

Independent Scientific Advocacy Group



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
1st March 2021

One of the greatest dilemmas posed by the pandemic has been the question of education - how to balance the public health threat of the virus against the cost of school closures in terms of learning loss, exacerbated inequalities, social isolation, and increased mental health difficulties for both children and families.

With the phased reopening of schools continuing today (Monday 01/03) for children with special educational needs, the four youngest school-going years, and Leaving Cert students, we seek to shift the conversation away from the binary of open or closed, safe or unsafe, towards making schools *safer*, so that they can reopen and stay open, while avoiding a 4th wave.

On **Wednesday March 3rd, 12.00 – 1.00 PM** we will host a webinar that will consider why we must and how we can make schools *safer* for students, teachers, and our communities. We will also consider the cost of failing to do so - to children and young people with developmental disabilities who suffer disproportionately from school closures, and to medically vulnerable children and their families, who are either forced to accept the risk of exposure or are excluded completely from in-person education.

Register in advance for this webinar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_j6bYXQynQOaLytvuVsZjYg

Chaired by Gary Gannon (TD, Social Democrats), our panel - Deepti Gurdasani, Olive O'Connor, Louise Gallagher, and Gabriel Scally will share their expertise, research, and experience on why we should do everything in our power to make schools *safer* now.

ISAG is offering the group's expertise and experience to work together with the Government and the people to make Ireland the first country in Europe to aim for ZeroCovid. We welcome all members of the Oireachtas to attend.

-ENDS-

Chaired by:

Gary Gannon, TD for Dublin South Central, Social Democrats
and

Clare Kelly, Associate Professor, School of Psychology and Department of Psychiatry at the School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin

Speakers:

Deepti Gurdasani, Senior Lecturer in Machine Learning, clinical epidemiologist and statistical geneticist, William Harvey Research Institute, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London | <https://twitter.com/dgurdasani1>
"Myths and mitigation - why schools are not safe and what we can do to make them safer"

Olive O'Connor, Patient and Parent Healthcare Advocate and member of Parents United | <https://twitter.com/oliveblogs>
"There is nothing positive about positivity rates in schools"

Louise Gallagher, Chair of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Director of Research, School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin | https://twitter.com/lgallagh_louise
"COVID-19 and school closures impact children and young people with developmental disabilities"

Gabriel Scally, President of the Epidemiology and Public Health section of the Royal Society of Medicine, Chair of the Soil Association, and Professor of Public Health at the University of the West of England (UWE) and the University of Bristol | <https://twitter.com/GabrielScally>
"Following the science for safer schools"

The ISAG team will also provide an up-to-date analysis of SARS-CoV-2 infection rates in Ireland, including rates amongst children. The presentations will be followed by a full panel discussion and Q&A including ISAG members.

Let this lockdown be our last.

We can suppress the virus, and keep Ireland at Level 1

The Independent Scientific Advocacy Group (I.S.A.G.) is a multidisciplinary, all-island group of scientists, academics, and researchers who have come together to advocate for a SARS- CoV-2 elimination strategy for the island of Ireland.