



Research and Engagement Overview

Building a Better GP and Primary Care Service



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Introduction



The HSE is committed to achieving a decisive shift towards stronger, more integrated Primary Care services and recognises that General Practitioners are key to the strengthening of Primary Care. To identify opportunities to enhance Primary Care services and inform the negotiation of a new GP Contract, the HSE undertook a series of comprehensive stakeholder engagements between October 2016 and May 2017.

The purpose of the engagements was to understand ‘what matters most’ to those who use and those who provide GP care, and to learn what they would most like to see developed as part of a future GP and Primary Care service. The HSE sought the input of both frequent and occasional GP service users to formulate a rounded understanding of patient needs and priorities. Views of current and future GPs and other healthcare professionals working in or close to Primary Care were also sought to identify priorities for service development in the future. Input was captured from as many categories of healthcare professionals as possible within the timeframe. While it was not possible to engage with all disciplines, this exercise will be repeated in the future.

Combined feedback from over 6,000 people made this one of the largest engagement initiatives undertaken by the HSE. The wealth of data collected from this extensive engagement has resulted in a final report capturing the views of a broad range of stakeholders. This report will be used to inform GP contract negotiations and more broadly to help the HSE to build a better GP and Primary Care service in Ireland.

Objectives

The key objectives of the communications strategy and approach are outlined below.

- ▶ Identify current key themes and issues relating to GP services;

- ▶ Deepen the HSE’s understanding of the various stakeholder priorities;

- ▶ Develop insights in relation to consumer priorities related to Primary Care;

- ▶ Better understand how our GP services compare to GP services in other countries; and

- ▶ Produce a detailed report that reflects the feedback from different stakeholder groups.

Process



The engagement approach involved consultation with a broad range of stakeholders and in-depth research of available national data and international evidence. Primary research was undertaken by an external company, Coyne Research, and a combination of primary and secondary research was conducted by a research team from Trinity College Dublin, led by Professor Tom O’Dowd, Emeritus Professor of General Practice. The latter research team was commissioned by the Primary Care Division of the HSE to provide a basis for developing a comprehensive report within which the findings from the engagements have been synthesised.

The main stages of the approach are listed below.

1. Collation of existing national data and international evidence review
2. Consumer/service user research
3. Focused public consultation via national survey
4. Views of advocacy groups
5. Views of current and future GPs
6. Targeted qualitative interviews
7. Views of political representatives [all but one declined to participate]
8. Plenary session involving a broad range of key stakeholders

A number of themes/headings to be explored at various stages throughout the process were agreed at the outset. These ensured that a consistent approach was taken to analysing the data across various inputs and included:

Quality – Including waiting times, quality of service, level of satisfaction with service, creation/maintenance of patient records, involvement in agreed surveys and other initiatives.

Access – Acceptance of eligible patients, location of practices, opening hours, out of hours and general accessibility including length of time to receive appointment.

Cost – With and without medical card, additional costs including those for vaccines etc.

Range of Services – Exploring existing and future possibilities.

An overview of each of the elements of the stakeholder engagement approach is provided overleaf.

1. National Data & International Evidence Review

Data contained in the annual reports produced by the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) between 2005 and 2015 were gathered and collated. Findings highlighted the levels of GP payments and claims at a national level and over time.

To identify the international GP models or parts of models that may be compatible with the Irish system, an evidence review was conducted based on 10 countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Israel, New Zealand, Scotland, Spain and the US (Vermont). In addition, three expert interviews/case studies were conducted across three continents with leaders of the patient care journey in Scotland, New Zealand and Vermont. In-depth case studies were developed based on literature and expert interviews.

2. Consumer/Service User Research

The HSE undertook both quantitative and qualitative research amongst the wider public to build a thorough understanding of service users' experience of GP services and their priorities for the future. This process sought to establish those aspects of GP care most valued by the public, areas perceived to be in need of improvement, and expectations of GP services now and in the future.

Quantitative

1,010 Computer Aided Telephone Interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of the population. This component of the engagement strategy ensured that the attitudes and views of a representative sample of the population were ascertained.

Qualitative

The qualitative stage of the consumer research was conducted in December 2016 via four focus groups involving service users who had visited a GP within the previous 12 months. The public sample was split by age, life stage, social class, gender and location to ensure the views of key demographic groups were reflected. The groups explored in detail a number of key themes and priorities, and tested insights emerging from the quantitative research.

3. Focused Public Consultations via Survey

A national, online survey was conducted between 23rd November and 5th December 2016 via the HSE website www.hse.ie/mygpsurvey. To ensure a fully open, transparent and accessible approach, the questions were developed by the Research Agency and made available to all the public to answer via an open forum. The survey website was promoted to the public using a series of newspaper advertisements and a social media campaign. 5,083 responses were submitted.



4. Views of Advocacy Groups

To explore in more detail the views of highly invested stakeholders, a facilitated workshop with Advocacy Groups was conducted in November 2016. 25 members of the National Patient Forum, representing patient advocacy groups, voluntary organisations and individual patients and carers, took part. The session explored key themes and topics related to GP care and services. A report outlining the outputs from the session was produced and a detailed submission from the Irish Cancer Society was subsequently received.

5. Views of Current and Future GPs

As part of the qualitative research approach, the HSE ascertained the views of existing GPs and GPs of the future. Selection of GPs was made on the basis of age, location (urban and rural) and whether they worked in a single handed or group practice. Engagements included a facilitated focus group with GPs based across Ireland and a series of in-depth phone interviews with rurally based GPs in December 2016 and January 2017. In addition, a full day consultation with two of the largest GP training schemes in Ireland was undertaken in December 2016. This was attended by 70 GP Trainee, eight Programme Directors and three Academic/Practicing GPs.

GPs were also invited to participate in the public online survey and to submit any further information, additional to the survey, by email. These submissions complemented the views of GPs collected via the focus group and in-depth phone interviews.

6. Targeted Qualitative Interviews

To capture input from key individuals with specific insight into the wider healthcare system and help identify what is desired of GP and wider Primary Care services, targeted interviews were conducted. While it was not possible to engage with all disciplines and those interviewed represent a small sample of wider groups, the following individuals or key stakeholder groups participated:

- ▶ Emergency Department Consultant

- ▶ Representative from the National Ambulance Service

- ▶ Specialists in disciplines with close linkages to GP services including:
 - ▶ Respiratory
 - ▶ Endocrinology
 - ▶ Cardiac
 - ▶ Mental Health
 - ▶ Cancer
 - ▶ Geriatrics
 - ▶ Radiology

- ▶ Representative from a GP Co-operative

- ▶ GP Practice Nurses

- ▶ GP Practice Manager

- ▶ Palliative Care (Hospice/Homecare)

- ▶ Public Health Nurse

- ▶ Community Diabetes Nurse

- ▶ Irish Pharmacy Union

- ▶ Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland

- ▶ Private Health Insurer

7. Views of Political Representatives

All members of the Oireachtas were invited to participate in two political engagement sessions in December 2016 at a location close to Leinster House. An outline of the research and engagement progress was presented and a question and answer style forum provided the opportunity for political representatives to input into the process. It was disappointing that only one TD attended this session.

8. Plenary Sessions Involving Invited Stakeholders

A Plenary Session was held in May 2017, as the final stage of the consultation. The purpose of the session was to explore some of the results of the research to date and invite participants to share experience and knowledge. Representatives from the following groups/organisations were invited to attend the Plenary Session.

- ▶ Health Service Executive

- ▶ Department of Health

- ▶ Community Health Organisations

- ▶ Hospital Groups

- ▶ Representative and Professional Bodies

- ▶ Professors of General Practice

- ▶ Patient Advocates

- ▶ Practicing GPs and GPs in Training

- ▶ Healthcare professionals who participated in qualitative interviews

The session included presentations from those who undertook the stakeholder engagements. A guest speaker, Dr Alan McDevitt, Chair of the Scottish General Practitioners Committee at the British Medical Association (BMA), shared learnings and insights from the Scottish Experience. A panel discussion and question and answer session took place in the afternoon.

A broad range of feedback mechanisms were made available to participants. These included an audience interactive tool, comment cards, and the question and answer session. The feedback from the Plenary Session was collated and reflected in the final report.

A submission was subsequently received from the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation as a representative was unable to attend the Plenary Session.



Outputs

The final outputs from the stakeholder engagement process are listed below and can be downloaded from the HSE website.



Building a Better GP and Primary Care Service Research Findings from Service Users and Providers

This report, developed by Coyne Research, presents findings from the series of qualitative and quantitative stakeholder engagements which took place between October 2016 and March 2017.



A Future Together Building a Better GP and Primary Care Service

This report was developed by Professor Tom O'Dowd, Emeritus Professor of General Practice in Trinity College Dublin, Dr Jo-Hanna Ivers and Ms Deirdre Handy. It includes an examination of the international evidence base for enhanced GP and Primary Care services, summarises the findings of the Coyne Research and synthesises additional feedback from relevant key stakeholders to support the development and negotiation of a new modern GP service for the future in Ireland.

Conclusion

The breadth and depth of these engagements has enabled the development of a suite of meaningful outputs, including a comprehensive final report, which will inform the negotiation of a new GP Contract and help to build a better GP and Primary Care Service. The views of a wide variety of stakeholders, including consumers, service providers and other relevant bodies with a strong interest in the future of GP and Primary Care services in Ireland have been encompassed. This has provided the HSE with a deeper understanding of consumer satisfaction levels, the priorities and concerns of current and future GPs, and the perspectives of a range of professionals working within or close to the Primary Care field. The international research has broadened the knowledge base around how GP services are managed and delivered in other countries and helped to identify some potential opportunities for the Irish system. Collectively, these inputs have provided valuable insight into how GPs can contribute to an enhanced Primary Care service, and identified key areas for consideration and discussion during contract negotiations and beyond.



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