (Generic email addresses only for the Repository)	Fionae.Lyons@hse.ie
Document Approver(s): (Name and post holder title):	Prof Fiona Lyons

Additional headings can be inserted if required

II. DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT²

Date effective from:		24/06/2026	
Date set for next review:		24/06/2029	
Your Reference No: <i>(if applicable)</i>		Click or tap here to enter text.	
Current version no:	1	Archived version no:	Click or tap here to enter text.

Note: Original document is Version 0. First revision is Version 1. Second revision is Version 2, and so on.

Note: HSE National 3PGs should be formally reviewed every 3 years, unless new legislative/regulatory or emerging issues/research/technology/audit etc. dictates sooner.

¹ Records the senior management roles involved in the governance and development of the document.

² Records the control information about the document.

III. VERSION CONTROL UPDATE ³

Version No. (most recent version first)	Date reviewed (most recent date first)	Comments (1 sentence max, if required)
1	24/06/2026	

Additional notes:

If there are no amendments to the National document following a formal review, the date and detail of the review must still be recorded in the version control update box.

IV. PUBLICATION INFORMATION ⁴

Topic:

Ireland's online PEPSE assessment pathway: Standard Operating Procedure

National Group:

HSE Sexual Health Programme (SHP) gbMSM (Gay and bisexual Men who have sex with Men) Sexual Health working group

Short summary:

This document outlines the standard operating procedures for the online HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis following sexual exposure (PEPSE) assessment pathway.

Description:

HIV PEPSE is a HIV prevention tool. It is a time sensitive intervention whereby a 28-day course of oral antiretroviral therapy is taken as soon as possible within 72 hours of a sexual exposure where there is a significant risk of HIV. PEPSE is recommended based on the type of exposure and the source status in line with national guidelines⁵. An online pathway has been developed to improve out of hours access for PEPSE, streamline assessment via the emergency department and address barriers, including the mandated emergency department charge.

³ Records details when a document is reviewed, even if no changes are made.

⁴ Records the document information required for publication on the HSE National Central Repository.

⁵ HSE. Guidelines for the Emergency Management of Injuries (EMI) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), 2024. <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/emi/>

Table of Contents

I. DOCUMENT GOVERNANCE	1
II. DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT	1
III. VERSION CONTROL UPDATE	2
IV. PUBLICATION INFORMATION	2
1. Background	4
2. The online PEPSE assessment pathway	4
3. Standard Operating Procedure for Online PEPSE assessment Pathway	5
4. Appendices	9
Appendix 1: Service user information around PEP availability	9
Appendix 2: Sample referral email and letter	12
Appendix 3: PEPSE clinic referral details	14
Appendix 4: SMS received by service user based on outcome	17

1. Background

HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis following a sexual exposure (PEPSE) is a HIV prevention tool. It is a time sensitive intervention whereby a 28-day course of oral antiretroviral therapy is taken as soon as possible within 72 hours of a sexual exposure where there is a significant risk of HIV. PEPSE is recommended based on the type of exposure and the source status in line with national guidelines⁶.

Improving out of hours access to PEPSE is a priority action identified by the HSE Sexual Health Programme (SHP) gbMSM (gay and bisexual Men who have Sex with Men) Sexual Health working group. Specifically, the mandated emergency department charge is identified as a barrier to accessing PEPSE assessment with the gbMSM community.

SH:24 is commissioned by the HSE to deliver the national free home STI testing service.

2. The online PEPSE assessment pathway

To improve access to out of hours PEPSE assessment; reduce inappropriate Emergency Department (ED) attendances where PEPSE is not indicated and overcome the mandated emergency department attendance charge, an online assessment pathway via the HSE home STI testing service has been developed. The steps in this process are:

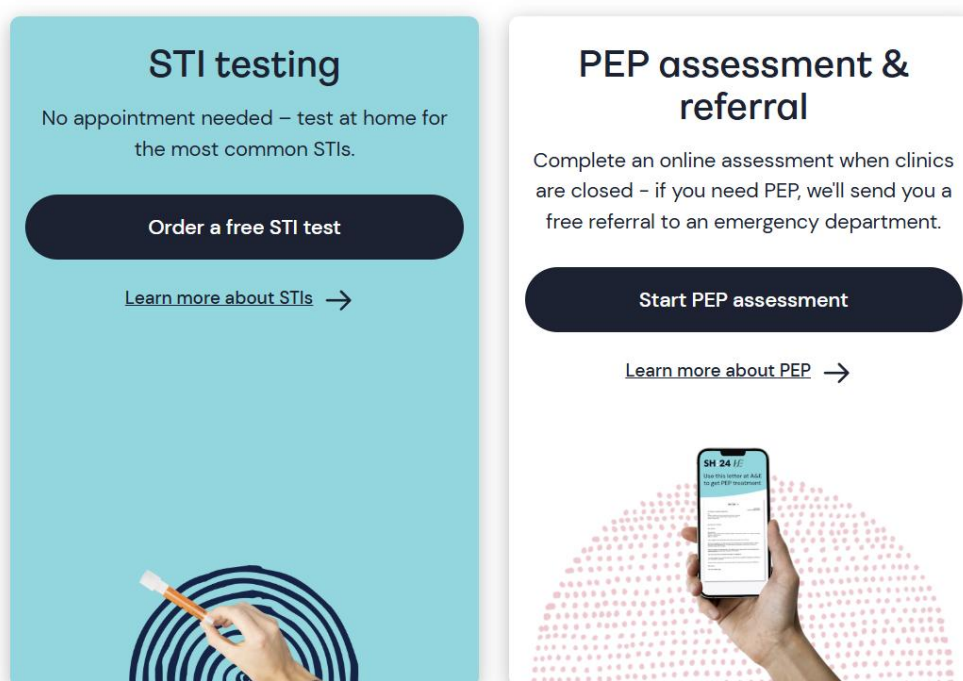
Via the national home STI testing service, an individual has an online assessment to determine need for PEP – aligned with Irish PEP guidelines⁶

- ✓ If PEPSE is not indicated the person is signposted to resources for HIV/STI testing and prevention, but reminded they can still choose to access an ED but will incur a cost.
- ✓ If PEPSE is indicated the person is provided with a referral letter by email to bring to the ED where the individual will be reassessed and offered a PEP starter pack if indicated. The person also chooses a local sexual health clinic, who is notified of the referral. The clinic provides the follow-up medication to complete the 28-day course of PEP, alongside testing, vaccinations and support.

⁶ HSE. Guidelines for the Emergency Management of Injuries (EMI) and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), 2024. <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/emi/>

3. Standard Operating Procedure for Online PEPSE assessment Pathway

- 3.1 Service users determine they need a PEPSE assessment but their local public sexual health clinic is not available within 72 hours, see appendix 1 or <https://sh24.ie/pep-clinics> for availability.
- 3.2 Service user is made aware of SH:24 PEP Assessment tool to help them access PEP in Emergency Departments out of hours - <https://sh24.ie/orders/pep-referral/intro-pep>. The tool will be promoted on:
 - a. HSE PEP information webpages;
 - b. SH:24 online testing platform;



- c. Sexual health/HIV NGOs websites;
 - d. Local clinical websites (where available);
 - e. Targeted health promotion material.
- 3.3 Service user completes health assessment on SH24.ie, which is available to anyone aged 17 and over who is a resident of Ireland.

The tool has information provided on response times, and has an early question to determine if there is sufficient time to access PEP via the online assessment tool.

Eligibility

[← Back](#)

When do you think you might have been exposed to HIV?

If you think you've been exposed to HIV, we can help you get PEP to reduce your risk of HIV. Timing is important so please be as accurate as you can.

You do not need to tell us about sex where you used condoms or taken PrEP.

If you can visit a clinic within 72 hours of your risk, that may be a faster way to get PEP. [Check clinic times to find out.](#)

☐ Less than 2 days ago (less than 48 hours ago)

☐ Between 2 and 3 days ago (48 to 72 hours ago)

☐ 3 or more days ago (over 72 hours ago)

Continue →

At the start of the user journey, users are prompted to check if they could access PEP from their sexual health clinic within 72 hours.

This is a free online assessment to help you get PEP when sexual health services are closed.

To use this service you must:

- be aged 17 or older
- have had a potential sexual exposure to HIV in the last 72 hours

PEP is a 28 day course of medication. You must start PEP within 72 hours of a potential risk to help protect you against HIV.

⌚

If your risk was more than 48 hours ago, we recommend going straight to a clinic or emergency department. We cannot be sure that we can send you a referral letter in time.

If a sexual health service is open within 72 hours of your potential risk, it may be quicker to contact them to get PEP.

[Check clinic opening times](#) →

- a. If someone is between 2 and 3 days since potential exposure they are advised to go to ED and not to wait, with a link to the HSE's main PEP availability webpage.

- b. Users with a risk after 3 days are notified this is outside the window for accessing PEPSE, given health promotion information (including on testing windows) and are signposted to sexual health clinics, including the home STI testing service.

The assessment covers all key criteria for PEP, and includes a verification for both the user's mobile number and email, ensuring SH:24 has accurate contact details.

The assessment includes safeguarding questions around sexual assault, with remote clinical support and referral to Sexual Assault Treatment Unit's (SATU) offered to all users. 17-year-olds are asked an expanded set of safeguarding questions, with any identified issues supported by a phone call assessment by SH:24 clinicians and referrals into local services. Of note, the safeguarding assessment is not required to complete the users PEP referral letter so will not delay their access.

Users are also asked to select a sexual health clinic during the assessment, where they will access their follow-up medication, testing and vaccinations after ED. Location and opening hours of the clinics are presented to users to help them find the most appropriate option.

Users receive an SMS from SH:24 confirming their assessment answers have been received and are being reviewed. They are also reminded they can still access ED at any time. Users can reply to this SMS to speak to SH:24's clinical team.

- 3.4 SH:24's clinical team (comprised of Sexual Health Nurses and Health Advisors) review completed health assessments 7 days a week, between the hours of 9am – 5pm.

Staff are notified of inbound PEP referral via a dedicated alert channel on their internal communications platform, and within their electronic record system.

- 3.5 SH:24's system includes an algorithm which outputs four outcomes – PEP Recommended, Considered, Generally not recommended or Not Recommended. "Recommended" assessments can be approved by Health Advisors or Nurses. "Consider", "Generally not recommended" and "Not Recommended" outcomes are reviewed and actioned by Nurses.

- 3.6 SH:24's system makes contact with the user automatically via SMS to let them know the outcome of their health assessment:

- ✓ PEPSE indicated; user is told via SMS that their ED referral letter (see appendix 2, pg 13) has been generated and sent to their email address, with

instructions provided in the email on how to take the letter to ED and next steps. The sexual health clinic the user chooses for follow-up care during the assessment is blind copied into the email to the user with the same referral letter (see appendix 3, pg 12). The user is advised to check clinic opening times again, specifically in reference to being able to access the clinic within 5 days of attendance at ED. The clinic's opening hours are automatically pulled into the referral letter, making it clear for the user and/or ED clinician if timing would be problematic, alongside a link to other clinics and opening times. SH:24 will follow-up with users at 3 days after ED referral to check whether they have received their starter pack from ED and if they have an appointment with the clinic.

- If a clinic or user notifies SH:24 that they did not attend ED/the sexual health clinic, SH:24 will contact the user again via SMS to support them to attend clinic, emphasising medication start/continuation if timings are appropriate, or if outside of windows, follow-up testing, PrEP and vaccinations etc.
- ✓ PEPSE not indicated; signpost to resources about HIV/STI testing and prevention and user is also reminded they are still able to access ED if still concerned, though there will be a cost.

3.7 Emergency Department (ED) Attendance

- a. Reception staff accept the referral letter that patient presents (may be on phone) as a referral letter so mandated charge is not applied (for those outside EU/EEA a 100 euro 'discount' will be applied to the ED charge).
- b. ED triage to determine urgency and priority
- c. ED PEPSE assessment in line with national guidelines⁶
 - Provision of PEP starter pack, or in some circumstances a 28-day supply is provided
 - +/- provision of HBV vaccine, HBV Immunoglobulin
 - Baseline bloods, including HIV, HBVsAg, Syphilis

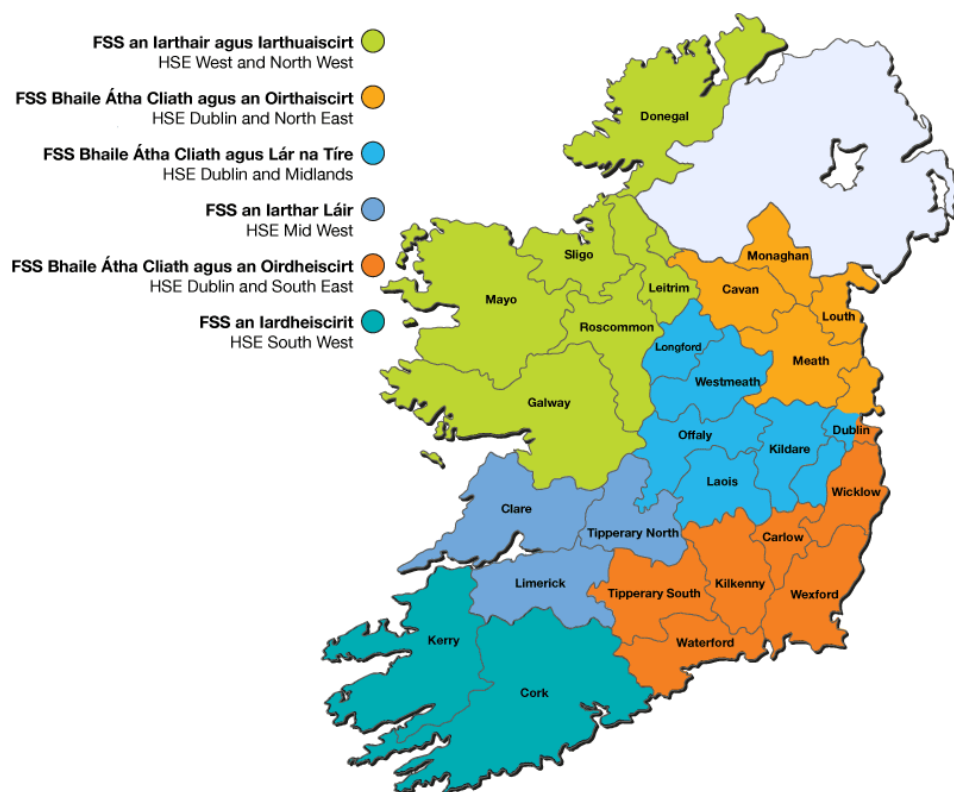
3.8 Public Sexual Health Clinic

- a. Monitoring of nominated inbox/phone lines for referrals from SH:24
- b. Provision of appointment for ongoing PEPSE within 5 days (unless where a 28-day supply is provided by the ED)
- c. PEPSE follow-up in line with national guidelines
- d. SH:24 will automatically follow-up with the user to confirm their contact and attendance with the clinic, with support provided appropriately.
- e. Where a service user fails to attend a follow-up PEPSE appointment following SH:24 referral, the clinic will inform SH:24 that the person did not attend.

4. Appendices

Appendix 1: Service user information around PEP availability

The table below has a list of Public Sexual Health services who are taking SH:24 PEP follow-up referrals. This information will be available to service users on the online assessment pathway.



HSE West and North West	Service	PEP Availability
Donegal	GUM/ Sexual Health Clinic Errigal CDM HUB, Kilmacrennan Road, Letterkenny, F92 NP23. Tel: 074 912 3715	Clinic hours: Thurs: 5.30 – 9pm

HSE Dublin and North East	Service	PEP Availability
Louth	Sexual Health Clinic Louth County Hospital Dublin Road Dundalk or Sexual Health Clinic Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda Tel: 086 824 1847	Clinic hours LCH: Tuesday (all day) 2nd Friday of the month: 1.30-4pm Clinic hours OLOL: 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, Friday of the month: 9-11 am
North Dublin	Sexual Health Clinic Mater Misericordiae University Hospital Eccles Street Dublin 7 Tel: 01 803 2563	Clinic hours: Mon – Thurs: 10am – 12.30 2 – 4.30pm Friday: 10am – 12.30

HSE Dublin and Midlands	Service	PEP Availability
Dublin South City and West	GUIDE clinic St James's GUIDE Clinic St. James's Hospital James's Street Dublin 8, D08NHY1 Tel: 01 416 2315/2316 http://www.guideclinic.ie/	Clinic hours: Mon – Thurs: 9 - 11am 2 – 3.30pm Fri: 9 - 11am
Laois	Sexual Health Clinic Out patients Dept. Midland Regional Hospital Block Rd. Portlaoise Tel: 086 859 1273	Clinic hours: Tues: 2 – 4.30pm Tues: 5 – 6.15pm
Westmeath	Sexual Health Clinic Regional Hospital Mullingar Longford Road Mullingar Tel: 087 7104152	Clinic hours: Wed pm 17.00 –20.00 hrs

HSE Dublin and South East	Service	PEP Availability
Dublin South	Gay Men's Health Service Meath Primary Care Centre, Heytesbury Street, Dublin 8. Tel: 01 9212730	Clinic hours: Tuesday: 9am-1pm, 2pm-5pm and 6pm-8pm Wednesday: 9am-1pm and 2pm-5pm Thursday: 9am-1pm Monday and Friday: No Clinic
	ID Clinic St. Vincent's University Hospital Elm Park Merrion Rd. Dublin 4	Clinic hours: Mon – Thurs: 9 – 5pm Fri: 9 – 1pm

HSE Midwest	Service	PEP Availability
Clare and Limerick	Sexual Health Clinic University Hospital Ennis	Clinic hours Ennis: Mon: 9am – 12pm
	Sexual Health Clinic University Hospital Limerick Dooradoyle theclinic@hse.ie Tel: 061 482 382	Clinic hours Limerick: Tuesday 9 – 12 and 1.30 to 3.30pm Thursday 9 – 12

HSE South West	Service	PEP Availability
Cork	Sexual Health Clinic South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital Old Blackrock Road Tel: 021 496 6844	Clinic hours: 9-4pm Monday to Friday

Appendix 2: Sample referral email and letter



SH:24 PEP Referral

Please take the attached referral letter to your nearest Emergency Department that provides PEP. A full list of Emergency Departments that provide PEP is available on the [HSE website](#).

If the Emergency Department determines that you need PEP, they will provide you with a "starter pack" of 5 days' medication to reduce your risk of getting HIV. Within 5 days of starting the pack you will need to visit your local sexual health service to obtain the rest of the 28-day course.

We have sent a copy of this email to your nominated clinic and they will contact you to arrange an appointment.

If you do not hear from your nominated clinic within 3 days of starting the PEP medication, contact them to arrange an appointment to obtain the rest of the 28-day course of PEP medication. Contact details and opening hours for your chosen clinic are in the attached letter, or you can [view their contact details alongside the full list of clinics](#).

When you are taking PEP, **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU COMPLETE THE FULL COURSE** and that you arrange follow-up HIV testing via your local sexual health service.

If you have not been vaccinated against hepatitis B, we recommend that you start this as soon as possible. It is available at the Emergency Department and your chosen sexual health clinic.

Kind regards,

SH:24

Visit sh24.ie





22/06/2026

Our Ref: RR26-ONGD09

To: Clinician, Emergency Department

BCC:

Clinician, Dublin GUIDE Clinic,

Hospital 5, St. James's Hospital, James's Street, Dublin 8, Ireland, D08 NHY1

Phone: 01 416 2315 or 01 416 2316

Email: SH24@stjames.ie

Opening times: Monday - Thursday: 9am to 11am, 2pm to 3.30pm. Friday: 9am - 11am

Information for clinician

Dear Clinician,

Re: [First Name] [Last Name]

Address: 123 Test Street, Testington, Dublin, A11SH24

Phone: 44798

DOB: 29/10/

I am a member of the clinical team at the online sexual health service SH:24.

SH:24 is commissioned by the HSE to provide online assessment and referral to Emergency Departments out of hours for people in Ireland who have sought assessment for HIV post-exposure prophylaxis following sexual exposure (PEPSE) via the sh24.ie website.

We have reviewed the potential risk of HIV infection for the above named individual in line with national guidelines and we are referring them to you for PEP assessment.

They report they have not received vaccination for hepatitis B.

We would be grateful if you would assess them for HIV and hepatitis B PEP according to your organisation's protocols.

We have made a referral to the sexual health clinic nominated by the service user for follow-up. They have chosen the clinic detailed at the top of this letter and have been advised to check that the opening hours of the service to ensure that they can be seen within 5 days of attending ED. Details for all clinics can be found [on the SH:24 website](#).

Best wishes,

The SH:24 clinical team

Appendix 3: PEPSE clinic referral details

The table below has a list of internal referral details for clinics. This information is available to clinicians and provides internal contact details to support referral.

HSE West and North West	Service	PEP referral mechanism OOO pathway	PEP Availability
Donegal	GUM/ Sexual Health Clinic Errigal CDM HUB, Kilmacrennan Road, Letterkenny, F92 NP23. Tel: 074 912 3715	Continue using the existing process of notification through SH24 reactivities	Clinic time: Thurs: 5.30 – 9pm NB – note prescriber on site only on Thursdays
Sligo	GUM Clinic Sligo University Hospital The Mall Tel: 071 917 0473	We will continue to use the existing process for contact for SH24 reactivities.	Clinic hours: Tuesday and Thursday 6pm -7.30pm.
Galway	Sexual Health Clinic University Hospital Galway Newcastle Road Tel: 091 525 200 Email: selftest.guh@hse.ie	To use something like the existing process through which you are notified of reactive HIVs within the home STI testing service. Email selftest.guh@hse.ie , and provide clinic numbers and email to user.	Clinic hours: Mon – Fri: 9.30 -4pm Email monitored during clinic hours

HSE Dublin and North East	Service	PEP referral mechanism OOO pathway	PEP Availability
Louth	Sexual Health Clinic Louth County Hospital Dublin Road Dundalk or Sexual Health Clinic Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda Tel: 086 824 1847	Use phone number provided Tel: 086 824 1847	Clinic hours LCH: Tuesday (all day) 2nd Friday of the month: 1.30-4pm Clinic hours OLOL: 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, Friday of the month: 9-11 am

North Dublin	Sexual Health Clinic Mater Misericordiae University Hospital Eccles Street Dublin 7 Tel: 01 803 2563	For notifications from SH24 for PEP and PEP follow up, may the referrals be emailed to sh24@mater.ie Our email is monitored daily from Monday to Thursday (from 07.30 - 18.00) and Fridays (07.30 to 16.30)	Clinic hours: Mon – Thurs: 10am – 12.30 2 – 4.30pm Friday: 10am – 12.30
---------------------	---	---	---

HSE Dublin and Midlands	Service	PEP referral mechanism OOO pathway	PEP Availability
Dublin South City and West	GUIDE clinic St James's GUIDE Clinic St. James's Hospital James's Street Dublin 8, D08NHY1 Tel: 01 416 2315/2316 http://www.guideclinic.ie/	SH24 GUIDE email address monitored Monday to Friday	Mon – Thurs: 9 - 11am 2 – 3.30pm Fri: 9 - 11am
Laois	Sexual Health Clinic Out patients Dept. Midland Regional Hospital Block Rd. Portlaoise Tel: 086 859 1273	Use existing email for contacting re reactive HIV results	Clinic hours: Tues: 2 – 4.30pm Tues: 5 – 6.15pm NB – note prescriber on site only on Tuesdays
Westmeath	Sexual Health Clinic Regional Hospital Mullingar Longford Road Mullingar Tel: 087 7104152	PEP referrals via email PrEP.Mullingar@hse.ie These emails will be seen on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.	Clinic time: Wed pm 17.00 – 20.00 hrs NB – note prescriber on site only on Wednesdays

HSE Dublin and South East	Service	PEP referral mechanism OOO pathway	PEP Availability
Dublin South	Gay Men's Health Service Meath Primary Care Centre, Heytesbury Street, Dublin 8. Tel: 01 9212730	SH24 GMHS email SH24GMHS@hse.ie	Mon: No Clinic Tuesday: 9am-1pm, 2pm-5pm and 6pm-8pm Wednesday: 9am-1pm and 2pm-5pm Thursday: 9am-1pm

			Friday: No Clinic
	ID Clinic St. Vincent's University Hospital Elm Park Merrion Rd. Dublin 4	SH24 can email us on the shc email address shc@svuh.ie as they use this already to refer patients and it works perfectly as the email is monitored Monday to Thursday and until 2pm on Friday	Clinic hours: Mon – Thurs: 9 – 5pm Fri: 9 – 1pm

HSE Midwest	Service	PEP referral mechanism OOO pathway	PEP Availability
Clare and Limerick	Sexual Health Clinic University Hospital Ennis Tel: 061 482 382 Sexual Health Clinic University Hospital Limerick Dooradoyle	Send referral to theclinic@hse.ie	Clinic hours Ennis: Mon: 9am – 12pm Clinic hours Limerick: Tuesday 9 – 12 and 1.30 to 3.30pm Thursday 9 – 12

HSE South West	Service	Opening hours	PEP Availability
Cork	Sexual Health Clinic South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital Old Blackrock Road Tel: 021 496 6844	We have a generic email for SH24 referrals that is monitored Monday to Friday by three staff members (cuh.sh24@hse.ie) and would like to receive notification from SH24 that a person they have referred to ED to start PEP needs follow up through that email address if possible please.	Clinic hours: 9-4pm Monday to Friday



Appendix 4: SMS received by service user based on outcome

PEP referral approved

pep_referral_request_created:

Your referral request has been received. We are reviewing it and will be in touch soon. Remember, you can go to the Emergency Department for a PEP assessment without a referral, but you will be charged a fee. Thanks, SH:24

pep_referral_request_approved:

We've have reviewed your details and we have sent you a PEP referral letter by email. Take the letter to the Emergency Department as soon as possible for PEP assessment. We cannot guarantee that you will be given PEP but you should not be charged for your visit if you show our referral letter. Thanks, SH:24

pep_referral_request_followup:

Hello. We recently referred you for PEP. Were you able to get and take your PEP? Have you heard from the sexual health clinic with a follow up appointment? Text back if you need help. Thanks, SH:24

pep_referral_request_next_steps (sent within 24 hours to users who tell SH:24 they didn't access PEP when SH:24 followed up with them, and 5 days after the original request is approved if SH:24 hasn't recorded an answer)

Hello. We recommend that you test for HIV 45 days after a potential exposure. You can order a test online at <https://sh24.ie> Thanks, SH:24

PEP referral rejected

pep_referral_request_created:

Your referral request has been received. We are reviewing it and will be in touch soon. Remember, you can go to the Emergency Department for a PEP assessment without a referral, but you will be charged a fee. Thanks, SH:24

pep_referral_request_rejected:

We have reviewed the information you provided. Based on this, in line with national guidelines, you do not require PEP at this time. If you are still concerned you can attend an Emergency Department but you will need to pay. We recommend that you test for HIV 45 days after a potential exposure. Text back if you need help. Thanks, SH:24