



## **Annual Report 2007**

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## **Foreword by the Minister**

I welcome this Annual Report which sets out the progress made in 2007 in implementing the Department's *Statement of Strategy 2005-2007*.

The maintenance of health, and the delivery of appropriate care to those who need it, when they need it, must be a key objective of Government, and it is something that I am determined to deliver. This requires that our system evolve, adapt, and change to meet the challenges facing us. It will take some time to complete the refocusing of a system as large, as sensitive, and as complex as the Irish health system.

However, change *is* happening. The Health Service Executive (HSE) is now firmly in place as the single body responsible for managing and delivering health and personal social services in Ireland. Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is driving our national commitment to higher standards and the pursuit of excellence. The Office of the Minister for Children is, as an integral part of my Department, bringing coherence and clarity to a broad range of issues relevant to children. Cancer services are receiving the focussed attention that they deserve. Right across the spectrum of health issues, my Department is working with relevant agencies and organisations to define and deliver what is needed.

Without in any way minimising the challenges facing us, it is important to remember that much good has been achieved in the Irish health sector. Life expectancy has increased significantly in recent years, and at 81.8 years for women, and 77.3 years for men, is above the average for the EU in 2007. There have been significant reductions in major causes of death, such as circulatory disease. Our medical professionals are trained to the highest level and operate with extraordinary integrity.

I am deeply appreciative of the work of those within my own Department, and of all those throughout the health sector, who are doing their very best to ensure that the Irish people get the health service that they deserve.

**Mary Harney, T.D.**

**Minister for Health and Children**



## **Minister for Health and Children**

### **Introduction by Secretary General**

I am pleased to introduce this Annual Report on the final year of the Department's *Statement of Strategy 2005-2007*.

This year's report outlines the mission, mandate and functions of the Department. It also summarises the progress achieved under each of the high level objectives in our *Statement of Strategy 2005-2007*.

The Irish health system is critical to the welfare of our society. It is complex, multi-faceted and touches each and every person at some point in their lives. Change is unavoidable and essential but needs to be based on careful evaluation, accurate information and appropriate consultation.

It is our responsibility to develop policy advice which helps the Government achieve its objectives, and to support and evaluate the implementation of Government policy by the Department itself, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and other agencies.

This work requires close and effective liaison at many levels between my Department and agencies charged with delivering services, particularly the HSE. One of our ongoing priorities, therefore, is to deepen and improve liaison mechanisms and structures.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the staff in the Department and to thank them for their contribution towards achieving our objectives in 2007. With their continued commitment and support, we will continue to meet the new challenges that we face in future years.

**Michael Scanlan**  
**Secretary General**

## **Our Mission**

### **Mission Statement**

*To improve the health and well-being of people in Ireland in a manner that promotes better health for everyone, fair access, responsive and appropriate care delivery, and high performance.*

### **Mandate**

*The Minister for Health & Children is politically accountable for developing and articulating Government policy on health and personal social services, and for the overall performance of the health service. Our mandate is to support the Minister and the four Ministers of State by advising on policy development and implementation, evaluating the performance of existing policies and service delivery, preparing legislation, and working with other Government Departments, the social partners and international organisations.*

Our functions include:

- To develop policy across the full spectrum of health and personal social services, with a focus on quality, equity, access based on need, consistency and outcomes and to support implementation of Government policy.
- To negotiate and report on the Health group of votes and analyse financial and service outturns, including value for money and adherence to governance and accountability standards.
- To ensure compliance with Government policies on public service pay and industrial relations, employment control, and modernisation.
- To undertake medium and long-term planning, including workforce planning.

- To provide a legislative and regulatory framework that helps protect the interests of service users and supports practitioners in working to the highest standards.
- To work with colleagues in other Government Departments and the social partners to ensure that the aim of improving health and social well-being is advanced effectively in other parts of the public service.
- To develop and refine a system of performance evaluation which helps the Minister to assess the performance of the health system.
- To support the Minister and Ministers of State in fulfilling their parliamentary duties.
- To ensure the fullest possible involvement by Ireland in the work of the European Union, the World Health Organisation and other international bodies in the area of health and children; to progress closest possible co-operation with Northern Ireland.
- To ensure we have the internal capacity, in terms of structures, people, systems, etc., to equip us to meet our objectives.

### **Resources**

The approved staff complement for the Department is 590 approximately. Some 60 posts relate to the Disability Appeals Office, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and the Appeals Unit dealing with repayment of nursing home charges.

The approved staff complement for the core Department is therefore 530. This includes nearly 70 staff in the Office of the Minister for Children and some 50 staff working in the Offices of the Minister and the four Ministers of State.

The total provisional outturn for the Department in 2007 under Vote 39 was in the region

of €390 million. However, the bulk of this, some €265 million, was allocated to more than 20 agencies such as the Food Safety Authority, the Crisis Pregnancy Agency, the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, Breast Check, the Mental Health Commission, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), and the Office of Tobacco Control. The allocation also included over €75 million for compensation payments for people affected by Hepatitis C and repayment of nursing home charges. The balance of some €125 million represented the Department's Administrative Budget and a number of other elements.

The Office of the Minister for Children has its own Vote, Vote 41, which provided approximately €576 million towards the provision of certain services in respect of children in 2007. Of this, over €417million was expenditure in respect of the Early Childcare Supplement.

### **Developments in 2007**

In October 2007, the Department published "Health in Ireland: Key Trends 2007", a useful guide to trends in population and health status in addition to service provision over the last decade. Following its publication, the OECD published "Health at a Glance, 2007", an authoritative source of comparable data on health and health systems up to and including 2005 in OECD countries. Both publications point to significant improvements in health status and life expectancy and to increasing health service provision. Among the key findings are:

- an increase in life expectancy for men and women in recent decades. Since 1999, the rate of increase has been unmatched by any other EU country. Life expectancy in Ireland is now above the EU 2007 average and stands at 81.8 years for females and 77.3 years for males.
- significant reductions in major causes of death such as circulatory disease (down by 38% since 1997), contributing to the increase in life expectancy.
- over 80% of Irish people assess their health to be good or very good – this is the highest reported level of self-perceived health within the EU.



- the number of day cases in Irish hospitals more than doubled between 1997 and 2006 and stood at over 550,000 in 2006.
- in the period 1995 to 2005, Ireland's annual average growth rate in real health expenditure per capita was one of the highest in the OECD at 7.2%, compared with the average growth rate of 4% for the OECD as a whole.

Legislation is a core function of the Department. The following Acts were passed during 2007:

- Health (Nursing Homes) (Amendment) Act 2007
- Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2007
- Health Act 2007
- Pharmacy Act 2007
- Medical Practitioners Act 2007
- Child Care (Amendment) Act 2007
- Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2007

During 2007, 38 Statutory Instruments were made by the Minister and Ministers of State, 11 of which transposed important EU directives into Irish law.

Publications during 2007 included:-

- Code of Practice of Fluoridation of Drinking Water 2007;
- Health in Ireland, Key Trends 2007;
- Influenza Pandemic Preparedness in Ireland Joint Assessment Report 2007;
- National Standards for Residential Care Standards for Older People (Draft for Consultation – August 2007);
- Quality and Fairness Report A Health System for You – Action Plan Progress Report 2006;
- Review of the Mental Health Act 2001- Findings and Conclusions - May 2007;
- Health Behaviour of School-Aged Children;
- Health Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005 – Year 1 Review;
- Standards for the Assessment of Need Process Under Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005.

The Department also dealt with many other policy and service development issues, often in collaboration with the HSE, including:

- advising and assisting the Minister during the negotiation of the annual estimates and budget allocations;
- contractual negotiations with medical consultants;
- progressing the development of the new national paediatric hospital;
- revised arrangements for private health insurance, under which the VHI will become a conventional insurer, authorised by the Financial Regulator, by end-2008;
- agreement between the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association Ltd. and the Health Service Executive on the supply terms, conditions and prices of medicines supplied to the health services; and
- development of the National Cancer Control Programme, including the transfer of all major cancer treatments to eight specialist cancer services.

Like any Government Department, one of our key priorities is to support the Minister and Ministers of State in their parliamentary work. During 2007, the Department dealt with some 5,000 Parliamentary Questions and 140 Dáil and Seanad Adjournment debates. Staff from the Department attended various Oireachtas Committee meetings, either with the Minister or to give evidence themselves.

Another important priority was to support the Minister in her dealings with other countries and with international organisations such as the EU, World Health Organisation, Council of Europe and OECD. We also continued to play an important role in supporting North-South co-operation on health issues.

The organisation chart for the Department is at Appendix 3.

## ***HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVES.***

*The following sections are broken down by “High Level Objective,” which are the strategic pillars on which the Department’s Statement of Strategy for the Years 2005-2007 was based.*

### **HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE 1: HIGH PERFORMANCE**

*Ensure that the organisational structures, legal and accountability frameworks and management capacity (systems and people) are in place so that health and personal social services are planned and delivered efficiently and effectively on the basis of the best available evidence, and monitored and evaluated on the basis of this evidence.*

### **Health Structures Reform**

#### **Legislation to set up the Health Information and Quality Authority.**

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) was established on a statutory basis by the Health Act 2007, which was enacted in April, 2007. The CEO had already been appointed as the first Chief Executive of HIQA in June 2006, when the Authority was operating on an interim basis.

The Health Act 2007, which is a central part of the health reform programme, provides for:

- the establishment of HIQA on a statutory basis; and
- the establishment of the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) within HIQA with a remit to inspect and register all residential services for children, people with disabilities, and older people.

The Act sets out HIQA's functions as:

- setting and monitoring standards on safety and quality in health and personal social services provided by, or on behalf of, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and advising the Minister and the HSE accordingly;
- carrying out reviews and making recommendations to ensure the best outcomes for the resources available to the HSE;
- carrying out assessments of health technologies;
- evaluating information on health and social services and the health and welfare of the population and advising the Minister and the HSE on deficiencies identified;
- setting information standards and monitoring compliance with those standards; and
- undertaking investigations as to the safety, quality and standards of services where there is serious risk to the health or welfare of a person receiving services.

*Visit [www.hiqa.ie](http://www.hiqa.ie) for more information.*

### **Office of the Minister for Children**

The Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) is an integral part of the Department of Health and Children. The role of the OMC is to improve the lives of children under the National Children's Strategy and bring greater coherence to policy-making and a focus on strategic and integrated delivery of services for children and young people. The OMC has brought together functions within the Department of Health and Children with the Early Years policy function of the Department of Education and Science and the Youth Justice policy function of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The OMC focuses on harmonising policy issues that affect children in areas such as early childhood care and education, youth justice, child welfare and protection, children and young people's participation, research on children and young people and cross-cutting initiatives for children.

*The key role of the OMC is to support the Minister in:*

- implementing the National Children's Strategy (2000 – 2010);
- implementing the National Childcare Investment Programme (2006 – 2010);
- developing policy and legislation on child welfare and child protection;
- implementing the Children Act 2001 and the Child Care Act, 1991.

The OMC also maintains a general strategic oversight of bodies with responsibility for developing and delivering services for children.

### **National Cancer Control Programme**

During 2007, work continued across a broad front to achieve change, and to improve performance. The HSE launched its National Cancer Control Programme and Professor Tom Keane was appointed Director of the Programme. The delivery of cancer services on a programmatic basis will serve to ensure equity of access to services and equality of patient outcome irrespective of geography. Prof. Keane will oversee the implementation of the Programme, including the transfer of all major cancer services to four managed cancer control networks and eight designated Cancer Centres. Negotiations continued on new contractual arrangements, designed to facilitate the development of a Consultant-provided, rather than a Consultant-led, service.

### **Quality and Standards**

#### **Cancer Reviews**

A number of reports were commissioned during 2007 relating to diagnostic tests for cancer in Barrington's Hospital Limerick, Cork University Hospital, University College Hospital, Galway and the Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise. In each case, the focus was on ensuring the safety of care for patients and on ensuring the provision of high quality services in the future. In March 2008, the three reports regarding the Portlaoise Hospital were published, and the Minister and HSE announced a series of initiatives to ensure that problems of management, governance and communications would be fully addressed.

### **Development of proposals for Human Tissue legislation**

Enactment of legislation was recommended in the Madden Report (2006) and the Working Group Report on Post-Mortem Practice and Procedures (2006) with the objective of ensuring that no post-mortem examination would be carried out and no tissue retained for any purpose whatsoever without authorisation. During 2007 progress was made on the development of legislative proposals and a major consultative process was undertaken. The analysis of submissions received in response to the consultation process has been completed and discussions are ongoing with the major stakeholders on issues identified from the submissions. Work on the proposed legislation will continue in 2008 so that the Bill can be published as soon as possible.

### **Standards for Symptomatic Breast Disease Services**

In May 2007, the Minister launched “Quality Assurance Standards for Symptomatic Breast Disease Services in Ireland”. The Minister called on hospitals in the independent sector to take steps to ensure that their breast cancer services comply with these standards and brought them to the attention of private healthcare insurers.

The standards aim to improve the quality of care for women with breast disease in Ireland and to address fragmentation of services nationally. During 2007, 14 hospitals with low breast cancer surgery volumes ceased to provide breast cancer services.

HIQA will have a major role in monitoring the HSE’s compliance with the standards. The standards were developed by the National Quality Assurance Group for Symptomatic Breast Disease Services, established by the Minister.

### **Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance**

The Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance was established by the Minister in January, 2007 with the overall objective of developing clear and practical recommendations to ensure that quality and safety of care is paramount within the health system.

The Minister has asked the Commission to develop proposals for:

- greater accountability within our health system for performance in relation to patient safety;
- more effective reporting of adverse clinical events and complaints in order to learn from them and ensure that the rest of the health system learns from them;
- a clearer role for patients and carers in giving feedback on care received;
- ways to ensure health care practice is consistently based on what has been shown to work in other centres;
- a statutory system of licensing of public and private providers of health care;
- better integration of the work of the different regulatory bodies in the health system in order to achieve a joined-up approach and a sharing of best practice.

The Commission is due to report to the Minister by July 2008.

## **Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People**

The Minister published draft National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People in January 2007. The Standards will apply to all residential settings (public, private, and voluntary) where older people are cared for and for which registration is required. Preparation of the draft Standards was informed by legislation, research findings and best practice.

The Minister passed the draft Standards to HIQA to handle the consultation process and finalisation of the Standards, which will provide the basis for the very best quality of care to be provided, monitored, and enforced in all nursing homes. They will be an objective way for both care providers and inspectors to implement and enforce standards of care for nursing home residents.

### **Leas Cross Nursing Home**

In April, under the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004, a Commission of Investigation was established to examine matters relating to the management, operation and supervision of Leas Cross Nursing Home, which closed in 2005. The Commission commenced work in September, 2007 and is to provide a final report to the Minister for Health and Children within 12 months.

### **Health Repayments Scheme**

The Scheme was established in August 2006 to repay monies to eligible residents of public long-stay facilities and public contracted beds who were wrongfully charged. Up to the end of 2007 the Scheme repaid 6722 claims which were valued at €133.1million.

The Appeals Office was established in December 2006 under the terms of Section 16 of the Health (Repayment Scheme) Act 2006. Up to 21st December 2007, a total of 2131 notices of intention to appeal were received by the Office, and 975 completed appeal forms were returned. The Appeals Officer issued decisions in 409 of these cases.



A National Oversight Committee, representative of service users, was appointed by the Minister for Health and Children in August 2005 to provide an independent input into the design of the Repayment Scheme, to monitor its operation and to ensure that it is being implemented in the most equitable and effective way possible. The Committee meets on a monthly basis and reports directly to the Minister.

### **National Standards for Residential Services for People with Disabilities**

A Standards Advisory Group was put in place by the Health Information and Quality Authority to consider the development of service-specific standards including residential- and community-based residential services for people with disabilities in residential centres. The Department of Health and Children is represented on this group. A set of standards is expected to be published by the end of 2008.

### **National Accreditation Committee (NAC)**

The Department, with the co-operation of the Health Service Executive (HSE), transferred the administrative functions of the National Accreditation Committee (NAC) for Rehabilitative Training to the HSE in 2007. The NAC oversees the accreditation process for rehabilitative training services by reference to agreed standards.

### **Lourdes Hospital Redress Scheme**

In April 2007 the Government approved a non-statutory ex-gratia Scheme of Redress to provide compensation for patients of a consultant Obstetrician/Gynaecologist at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda who underwent unnecessary peripartum hysterectomy and bilateral oophorectomy. The Lourdes Hospital Redress Board was established under the Scheme and began the process of assessing individual applications for redress in July. The work is ongoing and a final report will be furnished to the Minister on completion of this work.

## **Professional Regulation**

The enactment of the Pharmacy Act, 2007 marked a major modernisation of the law governing the regulation of pharmacists and pharmacy practice. The Minister announced the establishment, under the provisions of the Act, of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, and the appointment of Members to its Council. This is the first time that healthcare professionals in the pharmacy sector in Ireland have been regulated under statute. For the first time also, the Council of the Society includes a non-pharmacist majority. Regulation will be based on patient safety, best practice, and public protection.

The Medical Practitioners Act, 2007 was enacted in April, 2007. The previous Act dated back almost 30 years and the 2007 Act represents a major modernisation. Medical practitioners will not be in a majority on the Medical Council, which will have the public interest as its primary goal. Fitness to practice hearings will normally be held in public unless the public interest is best served otherwise.

Under the Health and Social Care Professional Act, 2005 the Minister established the Health and Social Care Professionals Council, which provides for the statutory regulation of twelve health and social care professions which were not previously subject to statutory registration.

In May of this year the Minister put in place legislative provisions to allow for nurse/midwife prescribing. Patient safety is paramount. Under the Regulations, Prescribing Nurses must be employed by a health service provider and may only prescribe the drugs relevant to the setting in which they are employed. The requirements of the nursing board (An Bord Altranais) will also apply.

A Resource and Implementation Group has been established to oversee the roll-out of nurse/midwife prescribing on a national basis.

A single education programme is being delivered by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and University College Cork. This six month programme commenced in April with an intake of 25 students in each college. A further programme commenced in the

autumn. A total of 42 nurse/midwives qualified as prescribers this year with a further 100 expected to undertake the education programme in 2008.

The new prescribers will work in clinical areas such as cardiology, coagulation, respiratory, dermatology, wound care, breast care, diabetes, A&E, midwifery and sexual and occupational health.

The Minister has given a commitment to review the Regulations after two years time.

### **School of Podiatry**

The Minister for Health and Children and the Minister for Education and Science announced funding for a new degree programme and associated clinic for the education of Podiatrists (Chiropodists) in Ireland, to be located at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG). The School of Podiatry will offer a B. Sc. (Hons) in Podiatry (Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications). An annual intake of 25 students is planned.

## **HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE 2: RESPONSIVE AND APPROPRIATE CARE**

- *To support the health system in developing the capacity - infrastructure, technology, systems and people - to deliver timely and appropriate services within available resources; and*
- *To provide key policy guidance to ensure high quality care is being delivered in the appropriate setting with a focus on patients, clients and their families.*

### **Continuing high level of public investment in health**

The National Development Plan (NDP), launched in January 2007, underlines the Government's commitment to high levels of investment in health over the next seven years. Key elements of this investment package are:

- capital programmes in hospitals and primary and community settings;
- expansion of services for older people;
- expansion of services for people with disabilities.

The NDP includes total capital funding of €5 billion for improving health infrastructure, both in terms of upgrading existing facilities and putting in place new developments to meet changing service needs.

Priorities in the Acute Hospital sector, in which €2.4 billion will be invested, will include the redevelopment of the Mater Hospital, a new National Paediatric Hospital, and work on a new Regional Hospital for the North-East.

The Plan also provides for the re-development of the National Rehabilitation Hospital in Dún Laoghaire, which will increase rehabilitation bed capacity.

In Cancer Care, the BreastCheck Programme will be fully rolled out. The new Radiation Oncology Service will be developed nationally. There will be new initiatives in Accident and Emergency services, infection control, and acute bed capacity.

There will be investment in the physical facilities to support new Primary Care teams. The Plan supports the modernisation of Mental Health services and the implementation of “A Vision for Change”.

Under the Plan, €9.7 billion will be invested in services for older people. An amount of €19.2 billion will be directed to services for people with disabilities.

### **Co-Location Initiative**

Significant progress was made during the year on the Government’s co-location initiative, which aims to make available in the fastest way possible approximately 1,000 additional acute beds for public patients in public hospitals through the development of private hospitals on public sites. The intention is to transfer private activity to those hospitals thereby freeing up capacity for public patients. In mid-2007 the Board of the Health Service Executive approved successful bidder status for six public hospital sites. Following that the hospitals and the bidders worked towards finalising detailed agreements to allow the projects to be progressed. Plans for two further sites were also developed.

### **National Plan for Radiation Oncology**

In relation to the National Plan for Radiation Oncology, progress was made on procuring additional capacity aimed at meeting population needs by 2010. Approval was also given for the development of additional capacity, which will become available in 2008, at St. Luke’s Hospital in Dublin.

### **National Cancer Screening Service**

The first Board of the National Cancer Screening Service was appointed by the Minister. The new Service amalgamates BreastCheck and the Irish Cervical Screening Programme, and will deliver these and other screening programmes nationally. The Service had a budget of €32million in 2007. The BreastCheck Programme was extended to counties in the West and South and static units were opened in Galway and Cork in December. Around 66,000 women were screened and 3.5% were called back for further assessment.

A total of 28,286 women were screened under the pilot cervical screening programme in the Midwest. Agreement was reached on the plan for roll-out of a National Cervical Screening Programme, which will commence in mid-2008.

### **National Paediatric Hospital**

The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board was established in May 2007. Its primary function is to plan, design, build, furnish and equip the new National Paediatric Hospital, which will involve the transfer of services from the three existing Dublin children's hospitals. The details of the High Level Framework Brief for the new National Paediatric Hospital were announced by the HSE in late 2007.

### **Childrens' Care Centre for Tallaght**

Plans were announced for a major new Children's Ambulatory Care Centre in a new purpose-built building in Tallaght. This development will be advanced as part of the initial phase of the new Children's Hospital Development.

The Tallaght development will consist of an urgent care centre providing for up to 48,000 urgent care attendances (15,000 more than are currently provided in the National Childrens' Hospital in Tallaght). Common day-case procedures, and a significant level of day-case surgery, will be carried out at this location.

### **Pandemic Influenza Planning**

A National Pandemic Influenza Plan and Advice for Pandemic Influenza in Ireland were published. Written jointly by the Department and the HSE, these publications concentrated on the health response to pandemic influenza, but also provide some advice on the planning which must take place across all sectors of society.

### **Dormant Accounts**

In co-operation, (primarily) with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DCRAGA) and the Health Service Executive, the Department continued to support the Dormant Accounts Fund as provided for under the Dormant Accounts (Amendment) Act, 2005. The Act provides for the allocation of funding for projects and services focusing on a number of designated groups within Irish society, namely, disability education and economic and social disadvantage. The Department of Health and Children leads in the area of disability and co-operates with the Department of Education and Science (DES) and DCRAGA respectively in relation to the other two categories.

### **HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE 3: FAIR ACCESS**

*To provide a policy and legal framework which ensures equity for public patients and enables all patients and clients to access the services they need.*

#### **Eligibility Legislation**

Work is underway in the Department on a new legislative framework on eligibility and entitlement for health and personal social services. The aim is to produce a clear set of statutory provisions that ensure equity and transparency and to bring the system up to date with developments in service delivery and technology that have occurred since the Health Act 1970. The legislation will define specific health and personal social services more clearly, will set out who should be eligible for what services, as well as criteria for eligibility. It will also establish when and in what circumstances charges may be made, and will provide for an appeals framework. As part of this work, the Department is reviewing the eligibility criteria for the assessment of medical cards in the context of financial, medical and social need in line with the commitment in *Towards 2016* to clarify entitlement to a medical card. A Steering Group has been established, which is expected to report in Autumn 2008.

#### **Waiting lists and waiting times**

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) arranged treatment for over 22,000 in-patients, and over 10,000 outpatients, in 2007, bringing the total treated since its establishment to almost 77,000 in-patients and over 20,000 outpatients. The NTPF has now arranged treatment for 100,000 patients since its establishment in 2002.

*Visit [www.ntpf.ie](http://www.ntpf.ie) for more information.*



## **Health Insurance Market**

Over 50% of the Irish population have private health insurance cover, and the private hospital sector makes an important contribution to health care provision. It is thus of great importance that the market operates in an efficient manner and in the interests of consumers.

Arising from reports by the Competition Authority, the Health Insurance Authority, and the Barrington Group (established by the Minister in January, 2007 to carry out a business appraisal of the health insurance market in Ireland), the Minister obtained Government approval for a range of reform measures for the market. These measures are designed to create a level playing field and enhance consumer choice. The package of measures includes:

- VHI to become a conventional insurer, authorised by the Financial Regulator, by end-2008. The derogation from solvency requirements which the company enjoys will cease when it is authorised;
- The publication of a VHI (Amendment) Bill. This was done in May, 2007, and provided that VHI will have to attain the level of reserves needed to achieve authorisation as an insurer, and to provide a structure that gives commercial freedom on products and pricing to the VHI;
- Health insurance customers to be provided with clear statements of consumers' rights and with standardised renewal notices;
- Companies with payroll deductions schemes to offer at least two companies' products to employees. Group Schemes to be put out to tender on a regular basis. Waiting periods imposed on older people to be reviewed to ensure that they comply with equality legislation;
- Measures to be taken to encourage more competition in the market, and to promote the effective application of risk equalisation and community-rating.

### **Services for people with a disability**

The arrangements for commencing Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005, under which people with a disability are entitled to an assessment of needs and a formal statement of services, are an important aspect of the Health Sectoral Plan. Part 2 commenced for children aged under five years with effect from 1 June, 2007. An assessment based on the needs of a client, independent of the costs of the provision of service, will be provided. The HSE will prepare a service statement outlining the services to be provided to the relevant person.

Services for adults and children will continue to be enhanced progressively over the next number of years.

### **Review of the Mental Health Act 2001**

As required by section 75, a review of the Mental Health Act 2001 was carried out in 2007. A small number of amendments to the Act are recommended and they will be addressed in 2008. The limited timeframe for the review did not allow for a comprehensive review as the full provisions of the Act had only been in operation since 1 November 2006. A more detailed review will be undertaken within 5 years of the full implementation of the Act i.e. before 1 November 2011.

### **Vocational training and health related employment services for people with a disability**

The past year has seen positive progress in supporting and enhancing sheltered adult day activity and training services for people with disabilities. Part of this work has been the establishment of a joint FÁS/ HSE approach to the development of ‘bridging initiatives’ which focus on supporting the effective transition from rehabilitative training to vocational training.

The Department of Health and Children is supporting the phased transfer of funding and responsibility for appropriate employment services from the health sector to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

### **Insurance scheme for persons with Hepatitis C & HIV**

Primary legislation was enacted in 2006 to allow for the establishment of an insurance support scheme for persons who have been infected with Hepatitis C and HIV through the administration within the State of infected blood and blood products. Regulations setting out the operational criteria for the scheme were put in place in January, 2007. The Health Service Executive appointed an administrator and support staff for the scheme in the spring of 2007 and the life assurance and mortgage protection elements of the scheme were commenced on 12 September 2007. The Minister launched the scheme on 27 September.

## **HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE 4: BETTER HEALTH FOR EVERYONE**

*To provide a policy and legal framework for the protection and promotion of health and well-being which gives active support to improving quality of life and targets inequalities in health.*

### **Improving Quality of life and targeting health inequalities**

#### **Mental Health**

The First Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Group for \* *'A Vision for Change'* was submitted to the Minister of State with special responsibility for Disability and Mental Health, in May 2007. The Report acknowledges the progress made but expresses concern about the lack of a systematic approach to implementation and the lack of clarity in responsibility for implementation in the HSE.

*(\*'A Vision for Change' is the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy. The Report sets out a comprehensive model of mental health service provision for Ireland. It describes a framework for building and fostering positive mental health across the entire community and for providing accessible, community-based, specialist services for people with mental illness.)*

#### **National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016**

The Department contributed to the preparation of the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016*, published in February 2007. The health commitments in the Action Plan aim to promote greater social inclusion through tackling and reducing health inequalities and improving the health status of the more vulnerable members of society.

#### **All-Ireland Traveller Health Study**

In July 2007 the All-Ireland Study of Travellers Health Status and Health Needs involving all Travellers living on the island, North and South, was launched. The Study is jointly sponsored by the Department and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Belfast. The purpose of the Study is to examine the health status of Travellers, to assess the impact of the health services currently being provided and to identify the factors which influence mortality and health status. The Study will take between 2½ and 3 years to complete. It will provide a framework for policy development and practice in relation to Travellers.

### **Stamp Out Stigma Campaign**

In 2007 the Department co-funded a campaign to address HIV-related stigma and discrimination. Co-funded by Irish Aid, the Stamp Out Stigma campaign culminated in the launch of national television and newspaper advertisements on the eve of World AIDS Day 2007 and the release of initial research findings on experiences of HIV-related discrimination in Ireland.

### **Office of the Minister for Children (OMC)**

Key activities undertaken by the OMC during 2007 to promote the wellbeing of children and young people and ensure their participation in decision-making included:

Work to integrate and innovate in the delivery of services for children / families:

- Development and publication of the Agenda for Children's Services;
- Support for the National Children's Strategy Implementation Group and the roll-out of integrated children's services committees in four counties;
- Oversight and support for a range of prevention and early intervention innovative projects for children and their families.

Development of the policy and legislative framework:

- Publication of Teenspace – the National Recreation Policy for Young People;
- Preparation of Adoption Bill for publication in early 2008;
- Preparatory work on a referendum on children's rights and subsequent establishment of the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children;
- Commencement of all provisions of the Children Act, 2001 and the enactment of the Child Care (Amendment) Act, 2007;

- Continued work in the national review of compliance with the Children First child protection guidelines, including the commissioning of research on experiences of service users.

Improvements in understanding, knowledge and data management in respect of children's lives:

- Continued roll-out of the National Longitudinal Study of Ireland;
- Publication of the first biennial State of the Nation's Children Report;
- Preparatory work for the development of a national data strategy on children's lives.

Improvements in children and young people's participation:

- A series of consultations with teenagers on alcohol misuse by young people;
- Establishment of a funding and evaluation scheme for effective Comhairle na nÓg throughout the country;
- Hosting of Dáil na nÓg and other children's participation initiatives.

Service Improvements:

- Launch of the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (2008-2010) under the National Childcare Investment Programme.

Further details are available in the Annual Report of the Office of the Minister for Children for 2007.

## **Health Protection**

### **Hygiene in Acute Hospitals**

Achieving and maintaining the highest possible standards of hygiene in our hospitals and healthcare facilities generally is a priority for the Department, and we liaise with HIQA and with the HSE on an ongoing basis regarding efforts to raise standards, and ensure the maximum possible protection for all users of hospital services.

In 2007, HIQA undertook a comprehensive assessment of how hygiene services are provided and managed in 51 HSE-funded acute care hospitals and published its report, the *National Hygiene Services Quality Review*, on 13 November, 2007. Most hospitals achieved either extensive or exceptional compliance with the standard in the service delivery section of the report. However, the results were poor on governance. While improvements have been made and are acknowledged in the report, no hospital achieved a 'very good' rating, 7 were categorised as 'good', 35 as 'fair' and 9 as 'poor.' The Department supports the emphasis by HIQA on a 'whole system' approach to hygiene.

The HSE established a National Infection Control Action Plan in March 2007, and over the next three to five years, the HSE aims to reduce Health Care Associated Infections (HCAIs) by 20%, MRSA infection by 30% and antibiotic consumption by 20%.

## **HIGH LEVEL OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORTING WIDER GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES AND INTERNATIONAL HEALTH POLICY**

*To support the implementation of Government programmes and policies beyond the health sector and to help meet Ireland's health-related commitments at European and international level.*

### **Supporting Government Programmes**

#### **Internal Modernisation**

The Department continues to support implementation of the Government's modernisation programme to ensure that we deliver a quality service to our internal and external customers and stakeholders. In 2007, this included:

- Further restructuring of the Department to better align it with its new role and strategic priorities. This included setting up a new Patient Safety Unit and the transfer of responsibility for the General Register Office to the Department of Social and Family Affairs and for the Social Services Inspectorate to HIQA;
- Providing a comprehensive training and development programme to support our business objectives and enhance our staff's capabilities. An amount equivalent to over 3% of the Department's payroll was spent on these initiatives in 2007;
- Promoting diversity by providing work placements under the Travellers' Initiative and under the Willing, Able and Mentoring (WAM) programme for graduates with a disability;
- Exceeding the strategic targets aimed at achieving a greater gender balance at the Assistant Principal and Principal Officer grades;
- Implementing the Department's mobility policy, under which approximately 100 staff were moved in 2007;
- Improving the Department's overall ICT infrastructure, including the enhancement of facilities with the provision of a new improved computer room with modern fire suppression and back up power supply facilities. ICT services



- were provided to the Office of the Disabilities Appeals Officer (ODOA). The Office of the Minister for Children was integrated in the Department's network;
- Strengthening business planning and risk management processes;
  - Strengthening and developing the partnership process within the Department through regular meetings of the Partnership Committee and its sub-committees.

## **Workforce Strategy and Policy Development**

Pay costs represent the single biggest element of the health sector budget. Increases in pay rates are essentially determined under the national partnership process. Accordingly, the management of employee numbers represents the best way of managing overall pay costs. During 2007, the Department worked to bed-in a new employment management framework for the HSE which will, among other things, establish clearer links between service developments, funding and employment.

## **Supporting International Commitments**

### **International Level**

A key role of the Department is to support the Minister in her dealings with other countries and with international organisations such as the Council of Europe, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). During 2007, the Department continued to ensure that Ireland fulfilled its international obligations and provided input into the formulation of policy in the EU and other appropriate international fora.

During 2007, key activities included:

- Fulfilling the Department's role in relation to Oireachtas Scrutiny of EU Affairs by submitting information notes on 13 EU legislative proposals;
- Transposing 13 Directives into Irish law;
- Participating in the annual meeting of the World Health Assembly;
- The supply of annual statistics to international bodies, e.g. to the OECD for the purpose of the report, "Health at a Glance 2007". This provides useful

comparative data that allow us to assess how the Irish health system is performing across a range of measurements;

- With a view to improving the quality of data in relation to health expenditure, a Steering Group was established to oversee a project aimed at implementing the OECD System of Health Accounts (SHA) and it is expected that the project team will produce a set of accounts using the SHA by the end of 2008;
- The Government signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 30 March, 2007. This Convention will have significant consequence right across the health services and is not specific to one given area. It proposes a shift in an understanding of how society views ‘disability’ from a medical to a social model. The Department of Health and Children is represented on an Inter-Departmental Committee chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform which is charged with putting in place the necessary steps to support ratification of the Convention as soon as possible.

### **North South Co-operation**

During 2007, the Department continued to work with colleagues in Northern Ireland.

Activities included:

- continuing co-operation on the health agenda areas initiated under the North South Ministerial Council including Accident and Emergency Services, High Technology Equipment and Health Promotion;
- working with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) in Northern Ireland on infectious disease emergency planning, with particular emphasis on pandemic influenza;
- collaboration with representatives of the DHSSPSNI and the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) on the issue of suicide prevention. Key actions achieved in 2007 include the launch of a mental health awareness campaign and the launch of the Deliberate Self-Harm Registry on an all island basis;
- working with the Institute of Public Health to develop information, policy and practice relating to poverty and health on an all-island basis;

- continuing to promote awareness and knowledge of food safety issues on an all-island basis through the work of safe food - the Food Safety Promotion Board;
- facilitating the completion of a Service Level Agreement for the referral of about 50 radiation oncology patients annually from Donegal to Belfast City Hospital; it was also agreed that the number will be increased if there is sufficient demand from patients in Donegal;
- the funding of a range of initiatives, particularly clinical trials, under the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding which reaffirms the commitment of the Government and the authorities in Northern Ireland and the United States of America to supporting the work of the All Ireland-National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium. During the year the Irish Clinical Oncology Research Group recruited approximately 600 patients into clinical trials.
- working with Co-operation & Working Together (CAWT), the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the relevant Social Services Boards in Northern Ireland to facilitate the establishment in 2007 of two cross-border GP out-of-hours pilot projects.
- North/South Initiative: Middletown, Co. Armagh  
In April, 2002 the Ministers for Education (north and south, under the North-South Ministerial Council) announced the establishment of a specialised centre for autism in Middletown, Co. Armagh. It will provide services to children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), with a capacity for up to 60 placements and up to 180 educational assessments per year. Costs are to be shared equally between both jurisdictions. The two Departments of Education are the drivers of the project but the two Departments of Health will play a supportive role on the health aspects.

## Appendix 1

### Legislation enacted in 2007

Child Care (Amendment) Act, 2007  
Health (Nursing Homes) (Amendment) Act, 2007  
Health Act, 2007\*  
Pharmacy Act, 2007\*  
Medical Practitioners Act, 2007\*  
Health Insurance (Amendment) Act, 2007  
Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2007.

(\*Regulatory Impact Analysis was carried out in respect of this Act).

### Statutory Instruments

SI Number	Title
31	Hepatitis C Compensation Tribunal (Insurance Scheme for Relevant Claimants) Regulations 2007
42	Fluoridation of Water Supplies Regulations 2007
85	Health (Country of Origin of Beef) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
92	European Communities (Medical Devices) (Reclassification of Hip, Knee and Shoulder Joint Replacement) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
99	Medicinal Products (Revocation of the Medical Preparations (Control of Amphetamine) Regulations 1969) Regulations 2007
120	Health (Repayment Scheme) (Public Notice) Regulations 2007
124	Health & Social Care Professionals Council (Establishment Day) Order 2007
125	National Treatment Purchase Fund Board (Establishment) Order 2004 (Amendment) Order 2007
126	Health & Social Care Professionals Act 2005 (Commencement) Order 2007
149	Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002 (Commencement) Order
150	Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2004 (Commencement) Order 2007
171	European Communities (Additives, Colours and Sweeteners in Foodstuffs) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
175	Crisis Pregnancy Agency (Establishment) Order 2001 (Amendment) Order 2007
194	Irish Medicines Board (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (Commencement) Order 2007
200	Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Regulations 2007
201	Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) (Amendment) Regulations
220	Risk Equalisation (Amendment) Scheme 2007
225	European Communities (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) Regulations 2007
226	Health Act 2007 (Commencement) Order 2007

<b>227</b>	Health Information and Quality Authority (Establishment Day) Order 2007
<b>230</b>	The National Social Work Qualification Board (Establishment) Order 1997 (Amendment) Order 2007
<b>234</b>	Disability Act 2005 (Commencement) Order 2007
<b>235</b>	European Communities (Cosmetic Products) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations 2007
<b>241</b>	European Communities (Dietary Foods for Special Medical Purposes) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>242</b>	European Communities (Infant Formulae and Follow-On Formulae) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>243</b>	Pharmacy Act 2007 (Commencement) Order 2007
<b>246</b>	The National Paediatric Hospital Development Board (Establishment) Order 2007
<b>262</b>	Health Act 2007 (Commencement)(No. 2) Order 2007
<b>263</b>	Disability (Assessment of Needs, Service Statements and Redress) Regulations 2007
<b>279</b>	The Blood Transfusion Service Board (Establishment) Order 1965 (Amendment) Order 2007
<b>303</b>	European Communities (Medical Ionising Radiation Protection)(Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>304</b>	The Commission of Investigation (Leas Cross Nursing Home) Order 2007
<b>305</b>	The Health Research Board (Establishment) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order 2007
<b>376</b>	European Communities (Labelling, Presentation and Advertising of Foodstuffs) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>409</b>	Health (Nursing Homes) (Amendment) Act 2007 (Commencement) Order 2007
<b>506</b>	European Communities (Food Supplements) Regulations 2007
<b>509</b>	Child Care (Amendment) Act 2007 (Commencement) Order 2007
<b>510</b>	Children Act 2001 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2007
<b>524</b>	Children Act 2001 (Commencement) (No. 3) Order 2007
<b>538</b>	Medicinal Products (Control of Wholesale Distribution) Regulations 2007
<b>539</b>	Medicinal Products (Control of Manufacture) Regulations 2007
<b>540</b>	Medicinal Products (Control of Placing on the Market Place) Regulations 2007
<b>541</b>	Medicinal Products (Control of Advertising) Regulations 2007
<b>542</b>	European Communities (Amendment of the Irish Medicines Board Act 1995) Regulations 2007
<b>543</b>	Irish Medicines Board (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2007
<b>554</b>	European Communities (Foodstuffs Intended for Particular Nutritional Uses) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>559</b>	Infectious Diseases (Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>598</b>	European Communities (Human Tissues and Cells Traceability Requirements, Notification of Serious Adverse Reactions and Events and Certain Technical Requirements) Regulations 2007
<b>628</b>	National Treasury Management Agency (Delegation of Functions) (Amendment) Order 2007
<b>634</b>	Hepatitis C Compensation Tribunal (Amendment) Act 2006 (Establishment Day) Order 2007
<b>635</b>	Hepatitis C Compensation Tribunal (Amendment) Act 2006 (Sections 1(a), 3, 4 and 5) (Commencement) Order 2007
<b>639</b>	Health (Repayment Scheme) (Charge for Administering Patients' Private Property Accounts) Regulations 2007
<b>686</b>	European Communities (Natural Mineral Waters, Spring Waters and Other Waters in Bottles or Containers) (Amendment) Regulations 2007

<b>711</b>	Appointment of Special Advisers (Minister for Health and Children) Order 2007
<b>712</b>	Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children) Order 2007
<b>713</b>	Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children) (No.2) Order 2007
<b>714</b>	Health and Children (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2007
<b>715</b>	Health and Children (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No.2) Order 2007
<b>716</b>	Health and Children (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No.3) Order 2007
<b>735</b>	Health Act 2007 (Commencement) (No. 3) Order 2007
<b>736</b>	Civil Registration Act 2004 (Commencement) Order 2007
<b>737</b>	Civil Registration (Marriages) (Fees) Regulations 2007
<b>738</b>	Marriage Registration Form Regulations 2007
<b>739</b>	Register of Marriages (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2007
<b>740</b>	Civil Registration (Fees and Allowances) Regulations 2007
<b>741</b>	Register of Solemnisers (Correction of Errors) Regulations 2007
<b>742</b>	Civil Registration (Marriages) (Fees)(Revocation) Regulations 2007
<b>743</b>	Civil Registration (Fees and Allowances) (Revocation) Regulations 2007
<b>744</b>	Delivery of Notification of Intention to Marry (Prescribed Circumstances) Regulations 2007
<b>747</b>	European Communities (General Food Law) Regulations 2007
<b>776</b>	European Communities (Processed Cereal-Based Foods and Baby Foods for Infants and Young Children) Regulations 2007
<b>784</b>	European Communities (Foods Intended for Use in Energy-Restricted Diets for Weight Reduction) Regulations 2007
<b>785</b>	Infectious Diseases Maintenance Allowances (Increased Payment) Regulations 2007
<b>808</b>	European Communities (Labelling, Presentation and Advertising of Foodstuffs) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2007
<b>824</b>	Health (In-Patient Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>825</b>	Health (Out-Patient Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 2007
<b>836</b>	Infectious Diseases (Maintenance Allowances) Regulations 2008
<b>837</b>	Health Services Regulations 2007
<b>839</b>	Food Safety Authority of Ireland Act 1998 (Amendment of First and Second Schedules) Order)
<b>852</b>	European Communities (Infant Formulae and Follow-On Formulae) Regulations 2007
<b>855</b>	Health Repayment Scheme (Change of Applicant by Reason of Death of Relevant Person) Regulations 2007
<b>866</b>	Irish Medicines Board (Fees) Regulation 2007

*Visit [www.dohc.ie/legislation](http://www.dohc.ie/legislation) to download 2007 legislation.*

## **Appendix 2**

### **Publications in 2007**

A Census of Family Support Services in Ireland  
Annual Output Statement 2007 for Health Group of Votes  
Annual Report of the Elder Abuse National Implementation Group, 2006  
Code of Practice on Fluoridation of Drinking Water 2007  
Code of Corporate and Financial Governance 2007  
Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) – Service Utilisation and Treatment Need (Lot 9)  
Department of Health and Children Consolidated Salary Scales effective from June 2007  
Department of Health and Children Corporate Business Plan 2007  
Department of Health and Children Annual Report 2006  
Family Support in Ireland - Definition and Strategic Intent  
First Annual Report of the Alcohol Marketing Communications Monitoring Body (2006)  
First Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Group on ‘*A Vision for Change*’ - May 2007  
Health in Ireland: Key Trends 2007  
Health Sectoral Plan under the Disability Act 2005 – Year 1 Review  
Influenza Pandemic Preparedness in Ireland Joint Assessment Report, 2007  
Listening to Children: Children’s stories of domestic violence  
Long-Stay Activity Report 2006  
Lourdes Hospital Redress Scheme 2007  
National Office of Suicide Prevention Annual Report 2006  
National Pandemic Influenza Plan  
National Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People (Draft for Consultation – August 2007)  
North-South Survey of Childrens’ Height, Weight, and Body mass Index, 2002  
Oral Health of Irish Adults 2000-2002  
Private Medical Insurance in Ireland  
Promoting the Well-Being of Families and Children

Quality and Fairness Report A Health System for You – Action Plan Progress Report  
2006

Risk Management Policy

Quality Assurance Standards for Symptomatic Breast Disease Services

Report of the National Health Consultative Forum 2006

Review of the Operation of the Mental Health Act, 2001

Review of the Mental Health Act in 2001- Findings and Conclusions - May 2007

Standards for the Assessment of Need Process under Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005

State of the Nations Children Report 2006

The Agenda for Children's Services - A Policy Handbook

The Irish Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HSBC) Study 2006

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### Appendix 3

## Organisation Chart for the Department of Health and Children (2007)







