



An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health

# Department of Health Annual Report 2022

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## INTRODUCTION BY MINISTER FOR HEALTH, STEPHEN DONNELLY

We are in the midst of an unprecedented expansion of capacity in our public health service. By the end of 2022, we added 970 hospital beds and over 360 community beds compared to January 2020 and increased the number of critical care beds to 323. In the same period, we hired more than 17,000 people into the health service including over 5,000 nurses and midwives, 1,800 medical and dental staff and around 3,000 health and social care professionals.

While challenges remain in hospital Emergency Departments, many solutions to overcrowding lie outside the hospital system. With this in mind, we have invested a record level of funding into Primary Care services. This includes the addition of 94 new Community Healthcare Networks over 18 months to the end of 2022. These multidisciplinary groups of health and social care professionals are working together to deliver local, accessible health and social services.

Additionally, 42 new Community Specialist Teams were also operational across the country by the end of 2022, providing services including elderly care and chronic disease management in the community setting.

Around 2,500 healthcare professionals have been hired into the new enhanced community care programme across Ireland. These teams will enable more and more patients to be treated and supported at home, in primary care centres and in the community. Helping them to avoid the need to go into hospital. In 2022, over 250,000 scans were funded and provided under the GP Access to Community Diagnostics Scheme, allowing easier access for GPs and patients to a suite of radiology scans.

The 2022 Waiting List Action plan was published in February, building on the good work carried out through the previous plans. The Sláintecare Action Plan was published in June, and all 19 of the Sláintecare Healthy Communities were implemented during the year. We invested in new ways of working that will enable us to better respond to the growing health needs of our population comprising of new care pathways, new technologies and new facilities.

All of the above was delivered while simultaneously managing the challenges presented by COVID-19, as Ireland transitioned from the emergency phase of the pandemic to focus on public health advice, personal judgement, and personal protective behaviours.

We will continue our endeavours to make the Sláintecare vision a reality, and provide a well-resourced, well-staffed, well-funded, modern healthcare service.

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all the staff in my Department and across the health and social care services for their continued hard work, passion and resolute commitment to deliver the right care, in the right place, at the right time.



**Stephen Donnelly T.D.**  
**Minister for Health**

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## OVERVIEW

This annual report for the Department of Health outlines the main achievements made during 2022 to deliver on our mission and fulfil our role. This report is set out across five chapters, each reflecting one of the five strategic priorities in the Department of Health's [\*Statement of Strategy 2021-2023\*](#).

### The Department's Mission

The mission of the Department of Health is to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Ireland by:

- Supporting people to lead **healthy and independent lives**.
- Ensuring the delivery of **high quality and safe health and social care**.
- Creating a more responsive, integrated and **people-centred health and social care** service.
- Promoting **effective and efficient management** of the health and social care service and ensuring best value from health system resources.

### Role of the Department

The Department serves the public and supports the Minister for Health, Ministers of State and Government by:

- Providing **leadership and policy direction** for the health sector to improve health outcomes.
- Undertaking **governance and performance oversight** to ensure accountable and high-quality services.
- **Collaborating to achieve health priorities** and contribute to wider social and economic goals.
- Creating an **organisational environment** where high performance is achieved, collaborative working is valued, and the knowledge and skills of staff are developed and deployed.

### Strategic Priorities

The five priorities in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 are:

1. Manage COVID-19 and promote public health.
2. Expand and integrate care in the community.
3. Make access to healthcare fairer and faster.
4. Improve oversight and partnership in the sector.
5. Become an organisation fit for the future.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

# **MANAGE COVID-19 AND PROMOTE PUBLIC HEALTH**

In 2022, Ireland transitioned from the emergency phase of the pandemic, with focus moving from regulation and population-wide restrictions to public health advice, personal judgement, and personal protective behaviours. Ireland's public health strategy for managing COVID-19 moved to a mitigation phase focused on reducing the impact of COVID-19 on those who are most vulnerable.

In parallel, there was a strong focus on investing and developing population health planning, prevention of illness and promotion of health and wellbeing for the people of Ireland.

## **The Public Health Response to COVID-19**

### **NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY TEAM (NPHE) FOR COVID-19**

The National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) continued coordinating the health sector response to COVID-19. It facilitated the sharing of information between the Department of Health and its agencies. The NPHE provided direction, guidance, support, and expert public health advice for the overall national response to COVID-19. The NPHE for COVID-19 was supported by a permanent secretariat within the Office of the CMO.

The NPHE met over 100 times in total. Three of these meetings were held in early 2022, with the final NPHE meeting taking place on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022. All remaining mandatory public health measures were removed from 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

Commitment to the principle of transparency remained central to the work of the NPHE, with a strong emphasis placed on the online publication of advice and decision-making materials. Over 900 documents relating to the work of the NPHE for COVID-19, including post-meeting letters, agendas and minutes, have been published on the Department of Health's website.

### **COVID-19 ADVISORY GROUP (CAG)**

Following the emergency phase of the pandemic, Ireland's response to COVID-19 required an approach informed by national and international evidence, grounded in best public health practice, with a broad, multidisciplinary membership encompassing members with specific expertise and experience in areas of strategic and/or operational responsibility. On this basis, the COVID-19 Advisory Group (CAG) was established in April 2022 to advise the Minister for Health and Government on how best to maximise Ireland's medium to long-term preparedness against SARS-CoV-2.

The CAG met eight times in 2022. The Group's recommendations informed the Department of Health's *Strategic Approach for the management of COVID-19: Preparedness for Autumn/Winter 2022/23*. This report was published by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer in October 2022.

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) has engaged extensively with cross-government press and communications teams to ensure important public health information and key messages were clearly conveyed to the public throughout 2022. During this time the Office of the CMO has completed:

Press conferences	0
Social media videos	9
Radio interviews	2
TV interviews	2
Press Releases	6

## **PUBLIC HEALTH COMMUNICATIONS**

The press and communications team are responsible for developing and managing the Department's day-to-day proactive external and internal communications strategies, to support and highlight the work of the Minister and Department of Health.

The Department delivered public information campaigns across a range of advertising and other communications formats including Healthy Weight, a Healthy Ireland overweight/obesity prevention campaign for young adults incorporating SciComm Collective young scientist peer-to-peer social media content, Let's take the mystery out of MENOPAUSE, the government's first Menopause Awareness Campaign on behalf of the Women's Health Task Force, and advertising for the Free Contraception Scheme for 17-25 yrs.

The Department continued to provide regular evidence-based communication on the status of COVID-19, respiratory viruses, and vaccines, this included Winter Viruses, a Department of Health campaign promoting key public virus prevention actions.

271 Press Releases were issued representing all Divisions. 932 media queries across a range of topics were answered working closely with units across the Department. 718 posts were pushed out to the public across departmental social media channels to our 176,376 followers, with a total view count of 186,164,123 across all platforms. The total video views across all our social media platforms total 566,540 and there were 5,371,654 website pageviews in 2022.

## **VACCINATION PROGRAMME**

The Department oversaw the implementation of a succession of NIAC recommendations over the course of 2022 including the rollout of both second and third booster doses.

More than 2.7m vaccine doses were administered in 2022 across all COVID-19 vaccination programmes including more than 1.1m second booster doses and in excess of 352k third boosters.

The Department also drove the transition towards a more sustainable model of vaccine delivery through the implementation of a proximity model which was formally ratified by Government. The transition to a proximity model saw GP/Pharmacy replace vaccination centres as the primary channel of vaccine administration and resulted in substantial costs savings.

Implementation of the proximity model resulted in ~€100m savings in 2022 compared to 2021 and will result in further savings in 2023.

IIDPU continued to represent Ireland on the Vaccine Steering Board operated by the European Commission. The Department leveraged its existing contractual commitments to secure access to more than 4m doses of adapted variant vaccine without requiring additional expenditure. These vaccines were

subsequently used to underpin the Winter booster programme. IIDPU continued to engage with representatives from both Gavi and the Department of Foreign Affairs in an effort to donate excess doses to developing countries.

Ireland more than doubled its donations in 2022 with approximately 2.5m doses donated over the course of the year.

## **TESTING & TRACING**

The Department worked closely with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to continue to provide the COVID-19 testing and tracing operation. Testing policy was kept under continuing review under the guidance of the CMO, having regard to the evolving epidemiological situation.

- The Department supported the HSE to deliver PCR testing capacity of 300,000 tests per week at the peak of the Omicron wave in early 2022.
- Over 2.85 million COVID-19 PCR tests were completed in 2022.
- Comprehensive serial testing programmes continued in long term residential facilities, in food processing facilities and in other high-risk, vulnerable settings.
- Supply of antigen tests according to the prevailing public health advice continued throughout 2022 with over 3.598m antigen test kits (5 tests per kit) distributed.
- Contact tracing remained central to the response to the pandemic. Four contact tracing centres were operational in the first half of 2022.

Following Ministerial approval, subsequently endorsed by Government in July 2022, transition plans for testing and tracing in line with public health guidance were implemented in the second half of 2022. The changes to COVID-19 testing were facilitated by the high level of vaccine-induced and naturally acquired population immunity in Ireland which mitigate against the worst impacts of infection.

- Public health advice was that testing was no longer recommended for most of the population.
- The HSE transitioned community swabbing from larger sites to smaller, predominantly HSE-owned sites, whilst maintaining continuity of service. Provision of antigen tests continued.
- Contact tracing was centralised to two locations in summer 2022 as demand reduced in line with public health guidance.
- Additional resources were provided to support enhanced disease surveillance systems in place in the Health Protection Surveillance Centre. The new model monitors levels of infections of COVID-19 through enhanced disease surveillance systems.
- Swabbing for COVID-19 where the result is required to contribute to the diagnosis and management of individual patients was introduced in December 2022.

## **HEALTH WORKFORCE**

In order to facilitate the continued expansion of the health sector workforce to address the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, the following initiatives were implemented:

- Extension the Pandemic Placement Grant (PPG) of €100 per week to all eligible nursing and midwifery students on supernumerary placement to the end of the academic year 2021/22. The vouched accommodation allowance was also doubled for eligible students.

- Student nurses and midwives (for Academic Year 2021/22) on paid internship placement received additional financial support (50% of the PPG: totalling to €1,800 for the academic year) for the duration of their internship, from 1 January 2022.

## **PANDEMIC RECOGNITION PAYMENT**

- In January 2022, Government announced a COVID-19 recognition payment for eligible frontline healthcare staff in the HSE, Section 38 organisations, and other specific cohorts of workers to recognise their unique role during the pandemic.
- The Department and the HSE quickly worked to give effect to this decision. Guidelines for payment were published by the HSE in April. Payment for non-public cohorts posed a unique challenge due to the sheer number of potentially eligible organisations and the complexities of payment and verification. To overcome this, HSE issued a tender which was completed in late October. KOSI Corp was awarded the tender and immediately began work with the HSE to ensure that payments began issuing to non-public cohorts as soon as possible.
- At year-end 2022, payments had been issued in respect of over 160,000 eligible staff.

## **IRELAND'S COVID-19 DATA HUB**

Through Ireland's [COVID-19 Data Hub](#), the Department, along with our collaborating partners, made available to the public daily updates of key COVID-19 indicators. Through the presentation of COVID-19 vaccination data, the progress of Ireland's vaccination programme could be monitored by the public. Daily figures counting the number of people tested and hospital/Intensive Care Unit admissions were also presented to provide the public with a broad picture of the COVID-19 situation in Ireland as it evolved.

## **COVID-19 CLINICAL TRIALS**

The Department supported Irish engagement in the [WHO Solidarity Plus](#) and [EU-SolidAct](#). These multi-national clinical trials sought to test new drug treatments for COVID-19.

## **The National Irish COVID Biobank (NCIB)**

The [National Irish COVID Biobank](#) is a national-wide project funded by the Department of Health through the Health Research Board. It involves 6 universities and 13 clinical sites. In December 2022, the NCIB became officially operational. The NCIB is a collaborative initiative to establish a health research biobank which collects biological samples (such as blood samples and respiratory samples) along with healthcare data, donated by people to facilitate research into COVID-19.

## **TRAVEL POLICY**

The aim of travel policy in response to COVID-19 was to protect public health. As such, its development over the course of the pandemic remained agile and reactive, informed by both the developing epidemiological situation and emerging scientific evidence.

The Department supported development and implementation of government decisions on Irish travel policy during the COVID-19 emergency. It coordinated development and revisions of legislation to support COVID-19 travel policy. It also supported public health experts in their work on international travel in the context of COVID-19.

As of 6th March 2022, all mandatory COVID-19 public health measures applying to travel to Ireland were lifted.

## **DIGITAL COVID CERTIFICATE**

The Department continued to provide support and funding for COVID related eHealth solutions as required under EU regulations and engaged with the EU Digital COVID Certificate Expert Group on proposed amendments to existing EU Regulations. In late June 2022, the Commission approved the extension of the EU DCC scheme for a further 12 months until June 2023.

In addition, the Department:

- Provided oversight of the Digital COVID Certificate Service Centre that was established to deal directly with queries from members of the public relating to the EU Digital COVID Certificate.
- In October 2022, the Department managed the transfer of operations of the Digital COVID Certificate Service Centre to HSELive as part of business as usual.
- Provided ongoing operational oversight to the application process for Irish citizens vaccinated in third countries to apply for an Irish Digital COVID Certificate. On 16th December 2022, the service was expanded to provide the EU DCC for persons who have been vaccinated in a non-EU country.
- Provided continued support for the technical implementation of Digital Covid Certificates and verification apps to support the free movement of Irish citizens within the EU.
- Supported coordination of public communications to facilitate the continued roll-out of Digital COVID Certificates.

## **PUBLIC HEALTH LEGISLATION**

In 2022, Corporate Legislation Unit drafted and oversaw a number of pieces of secondary legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These pieces of secondary legislation captured the complex and fast paced nature of the pandemic by managing the necessary ongoing amendments to existing regulations as the situation evolved and then managing the easing of restrictions as the epidemiological outlook improved. The unit also carried out significant work on contingency measures in relation to COVID – 19.

## **INTERNATIONAL AND EU ENGAGEMENT**

Ireland supported the establishment of a WHO Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) to agree an international binding legal instrument on pandemic preparedness and response in 2021. Following discussion of the international COVID-19 pandemic response and initial lessons learned, the Body was established in December 2021 during a Special Session of the World Health Assembly. Ireland continued to engage with the INB process to prepare the ground for the negotiation a zero draft of an international binding legal instrument (Pandemic Agreement).

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 saw increased activity in health at EU level, which has been maintained in 2022.

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND COVID-19**

€10 million in once-off funding was announced under Budget 2022 for mental health projects to combat the effects of Covid-19. This included €1 million for MyMind to continue counselling supports for people affected by the pandemic and €1.5 million for Mental Health Ireland who awarded almost 80 grants of

between €5,000 and €30,000 to support the work of community-based groups who deliver mental health services on the ground.

## Service Continuity and Adaptation

Although COVID-19 continued to affect healthcare activity in 2022, the Department of Health continued to support and lead the health and social care sector in ensuring the continuation of services for the people of Ireland. The below section contains details of activities and achievements in this area.

### MEDICINES AND CONTROLLED DRUGS

- 15 substances harmful to public health declared as controlled drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977.
- Multiple amendments made to relevant legislation to support continued rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination program.
- Stakeholder Group established to develop IE's position on the Pharmaceutical Strategy.
- Funding was secured for establishment of a national breast implant registry following recommendations from the HSE's Expert Advisory Group on Breast Implant Associated Anaplastic Large Cell Lymphoma (BIA ALCL).

### PRIMARY AND COMMUNITY CARE

Primary Care Practitioners continued to play a central role in responding to the health needs of the public regarding COVID-19. Engagement between the Department of Health, the HSE, and the various professional and regulatory bodies supported this role, for example:

- A number of General Practice support payments for COVID-19 related services commenced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 crises. Two of these payments, to support General Practitioner (GP) practices and ensure that patients had access to COVID-19 assessments, testing-referrals, and in-person dedicated COVID-19 related respiratory clinics where appropriate, without charge, continued until the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2022. A new payment was introduced from the 9<sup>th</sup> of December for assessment and consultations in respect of vulnerable patients who would benefit from the prescription of COVID antiviral medicines.
- Continued participation in the HSE's Community Pharmacy Contingency Planning Forum, to assist the coordination of contingency planning for community pharmacy services in light of COVID-19.

### SOCIAL INCLUSION

In Budget 2022, a further €10m in COVID-19 related funding was provided for people who are homeless. This funding allowed for the provision of vital services, including:

- continuation of the protective public health measures that were developed during COVID-19 for the medically vulnerable homeless population.
- expansion of GP services for people who living in emergency accommodation in Dublin and regional centres.
- continuity of care for people who are homeless who may require emergency hospital treatment during the winter months.

- establishment of a single integrated case management model in Dublin, which commenced activity in Q3 2022. The new model has been effectively supporting people experiencing homelessness.

## Traveller Health

In November 2022, the National Traveller Health Action Plan to improve the health experiences and health outcomes for Travellers, was published by the HSE. This plan was supported by the Dept with an allocation of €1.3 million in Budget 2023.

The Department strongly endorsed this action plan as it aligns with the department's strategic priority to improve access to healthcare for socially excluded groups. It is a comprehensive public health response to the health needs of Travellers, that that sets out tailored and affirmative measures to prevent disease, promote health and prolong life, and are delivered in partnership with Travellers.

## Promotion of Public Health

The Department continued to develop and invest in population health planning, prevention of illness and the promotion of health and wellbeing, and to support people to live healthier lives by implementing a variety of health initiatives.

- Public health promotion is underpinned by a comprehensive evidence base. Wave eight of the **Healthy Ireland Survey** was launched in December 2022. This annual survey gives an up-to-date snapshot of the health of the nation across a range of health behaviours and attitudes and helps monitor progress against key national policy targets.
- The first report of the **Healthy Ireland Outcomes Framework** was published in September 2022. The report uses a structured approach to collate and report relevant and appropriate data which builds awareness of the social determinants of health, supports assessment of the impact of policies on the agreed outcomes, and monitors progress on the whole-of-government response needed to improve health and wellbeing.
- Healthy Ireland engaged in **Public Engagement campaigns** that underpin the relevant policy initiatives, in terms of key messages to influence people towards adapting more healthy behaviours and towards our resources. The "Healthy Weight" campaign was designed and rolled out on social media in Q4 2022 to a target audience of 25-34 year-olds.



- Round 4 of the **Healthy Cities and Counties Programme** of the Healthy Ireland Fund was rolled out in 2022. There was a consistent rollout of the programme across the 31 Local Authorities, with a full time Healthy Ireland coordinator recruited in each Local Authority.
- The **Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme** became well established in 19 areas of greatest need, focusing on addressing health inequalities in these areas. A Local Development Officer was recruited within the local authority in each area and over 170 community health and wellbeing projects were funded. A range of services were provided by the HSE including social prescribing services, supports to quit smoking, practical nutrition advice, and training for local healthcare staff. In 2022 the Department commissioned the Health Research Board to provide an evidence brief which is being used to inform the implementation and evaluation of the programme. An “Enhancement Fund” provided funding to each community for projects that were identified as a priority for the people living in the 19 areas.



*People's Park, Ballyfermot*



*Mayo Rural Links Poles Programme*

- Following the publication of the **Healthy Workplace Framework** in 2021, 2022 saw the completion of an Options Appraisal by Grant Thornton and the establishment of an Implementation Group to oversee the implementation of the National Healthy Workplace Framework. A contract was awarded for the Development and Delivery of National Survey on Workplace. The results of this research are expected in 2024 and it will be the first national survey of worker health wellbeing.
- The **Healthy Campus** National Coordinator, tasked with coordinating the implementation of the Healthy Campus Charter on a national basis, and funded by the Department of Health, was appointed in July 2022 and the Department of Health sits on the Healthy Campus Advisory Group.
- **Healthy Clubs** has seen Phase 5 of the GAA Healthy Club project launched bringing the total number of clubs involved to 450. Funding of €50,000 was allocated to the GAA to support the provision of signage for Smoke Free Clubs in 2022. A funding model for the Football Association of Ireland to develop the “More Than a Club Project” project, targeting communities in greatest need was agreed. This project uses participation in football to promote a number of health and wellbeing programmes. The project aligns with the Healthy Communities targeted areas.
- **Healthy Prisons** - One of the key themes of the Strategic Action Plan is to reduce inequalities by developing initiatives for marginalised groups, and this includes the prison population. In October 2022 a consultation was held with key stakeholders, including the Department of Justice and the Irish Prison Service, to explore opportunities for working together to improve health and wellbeing in the prison setting.
- Phase 4 of the **Healthy Ireland at Your Library** programme commenced in 2022. The library programme centres on providing an enhanced collection of health and wellbeing books, along with the provision of health information services, and a range of programmes and events. Over 75,500 books, ebooks and audiobooks were issued from the collection in 2022.

- Implementation of the **National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP)** continued through support for the Active School Flag programme and key initiatives, supported by Healthy Ireland through Sport Ireland, to support walking, running, cycling and swimming, research, monitoring and evaluation of sport and physical activity, and other initiatives, such as development of the National Amenities Database. An independent review of the NPAP was published in 2022. This review acknowledged the significant achievements of the Plan and provided recommendations for the next iteration of the NPAP.
- **Men's Health Week (MHW)** - In Ireland Men's Health Week is coordinated by the Men's Health Forum Ireland (MHFI) to engage with key stakeholders to promote key messages among men through the provision of resources, seminars, and messaging on social media. In 2022 Healthy Ireland supported the MHFI with the publication costs of the "Challenges and Choices" Men's Health Manual for distribution during the week.
- Healthy Ireland worked with the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the wider Government Well-being Framework, and with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and Sport Ireland on the Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study and with regard to **Ireland's Physical Activity Research Collaboration**.

## **Tobacco and Alcohol Control**

Implementation of sections in the Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018:

- From 4 January 2022, minimum unit pricing, a prohibition on selling alcohol below a minimum unit price of 10c per gram of alcohol, came into operation. (Section 11)
- From 24 November 2022, an applicant for an intoxicating liquor licence must notify the Environmental Health Service in advance of an application and the Environmental Health Service may appear and give evidence at the court hearing on an application. (Section 4)
- Section 12 requires that certain health warnings and information be displayed on the labels of alcohol products, on notices in licensed premises and on websites which sell alcohol products. Regulations are required to specify the detail of the requirements. Draft Regulations were notified to the EU for assessment under the Food Information to Consumers Regulation (Regulation (EC) No. 1169/2011) and the Technical Standards Directive (Directive (EU) 2015/1535) in June 2022, and successfully exited the standstill period on 22 December 2022.

The Government approved the addition of restrictions on the sale and advertising of nicotine inhaling products to the General Scheme of the Public Health (Tobacco and Nicotine Inhaling Products) Bill in November. These additional measures are commitments in the Programme for Government."

## **FOOD SAFETY**

The Department continued to engage at EU level, across Government Departments and with Official Agencies, ensuring food safety and environmental health remains a priority in the development of National and EU policy. The Department continues to protect the well-being of its citizens and maintain Ireland's reputation as a leader in food safety by, the continued development and investment in physical infrastructure at Dublin Port and Rosslare Europort, through Governance and supporting the Official Agencies and by transposing EU legislation into national law.

- In May 2020, the European Commission announced its intention to revise the Food Information to Consumer (FIC) Regulation to support healthy and sustainable food purchasing decisions and

reduce food waste. In order to establish an Irish position, the Department established an Interdepartmental Working Group to facilitate engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders both within and outside government.

On 12 May 2022, the Department held a virtual stakeholder event, in conjunction with other Government Departments, to gather views from the broad range of stakeholders on the draft legislative proposals, and on the potential opportunities and impacts to Ireland.

- The Department in conjunction with the HSE Environmental Health Service worked with multiple Departments and Agencies to support the operation of efficient and effective food safety control systems at both Dublin Port and Rosslare Europort. This cross-sectoral approach minimised the impact on public health.

In Q2 2022, as part of the overall State facilities in Dublin Port, Yard 4, the HSE EHS Border Control Post became operational, allowing the State to efficiently handle increasing volume of consignments, as a direct result of Brexit.

- A legislative programme is developed annually by the Department and revised quarterly in consultation with the HSE EHS and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI). In 2022, Food Unit introduced 12 S.I.s and processed some 109 EU Food Regulations

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## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EXPAND AND INTEGRATE CARE IN THE COMMUNITY**

The Department is committed to keeping people well at home, or near home, by expanding and increasing primary care and social care available in the community, through an integrated model of care providing end-to-end care pathways across all settings.

#### **LONG COVID**

The Department continued working with the HSE to provide services for people with Long COVID. The HSE interim Model of Care for Long COVID began implementation, building on existing service provision, in addition to establishing new services across GP, community services and acute hospitals, to ensure a national service is in place for all who need it.

#### **PRIMARY CARE**

The Department continued to deliver on its commitment to expanding capacity and reforming service delivery within the Primary Care sector, thus driving the shift in the model of healthcare and supporting more comprehensive care for people within their local communities. Progress toward this goal in 2022 included:

- Significant investment in the Enhanced Community Care programme established 94 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs), with 45 CHNs becoming operational in 2022, and 42 Community Specialist Teams (CSTs) for Older Persons and Chronic Disease Management, with 25 CSTs becoming operational in 2022.
- Continued funding provisioned to the GP Direct Access to Diagnostics scheme which delivered over 251,000 radiology scans during the year.
- Continued expansion and augmentation of Community Intervention Teams (CIT) providing services nationwide, with a total of 21 teams in place, and which provided services to almost 84,000 clients in 2022.
- Continued delivery of Primary Care Centres across the country, with 18 new PCCs opening in 2022, bringing the total number of operational centres to 165.
- The Paediatric Outpatient and Emergency Care Unit at Tallaght University Hospital and the Paediatric Outpatient Department and Urgent Care Centre at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, that are integral components of the new children's hospital project are open and successfully delivering a new model of ambulatory and urgent care for children in the Greater Dublin area.
- A range of services are provided at CHI at Connolly including Urgent Care, Short Stay Observation and Outpatient care.
- CHI at Tallaght accommodates the existing children's emergency care unit - re-located from the adult hospital - and has expanded outpatient services to children and young people from Dublin South West, South City and the surrounding areas of Kildare and Wicklow.

#### **GENERAL PRACTICE(GP)**

The 2019 GP Agreement on Contractual Reform and Service Development continued to be implemented. Further increases in investment in general practice were made to make general practice a more attractive career option for doctors, to increase the number of GPs working in the State and therefore to improve access for patients. As a result of the implementation of the Agreement, annual expenditure on general

practice increased by €206.6 million. In addition, following large increases in previous years, the number of doctors that entered GP training increased to 258 in 2022.

The GP Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Treatment programme, having commenced in 2020, was extended fully to include General Medical Services patients aged 18 years and over. The CDM Programme includes Opportunistic Case Finding and Preventive components and these elements commenced in 2022 for eligible patients aged 65 years and over.

## SCREENING

### National Screening Advisory Committee

The National Screening Advisory Committee (NSAC) held four meetings in 2022. A second Annual Call for submissions in November 2022 received 19 submissions for introductions or changes to population-based screening programmes in Ireland. The committee published its third [Annual Report](#) detailing activities and progress achieved in 2022 and identifying some key priorities for 2023 (see NSAC [work programme](#).)

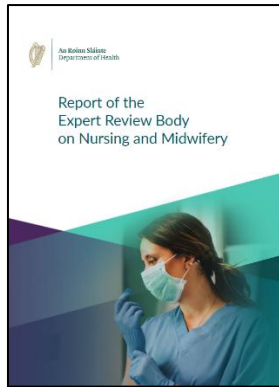
Since May 2022, infants are screened for Adenosine Deaminase Deficiency Severe Combined Immunodeficiency (ADA-SCID). This is the ninth condition added to the Newborn bloodspot Screening programme. A recommendation for the addition of a tenth condition (Severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID)) was made by NSAC in December 2022, and planning for implementation of this began in the HSE. Additionally, in 2022 the Minister for Health approved the implementation of a clinical guideline in the BowelScreen programme to align it with clinical practice across the symptomatic service in the HSE.

In 2022, NSAC tasked HIQA with four Health Technology Assessments:

1. To examine the addition of Spinal Muscular Atrophy to the NBS programme, which is underway
2. To examine the evidence for age range expansion in the BowelScreen programme (work to commence Q3 2023)
3. To look at the evidence in other jurisdictions in relation to ultrasound screening of all newborn babies for Developmental Dysplasia of the Hip (work to commence Q4 2023)
4. To examine the evidence for the introduction of screening for Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (work to commence Q1 2024).

## NURSING AND MIDWIFERY POLICY UNIT

- Funding provided for 149 Advanced Nurse / Midwife Practitioners (ANMPs) aligned to Policy priorities including Integrated Care Programme Older Persons (ICPOP); Children's; Chronic Disease; Mental Health; Maternity and Women's Health; Community Intervention Teams; Palliative Care and Intellectual Disabilities. All 149 ANMPs were recruited by end of 2022.
- In March 2022 Minister Donnelly published the *Report of the Expert Review Body on Nursing and Midwifery*. The report contains 47 recommendations that will support nurses and midwives to continue to learn and develop in professional roles, enabling significant reform and ensuring that critical Sláintecare priorities are realised. The national oversight group known as ERB Implementation Oversight Team (IOT) was established and is chaired by the Chief Nursing Officer. The IOT consists of a small, confined group of key stakeholders including HSE and Department of Health Executive Management team members and experienced leads from clinical, operational, HR, finance, policy, education and regulation, as well as staff representation. The inaugural meeting took place November 2022.



- Following the publication of “The testing and results of an integrated nurse-led community virtual ward (CVW) proof-of-concept” in 2021, the Nursing and Midwifery Policy Unit supported the establishment of the CVW Learning Collaborative to provide a vision for the future of CVW's. The purpose of the CVW Learning Collaborative is to create a forum in which key stakeholders (senior healthcare clinicians, digital health experts along with prospective and current CVW site leads) can share learning to support the scale up of CVW model of care in services whilst ensuring alignment with HSE established models of care.

### Community Virtual Ward

- Following the publication of “The testing and results of an integrated nurse-led community virtual ward (CVW) proof-of-concept” in 2021, the Nursing and Midwifery Policy Unit in collaboration with the HSE Chief Nursing and Midwifery Information Officer supported the establishment of the Virtual Care Learning Collaborative to share learning in the sector and support the scaling up of technology enabled solutions for patient care.
- The focus was on projects that will enhance Emergency Department and admission avoidance and facilitate timelier supported discharge.
- The Virtual Care Learning Collaborative consists of the HSE National Clinical Information Office, the Offices of the Chief Clinical Officer and Chief Information Officer, the HSE National Telehealth Steering Committee, the HSE Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services, with eHealth and Health Information Systems and the Chief Nursing Office from the Department, along with site leads to support optimal scaling up of virtual care in a wide variety of healthcare services whilst ensuring alignment with established models of care.

### MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- The implementation of the national mental health policy *Sharing the Vision* progressed further with the launch in March of *Sharing the Vision Implementation Plan 2022-2024*. By Q4 2022, of the 100 recommendations 87 were in implementation with 53 on track. Quarterly Reporting continued with reports published on the Department's website.
- Quarterly *Connecting for Life* (CfL) Steering Group meetings were held as scheduled. Planning began for implementation plan for final two years of the CfL strategy.

- HSE Mental Health Services continue to provide a broad range of services and supports by reconfiguring and enhancing services to enable them to respond to both current and new and emerging need.
- Significant investment led to service improvements in the delivery of specialist mental health care delivered through the national clinical programmes and models of care for Specialist Perinatal Services, Self-Harm and Suicide-Related Ideation, Eating Disorders, ADHD in Adults, Early Intervention in Psychosis and Dual Diagnosis. A new model of care for CAMHS Intellectual Disability launched in September 2022.
- The National Dialectical Therapy Office established a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) training team which will allow expansion of DBT within community mental health teams across Ireland.

## OLDER PERSONS SERVICES

- The cross-departmental Strategic Workforce Advisory Group was established in March 2022 to examine strategic workforce challenges in publicly and privately provided front-line carer roles in home support and nursing homes. The *Report of the Strategic Workforce Advisory Group on Home Carers and Nursing Home Healthcare Assistants* was published in October 2022.
- Engaged in the negotiations in respect of the drafting of the EU Council Recommendation on Access to Affordable High-quality Long-term Care (November 2022).
- Engaged in the negotiations in respect of the drafting of the UNECE Rome Ministerial Declaration, 'A Sustainable World for All Ages: Joining Forces for Solidarity and Equal Opportunities Throughout Life' (June 2022).
- In April 2022, Minister Donnelly established a steering group to develop the new palliative care policy for adults. This group was chaired by Professor Karen Ryan, a consultant in palliative care medicine at St. Francis Hospice and the Mater Hospital, and clinical professor at University College Dublin. The steering group held eight meetings and concluded on the 08 December 2022. A draft palliative care policy was agreed. To inform this new policy the Department conducted a public consultation and commissioned three reports in preparation for the new policy two of which were published in 2022:
  - a) Review of the Implementation of the Report of the 2001 National Advisory Committee on Palliative Care
  - b) Public Consultation for the Palliative Care Policy for Adults Report

The Fourth Progress Report on the Implementation of the COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel Recommendations was published in June 2022. The report highlighted the important progress that had already taken place across several areas and set out the structures and processes that have been established to ensure continued implementation.

- Over the course of 2022 significant progress was made on progressing the Expert Panel's recommendations including:
  - a) The Patient Advocacy Services was extended to private nursing homes from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and legislation was amended to support this rollout and to streamline complaints processes in December 2022.
  - b) The first Nursing Homes Care Experience survey results were published in November 2022.
  - c) New palliative and end-of-life programme for nursing homes was launched in 2022.

- d) General Scheme of a Bill was published in October 2022 to give the regulator (HIQA) further powers in relation to enforcement and data collection.
- e) New dedicated IPC and Safeguarding Specialist Capacities for nursing homes have been established across the 9 CHOs and recruitment is ongoing.
- f) Over 100 places funded on postgraduate gerontological nursing training courses for the academic year 2022/2023.
- g) Work is advancing on the development of a Safe Staffing & Skillmix Framework for the sector.

As part of the development of the **new home support scheme**:

- The Department commissioned research from the Economic and Social Research Institute entitled: Home Support Services in Ireland: Exchequer and Distributional Impacts of Funding Options which was published in February 2022.
- A home support pilot using interRAI as the single assessment tool for care needs in the community, and which ran across four sites, was completed in August 2022.
- A public consultation on draft regulations for providers of home support services was completed in August 2022. An analysis report of the findings was prepared by the Institute of Public Health.
- The Department commissioned an Evidence Brief from the Health Research Board entitled: The role, function, and supply of home care workers in four European countries which was published in August 2022.

## **DISABILITY SERVICES**

- Investment in services for children with a disability continued during 2022. Between 2019 and 2022 more than 610 new development posts were allocated to children's disability services across the country.
- In 2022, funding for 190 posts was allocated to the relevant lead agencies for recruitment to the 91 Children's Disability Network Teams (CDNTs).
- A further 136 health and social care professional posts were allocated in late 2022 to restore and establish multidisciplinary health supports for children attending 104 special schools.
- 1,451 young people with a disability left school and accessed a day service or commenced a rehabilitative training course in 2022.
- In 2022, 32 residential care packages were provided for young people transitioning from Tusla services as per the joint protocol.
- 3.4 million home support hours and 1.7 million personal assistant hours were delivered to people with a disability during 2022.
- In 2022, 103 new residential placements were funded and provided for people with disabilities, while 35 people with disabilities moved from congregated settings to live in the community.
- In addition, 22 people aged under 65 years moved from nursing home facilities to new homes in the community.
- Five new centre-based respite houses were established in 2022. 133,572 overnight and 28,587 day only respite sessions were accessed by 6,092 people during the year.
- The Report on the Public Consultation for the Disability Action Plan was published in March 2022.

## SLÁINTECARE

The Sláintecare Action Plan 2022 encompasses 11 projects spread across two programmes. 2022 saw unprecedented progress in improving access, affordability and quality in our health and social care services. The progress in implementing the Sláintecare reform programme is underpinned by the highest investment in health and social care in 2022 and 2023 in the history of the State. We are investing in innovation and the delivery of integrated services, by investing in people, new care pathways, new technologies, new facilities and new ways of working that will enable us to better respond to the growing health needs of our population.

### Key Highlights for Reform Programme 1 in 2022 include:

- A total of **970 additional acute** beds have been delivered since January 2020
- **Critical care capacity** now has **323 beds**, which represents an increase of approximately 25% over the 2020 baseline of 258 beds.
- There are **17,298 more** staff working in our health service than there were in January 2020 – this includes an additional 4,592 nurses and midwives, 2,654 health & social care professionals and 1,758 doctors and dentists.
- The National Stop Smoking Clinical Guideline was published in January 2022.
- Sharing the Vision Implementation Plan 2022 – 2024 was published in March 2022.
- Major Trauma Centre services commenced in end quarter 3, 2022 at the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital and on track to start at Cork University Hospital in 2023
- **Elective Hospitals** received formal Government **approval-in-principle** for the Preliminary Business Case for the Programme as well as the Project-level Business Cases for **Cork and Galway**
- The **National Forensic Mental Hospital** in Portrane opened in November 2022
- **The Sláintecare Consultant Contract** was approved by Government in December 2022 (and introduced in the first quarter of 2023).
- **2,400 healthcare workers** have been recruited to the **Enhanced Community Care (ECC) Programme**, establishing **94 Community Healthcare Networks (CHNs)** and 21 Community Specialist Teams for Older Persons and 21 specialist teams for Chronic Disease Management.
- The **GP Direct Access to Diagnostics** scheme, which provides a direct referral pathway for GPs to allow their patients access diagnostic scans delivered over **250,000 diagnostics** in 2022.
- **21.02m of home support hours** delivered in the year.
- €11m in 2022 secured **149 Advanced Nurse and Midwife Practitioner new additional posts** for the health service.
- The **1st National Nursing Home Experience Survey** was launched in March 2022 and results were published in November 2022
- Health Performance Visualisation Platform (HPVP) phase 1 deployed to 19 hospital sites
- A Framework for the design and delivery of post-natal hubs was finalised and approval for the development of five hubs at Kerry, Kilkenny, Cork, Sligo and Portlincula was agreed
- Without the intervention of the **2022 Waiting List Action Plan**, active hospital waiting lists would have increased by 42% to over 1 million people. Instead, there were c.1.56 million patients removed

and c.1.53 million patients added to hospital waiting lists during 2022 – a net reduction of c.30,000 people (4.1%) to c.690,000.

- Overall reductions were complemented by significant reductions in waiting times. In 2022, the overall number of patients exceeding the Sláintecare maximum wait time targets recommended in the 2017 Oireachtas Report (10 weeks OPD, 12 weeks IPDC / GI Scope) decreased by 11%.
- The **Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019-2021 End of Round 1 Report** was published in July 2022. The Fund, established in 2019 to test innovative care pathways/initiatives and eHealth transformation solutions which are informed by front line healthcare staff, contributed to the avoidance of 19,000 inpatient bed days and 3,000 ED attendances. 8,000 patients were seen from waiting lists, and 13,000 patients reported an improved health status through lifestyle, self-management and physical activity. The Fund is now multi-annual and a second round of projects are now operational.

**Key Highlights for Reform Programme 2, in 2022, include:**

- **Expansion in eligibility** including:
  - **Acute public in-patient charges for children under 16 years** were **abolished** in all public hospitals from 21 September 2022.
  - Funding allocated in Budget 2023 to provide for the abolition of all public inpatient hospital charges.
  - A **free contraception scheme for women aged 17-25** was launched on 14 September 2022 and will be expanded to 26-year-olds on 1 January 2023.
  - The **Drug Payment Scheme threshold was reduced twice in 2022**. From €138 per month in 2018, the threshold has now reduced to €80 per month.
  - A **free national STI home-testing scheme** was introduced by the HSE in October 2022
- **Regional Health Areas: Government approval** was **given**, in April 2022, on next steps, the programme of work, and timelines for Regional Health Areas (RHAs) implementation. (Now known as HSE Health Regions)
- The Traveller Health Action Plan was launched on the 28 November 2022
- Agreement for **additional undergraduate places in medicine** from September 2022 onwards was reached with Irish Medical Schools.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

# **MAKE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE FAIRER AND FASTER**

The Department is committed to the principle of health and social care based on need and not on ability to pay. This is grounded in a whole-of-system approach to support better health outcomes through the right care delivered in the right place at the right time, addressing fundamental health inequalities. Achievements and information in this area from 2022 are outlined below.

### **SCHEDULED CARE**

The 2022 Waiting List Action plan launched in February 2022, built on the work done through the 2021 Plan. The 2022 Plan allocated €350 million to the HSE and NTPF to stabilise and reduce waiting lists and times, while also progressing longer-term reforms, including a specific focus on the priority areas of gynaecology, paediatric orthopaedics-including Spina Bifida and Scoliosis and obesity/bariatrics.

2022 was the first year since 2015 in which overall waiting list numbers decreased achieving a 4% reduction by year end. Interim maximum wait times were also implemented in 2022 as the first step of a phased approach to gradually bring waiting times in line with those recommended in the 2017 Oireachtas Sláintecare Report and in 2022, the number of patients exceeding these Sláintecare maximum wait times fell, by 11% (over 56,000 people), which is also a 24% reduction compared to pandemic peaks during 2021.

The 2022 Waiting List Action Plan was the first year of a multi-annual reform programme to stabilise and reduce waiting lists and waiting times for elective care in Ireland, bringing about significant and lasting change in waiting list numbers.

2022 Waiting List Action Plan was published on 25th February 2022 and focused on the following areas:

- Delivering Capacity in 2022
- Reforming Scheduled Care
- Enabling Scheduled Care reform
- Addressing Community Care Access and Waiting Lists

### **UNSCHEDULED CARE**

- 2022 saw a further increase in Emergency Departments (ED) activity following, with total ED Attendances in 2022 of 1.48 million, an increase of 16% on 2021 (1.27m). This was 10% higher than 2019 attendance, (1.34m).
- Attendances for the over 75 age group in 2022 were 196,000, an increase of 17% on both 2021 and 2019 (168,000).
- The HSE Winter Plan for 2022-23 supported acute and community services this winter to respond to high levels of emergency attendances and admissions across the acute sector, long waiting times in EDs and high occupancy rates across acute hospital settings. The plan was estimated to cost up to €169m to implement.

## **EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY**

With effect from 21 September 2022, acute public in-patient charges for children under 16 years have been abolished in all public hospitals. The Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No.2) Act 2022 removes the acute public in-patient charge of €80 per day (including day-case charges) for children under 16 years of age in all public hospitals. Following enactment of the legislation in July 2022, the measure came into effect from 21 September 2022.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CRITICAL CARE**

Government approved the Strategic Plan for Critical Care in December 2020. This sets out a plan for addressing the historical critical care capacity deficits in our system, and addressing the requirements set out in the Health Service Capacity Review.

Very significant funding of €77m was provided across 2021 and 2022, to allow for the implementation of Phase 1 of the Strategic Plan for Critical Care. 23 adult critical care beds opened in 2022, increasing capacity to 323 beds. This represents an increase of 65 beds (25%) from the 2020 baseline of 258 beds. To put that in perspective, we had a total net increase of 18 beds in the three years 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Implementation of the Strategic Plan for Critical Care in 2022 also enabled the expansion of critical care education to support future recruitment. The development of a Critical Care Clinical Information System was also initiated in 2022, the aim of which is to support critical care staff in managing their patients more effectively, improving patient outcomes and shortening length of stay in ICU.

## **SLÁINTECARE PUBLIC-ONLY CONSULTANT CONTRACT**

The Government approved the new Sláintecare Public Only Consultant Contract which was announced on 7th December 2022. The Government and the Minister committed to introducing the new contract in the first quarter of 2023.

The introduction of the contract followed several months of engagement with representative bodies. In line with established practice, the agreement of the Consultants representative bodies to the proposed new contract was pursued as the preferred option for implementation. Officials from the Department of Health and HSE were involved in intensive negotiations with Union representatives from the IMO and IHCA since June 2022.

The removal of private practice from public hospitals is a central principal of Sláintecare, such that public healthcare facilities are used for public patients only, and that public patients can access public hospitals on a first-come first-served basis. The Sláintecare Public Only Consultant Contract, which will only permit the carrying out of public care in public hospitals from the date of implementation, is central to the delivery of the goal of universal healthcare in Ireland where patients are treated in public hospitals solely on the basis of their health needs. The involves a significant expansion in consultant availability and the provision of consultant delivered care and consultant decision making over an extended day and on Saturdays.

The contract will support consultant delivered care in both the community and our hospital services. This is central to hospital avoidance by delivering care in our communities as envisaged in Sláintecare. The Sláintecare Public Only Consultant Contract will ensure consultants are on-site in Emergency Departments late into the evenings and on Saturdays. Having consultants on site later and on weekends improving patient flow, should lead in particular to improved performances within the State's ED Departments.

While the contract will not result in an increase in the 37 working hour week for consultants, but instead focus on ensuring that these senior decision makers are present and delivering patient care when demand is highest. It doubles the normal working week from 40 core hours to 80 per week, facilitating a fundamental and essential jump in productivity and patient care.

There is considerable evidence to support the positive impact on patient outcomes by having senior clinical decision-makers on-site outside of office hours. Discharge rates within 24 hours of admission demonstrate disproportionately high rates of inappropriate admission of patients who would have benefited from senior clinical decision makers on duty. The contract will involve a significant expansion in consultant numbers and their availability.

## **HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE**

### **National Maternity Hospital**

- In May 2022, the Government approved the legal framework that will underpin the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital (NMH) to the St Vincent's campus at Elm Park.
- In approving the legal framework, the Cabinet was satisfied that the framework achieves the State's objectives and:
  - Ensures that all legally permissible services will be available in the new NMH
  - Prevents any influence, religious or otherwise, on the operation of the new hospital
  - Safeguards the State's significant investment in the hospital.
- In June 2022, the suite of business case documentation to support the relocation of the NMH entered the recently introduced External Assurance Process under the Public Spending Code. This review provides for independent scrutiny of public projects at key decision-making stages of the project lifecycle to ensure taxpayer's money is spent wisely and projects are delivered on time and on budget.

### **Other Major Capital Projects**

- Following completion of the External Assurance Process and presentation to the Major Projects Advisory Group in line with the updated Public Spending Code requirements, in December 2022, Government approved the next stage of the Enhanced Provision of Elective Care Programme and progression of the development of new Elective Hospitals in Cork and Galway.
- The new Elective Hospitals will provide significant additional capacity, enabling the separation of scheduled and unscheduled care. This will change the way in which day cases, scheduled procedures, surgeries, scans and outpatient services can be better arranged across the country, ensuring greater capacity in the future and helping to address waiting times.

### **New Children's Hospital**

The New Children's Hospital (NCH) project will have a transformational effect on the delivery of healthcare for 25% of the population. The two satellite centres at Tallaght University Hospital and Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, that are key to the project are now open and successfully delivering a new model of ambulatory and urgent care for children in the Greater Dublin area.

The NCH will bring together the services currently provided at three children's hospitals into a modern, custom-designed, digital, hospital at St James's campus, to deliver the best care and treatments for Ireland's sickest children.

As well as playing a central role in the provision of acute paediatric healthcare services, the NCH will be the primary centre for paediatric education, training, and research in Ireland.

- Despite challenges arising from, but not limited, to Brexit, the pandemic, and the invasion of Ukraine, global supply chain difficulties and shortages of raw materials, significant progress was made on the NCH project in 2022.
- The NCH will be Ireland's first digital public hospital. In 2022, Cabinet gave its approval for CHI to enter into a contract for delivery of the Electronic Health Record (EHR) system for NCH and contracts were subsequently signed in August 2022.
- In November 2022, the first of four hundred trees were planted by the Taoiseach and Minister for Health, marking the beginning of landscaping in the 14 outdoor areas and gardens at the hospital grounds.
- At the end of December 2022, the project was approximately 80% complete. The major focus throughout 2022 was, and continues in 2023 to be, the internal fit-out and commissioning of mechanical and electrical services.
- Other key milestones in 2022 included the near completion of the first clinical rooms, the main biome glazed structure encasing the feature stairway and lifts, and connection to a permanent power supply.
- On completion, the 12-acre NCH site will consist of a 7-storey structure, plus 2-3 levels and 1,000 car park spaces below-ground. Its internal 'street' will be the length of Grafton Street, with 6,150 internal spaces, of which 4,600 are clinical rooms. Features of the development will include: 300 individual, inpatient, ensuite rooms - each with its own place for a parent/guardian to sleep. In addition, it will have 60 critical care beds, 20 CAMHS beds and 93-day beds; 110 outpatient examination rooms; 22 theatres including specialised theatres for cardiac, neuro and orthopaedic surgery; and 4 acres of outdoor space for children across the 14 gardens/ courtyards.

## **NATIONAL AMBULANCE SERVICE**

- The Department oversaw the continued provision of essential pre-hospital care by the National Ambulance Service (NAS) in 2022. In 2022, the Department supported the NAS with a record funding allocation of over €200 million, including €8.3 million for new strategic service developments.
- This funding helped to address identified frontline emergency capacity needs as well as further develop and expand the NAS's suite of alternative care pathways including the Clinical Hub and Pathfinder initiatives and ensure that those alternative care pathways are integrated with other work programmes and in line with the aims of Sláintecare.
- A total of 25,233 patients were treated by NAS Alternative Care Pathways during 2022, of which over 10,000, or 40%, were treated in a home or community setting and did not need to be conveyed to Hospital.

- The NAS also supported the development of a Medical Assessment Unit (MAU) referral pathway in Mallow, Co. Cork, providing a new pathway for some patients to avoid Emergency Department attendance. This MAU pathway model is to be expanded to a number of other locations in early 2023 following the success of the initial pilot in Mallow.
- The Department also supported the establishment of a Southwest Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) on a permanent basis, with a procurement process completed by the HSE in 2022. The new provider is due to commence operations in early 2023.

## **NATIONAL MATERNITY STRATEGY**

Significant development funding of €8.7m was provided in Budget 2022 to progress implementation of the National Maternity Strategy.

This funding provided for an additional 88 WTEs for maternity services across the country, including consultants, nurses, midwives, allied health workers, healthcare assistants and administrative staff. These posts are supporting the realisation of the Strategy's vision of a new model of integrated, team-based care that provides increased choice to women, as well as improving outcomes and experiences for women and babies accessing maternity services.

The investment is also helping to improve the infrastructure of maternity services by providing additional home-from-home birthing suites, upgrades to theatres and wards, as well as additional training and supports for our maternity staff.

Furthermore, in 2022, a framework for the development of five postnatal hubs was developed by the HSE's National Women & Infants Programme (NWIHP). These hubs will provide vital postnatal care within the community, in line with the findings from the National Maternity Experience Survey and Sláintecare objectives. The first 5 sites have been selected and staff recruitment has commenced.

Other key achievements include:

- Development of a framework for the establishment of a National Perinatal Genetics Service. This service will provide women across the country with access to evaluation, diagnosis, management and treatment of anomalies before birth.
- Development of an Integrated Epilepsy and Maternity Model of Care, in collaboration with the National Epilepsy Clinical Care Programme.
- A review of perinatal pathology services being undertaken, and a network for this critical service developed across three of the maternity networks.
- The first National Maternity Bereavement Experience Survey was undertaken in September and October 2022. The survey offered women and their partners the opportunity to share their experiences of Ireland's maternity bereavement care services.

## **GYNAECOLOGY SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS**

€5.3m was allocated for gynaecology-related service developments to provide for:

- The development of six additional "see and treat" ambulatory gynaecology clinics around the country as part of the ongoing implementation of the Ambulatory Gynaecology Model of Care

- The development of three additional specialist menopause clinics for women who require complex, specialist care
- The further expansion of the specialist endometriosis service in Tallaght, as well as the development of a new complex endometriosis service in Cork.

Achievements in 2022 include:

- In conjunction with the Irish College of General Practitioners, the first GP lead in women's health was appointed to NWIHP, an integral role in achieving Sláintecare objectives.
- 2022 also saw the development of 12 new clinical guidelines in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.
- Four more ambulatory gynaecology clinics were established – in Wexford, Nenagh, Portlaoise and Drogheda – with the effect that, 12 of the 19 planned clinics were open by the end of 2022.
- Four more specialist menopause clinics were established – in Nenagh, the Coombe, the Rotunda and Galway – such that five of the six planned menopause clinics were operational by the end of 2022.
- One more Regional Fertility Hub was established – in Galway – bringing the total number to 5 by the end of 2022.
- The Government approved the legal framework that will underpin the ownership and governance arrangements for the new National Maternity Hospital (NMH) at the Elm Park campus.

## **NATIONAL TRAUMA STRATEGY**

In 2018, Government approved the report, A Trauma System for Ireland, which set out the strategic vision for the development of trauma services in Ireland. The strategy recommended the establishment of an inclusive trauma system, where a network of facilities and services co-ordinate in the care of injured patients along standardised pathways.

In April 2021, government approved the designation of the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital (MMUH) as the Major Trauma Centre for the Central Trauma Network, and Cork University Hospital (CUH) as the Major Trauma Centre for the South Trauma Network as soon as the recommended service specifications were met.

CUH reached Major Trauma Service specification at the end of 2022. Major Trauma Services commenced at MMUH in 2022, with services initially confined to direct attendances from within the hospital's existing catchment area.

Other Initiatives successfully introduced in 2022 includes the development of:

- A standardised Rehabilitation Needs Assessment (RNA) and Rehabilitation Prescription (RP) to support timely discharge from Major Trauma Centres.
- A Pre-hospital Trauma Triage Tool that will facilitate the National Ambulance Service to bypass certain hospitals to go direct to trauma receiving hospitals for potential severe trauma cases.
- A Trauma Unit Service Specification has been approved by the HSE which will enable the identification of Trauma Units outside Dublin.

- A Trauma Transfer of Care and Egress policy that will provide a standardised process for referral and transfer of care for trauma patients from Major Trauma Centres and Trauma Units to a facility that can meet their clinical needs and is close to home, regardless of where their care originated.

## **CANCER SERVICES**

There were significant accomplishments for Cancer Services during 2022, including:

- Significant additional funding of €20m allocated in 2022 enabled services for cancer patients to return to pre-pandemic volumes, meaning more patients were able to receive treatment for cancer. Attendances at Rapid Access Clinics (breast, lung & prostate cancer) increased to 104% of 2019 levels, radiation oncology was operating at 97.5%, medical oncology (chemotherapy, immunotherapy) at 108% and surgical treatments at 101% of 2019 levels
- Ireland now has over 200,000 people living after receiving a cancer diagnosis. This is a 50% increase over a decade ago, illustrating success of the National Cancer Strategies. In 2022, the government allocated €15 million for new cancer drugs, which means that more patients have access to innovative treatments
- In 2022, 172 additional staff were recruited to cancer services, which represents a 20% increase in staffing for cancer services in Ireland. It is projected that the national incidence of cancer will continue to increase, and that it could double by 2045, and it is important that cancer services continue to grow to meet demand
- The Minister for Health launched a new framework for the support and care of adolescents and young adults (AYA) with cancer in Ireland in May 2022. This framework will deliver a state-of-the-art AYA cancer care network which recognises the specific needs of young people with cancer through the provision of specialist care teams in the new Children's Hospital and in St James' Hospital, Galway University Hospital and Cork University Hospital
- In 2022, more ground-breaking treatments were made available to cancer patients in Ireland. This includes paediatric CAR T-cell therapy provided in CHI Crumlin, which means certain patients will no longer have to travel abroad for these treatments
- To ensure the continued delivery of care as close to home as possible, the Department and counterparts in Northern Ireland worked collaboratively to ensure the continued delivery of radiotherapy services for patients in the North West at the North West Cancer Centre at Altnagelvin. 267 patients resident in the state were treated in Altnagelvin in 2022, an increase from 253 patients in 2021
- Construction on a new radiation oncology centre in Galway University Hospital costing €70.7m was completed in 2022, and the first patients were treated in this new facility in April 2023.

## **NATIONAL STROKE STRATEGY**

The *HSE's Stroke Strategy (2022-2027)* was developed to build upon the significant achievements already made in stroke care in the last decade and to address the burden of stroke at a patient, organisational and system level with a clear direction for stroke care in Ireland in line with international standards. The strategy will assist in addressing the challenges faced in Ireland with the predicted increase in the total number of strokes, an ageing demography, and the rapidly changing environment of acute stroke treatment.

The overall aim of the Strategy is to modernise and reform stroke services in line with Sláintecare policy. The Strategy provides a blueprint for the required investment over five years, to deliver on key priorities under the pillars of:

- Stroke Prevention
- Acute Care and Cure
- Rehabilitation and Restoration to Life
- Education and Research

The Stroke Strategy was approved by the HSE executive management team in 2022 and launched on World Stroke Day in October that year. Minister Donnelly endorsed the Stroke Strategy and €4.9m was allocated to the strategy during Budget 2023. The Department will continue to work with the HSE over the lifetime of the strategy to ensure successful implementation.

## **ORGAN DONATION AND TRANSPLANT**

The Department remains committed to the improvement and expansion of organ donation and transplantation in Ireland. In 2022, there was a substantial recovery in organ donation and transplantation rates following a drop in figures during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the year, 250 transplants took place from 86 deceased and 33 living donors.

The publication of the Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill on 20 December marked another key milestone in the development of services. This significant piece of legislation provides, for the first time, a national legislative framework for operating donation and transplant services in Ireland and will help make organ donation “the norm” in Ireland. The Bill introduces a soft ‘opt-out’ organ donation system where all adults in Ireland will be considered to have agreed to be an organ donor when they die, unless they have recorded a decision not to donate on an Opt-Out Register or are in one of the excluded groups. The Bill also provides new pathways for living donation including for non-directed altruistic donation, which will allow people to donate a kidney to someone they do not know.

Other key achievements in the development of services in 2022 include:

- The Department funded the National Office of Clinical Audit to undertake a Potential Donor Audit Feasibility Study which was published in March 2022. This was expanded into a larger Potential Donor Audit Development Study, which is due to be published in 2023. The report from this study will provide the Department with a more in-depth understanding of how the organ donation and transplantation system is currently functioning and will identify areas where improvements can be made.
- The Department has also funded the HSE, through Organ Donation and Transplant Ireland, to conduct a strategic planning process to review the structures of organ donation and transplantation services including international benchmarking and comprehension of relevant reports. The report from this process, which is expected in 2023, will inform the delivery of services for the next 5 – 10 years.

## DENTAL TREATMENT SERVICES SCHEME

- The Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) provides dental care, free of charge, to medical card holders aged 16 and over. In May 2022 the Scheme, which previously limited scale and polish provision to high-risk patients only, was expanded to include Scale and Polish for all medical card patients, along with an expansion of the oral examination to include provision of preventative advice, using €10 million allocated in Budget 2022. In addition, the fees paid to contractors were increased by 40-60% across most treatment items.
- Both the numbers of patients and treatments provided increased following the introduction of these measures, including an increase of 92,988 scale and polish items claimed for in 2022 compared to 2021. The provision of Scale and Polish is in keeping with the preventative ethos of the National Oral Health Policy, Smile agus Sláinte. It also aligns the DTSS more closely with the other State scheme, the Dental Treatment Benefit Scheme (the PRSI scheme), in which Scale and Polish is available to all eligible patients.

## PATIENT SAFETY

- The National Care Experience Programme, a tripartite initiative of the Department, the HSE and HIQA to capture patient experiences to improve care, conducted Ireland's first National Nursing Home Experience Survey (delivering on recommendation 15.12 of the COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel Review Report) and the 5<sup>th</sup> cycle of the National Inpatient Experience Survey
- The Department of Health continued to implement Ireland's National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance 2021-2025, known as iNAP2, in line with the 'One Health' cross government approach to tackling antimicrobial resistance. The Mid-term review of the Human Health Actions is in progress and due for completion in May 2023
- A contract for the continued provision of the Patient Advocacy Service from 2022-2027 was awarded to the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities in 2022. This contract commenced on 1 November 2022 and saw the service expand its remit to include residents of private nursing homes in line with Programme for Government commitments
- The development of the National Open Disclosure Framework policy will provide a national, consistent approach to open disclosure in health and social care in Ireland. A focused stakeholder consultation and a public consultation on the Framework were conducted in 2022 and feedback from both consultations were positive. The policy was finalised and is to be launched in 2023
- Publication of National Clinical Effectiveness Committee (NCEC) *Perinatal Mortality Audit* and National Clinical Guidelines No. 28 *Stop Smoking* and No. 29 *Unexpected Intraoperative Life Threatening Haemorrhage*
- Publication of the 7<sup>th</sup> National Healthcare Quality Reporting System Report (2021/2022)

## PRIMARY CARE

- Funding allocated continued the Primary Care Psychology Waiting List Initiative, targeting children and young people waiting to access the service for longer than one year. In 2022, as a

result of the actions of the initiative, an additional 3,500 of these clients accessed the service and were removed from the waiting list.

### **CervicalCheck**

- Dr Scally published his final review of progress on implementation of his recommendations in November 2022. The report recognises and congratulates the significant progress made, acknowledging “CervicalCheck is a substantially better screening programme today, that women can have confidence in and should take full advantage of the programme” and that “the CervicalCheck programme has saved many lives and will continue to do so
- CervicalCheck was to date with invites for screening by the end of 2021, and the programme screened the same number of people as in any other two-year period
- The new bespoke National Cervical Screening Laboratory (NCSL) at the Coombe Women and Infants University Hospital was completed, and initial operations began in December 2022. The new laboratory will become the principal provider of cervical screening for the National Screening Service and become a national centre of excellence for cervical screening once it reopens after finalising INAB accreditation.
- Through 2022, the Department liaised with the HSE’s, National Screening Service, National Immunisation Office and National Cancer Control Programme to develop Ireland’s roadmap to reach global targets set by the World Health Organization for the elimination of cervical cancer in Ireland as a public health problem.
- The Department and the HSE’s National Screening Service worked with the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Cancer Research (IARC) on a project to develop best practice guidance related to cervical screening, including audit and communications to be published in 2023.

### **BreastCheck**

- BreastCheck expanded its age range from 50-64 and is now inviting women up to age 69 for screening, the Programme for Government Commitment being met
- Due to the impact of COVID-19, the current BreastCheck screening round was adjusted to three years. However, this remains in line with international best practices with many countries adopting a three-year programme. The HSE expects to return to a two-year interval by the end of 2023
- Breastcheck exceeded the COVID-adjusted target screening by providing screening to over 156,000 women, 4.5% above the target
- Breastcheck commissioned two additional mobile units, which commenced screening in 2022, facilitating screening appointments around the country and reducing screening inequality.

### **Diabetic RetinaScreen (DRS)**

- DRS is up to date with invites, and since September 2022 all participants have been invited when they are due, The programme screened over 113,000 clients, exceeding the annual target and had the highest screening uptake since the programme began in 2013
- The first full year of the new 2-year screening pathway is now complete with approximately 18,000 people having joined the new pathway

- A new pilot screening initiative was funded by the Women's Health Taskforce for women who have diabetes and become pregnant. This new pathway improves equality and quality of access to eye care for women at risk of sight loss.

### **Bowelscreen**

- Invited over 303,005 men and women to be screened, which was above the annual target
- The Minister approved, and Bowelscreen implemented a clinical guideline modification recommendation from NSAC to update the surveillance pathway to change the frequency of post-polypectomy surveillance across the symptomatic service in the HSE.

## **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

- The publication in September 2022 of The Report of the High-level Taskforce between the Department of Health and the Department of Justice to improve access to Mental Health, Addiction or Primary Care services for those who come into contact with the criminal justice system, delivered another Programme for Government commitment. Implementation of the recommendations is monitored by a new Inter-Departmental Joint Steering Committee.
- Drafters were assigned to begin drafting of the Mental Health Bill. There was extensive consultation between the Department, Attorney General's Office and other key Departments in relation to a number of legal issues that needed to be addressed before drafting could be substantially progressed. By year-end, the major legal issues were addressed and drafting of the Bill could proceed.
- New Primary Care Psychology Waiting List Initiative has reduced numbers waiting longer than 12 months from 5,298 in March 2021 to 3,963 in April 2022, a reduction of 1,335 or 25%.
- The new National Forensic Mental Health Service in Portrane which replaced the Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum was officially opened on 4 November 2022 delivering another Programme for Government commitment. Opening on a phased basis, this unit at total capacity will provide 170 beds (130-bed Central Mental Hospital /10-bed forensic Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) unit /30-bed Intensive Care Rehabilitation Unit).
- As per the Programme for Government, the new permanent grade of Psychologist Assistant was established
- Revamped Website and e-services have facilitated 1.9 million visits to [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie).
  - Jan to Dec 2022 48,696 text conversations to Text 50808
  - Jan to Dec 2022 - 42,610 online and face to face MyMind counselling sessions delivered.
  - Since April 2021 - 13,500 referrals to online CBT programmes (SilverCloud)
  - Jigsaw had 553,127 user sessions online from Jan to Dec 2022
  - Jan to Dec 2022 40,518 people completed the full stress control programme
  - 16,000 views of the Minding your Wellbeing video in 2022. 62,500 since it was rolled out in Nov 2020
- The Department was represented on the WHO Pan-European Mental Health Coalition, attending the inaugural virtual meeting on 4-5 May 2022 as well as participating in supplementary meetings with WHO representatives to aid the ongoing work of the Coalition

## **SOCIAL CARE**

Residential Support Services Maintenance and Accommodation Contributions (RSSMACs) Regulations govern how much a resident contributes towards their maintenance and accommodation in a range of settings, including residential centres, in the Disability and Mental Health sectors. Most of the residents in these settings rely on social welfare payments for their income.

These Regulations were amended on 2 January 2022, by the [Health \(Residential Support Services Maintenance and Accommodation Contributions\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2022](#), to ensure that there would be no increases in contributions for anyone whose income changed because they had received a social welfare increase under the Budget in October 2021, and also to ensure that this change was fairly applied to all residents on equivalent levels of income.

Funding was provided in Budget 2022 to improve access and reduce waiting times for assessment, diagnosis and post-diagnostic care through the development of five new Memory Assessment and Support Services (Donegal, Cavan-Monaghan, Mullingar, Limerick and Kerry) and a new Regional Specialist Memory Clinic in Galway, as well as a National Intellectual Disability Memory Service in Dublin.

Additional funding was also provided for a number of services first funded in Budget 2021: four new Memory Assessment and Support Services (Sligo, Mayo, Waterford and Wexford) and a regional Specialist Memory Clinic in Cork. The HSE plans to have most of these services operational by the end of 2023.

## **SOCIAL INCLUSION**

- Provision of health supports to 240 people with experience of homelessness, to enable them to live in own-door accommodation under the Housing First programme
- Formal establishment of the integrated care and case management approach in Dublin, which saw 2,164 initial assessments carried out since Sept 2022.

## **WOMEN'S HEALTH**

### **Women's Health Action Plan 2022 -2023**

The Women's Health Action Plan 2022-23 was published on 8 March 2022 (International Women's Day) and identifies key actions to improve health outcomes and experiences for women in Ireland.

#### **Women's Health Action Plan 2022 deliverables:**

- Free Contraception Scheme for women aged 17-25, launched Sept 2022
- Specialist Menopause Clinics – Four clinics opened in 2022 bringing the total to five clinics nationally, treating women who require complex, specialist care
- Ambulatory Gynaecology Clinics to improve access to services, where approx. 70% of general gynaecology referrals are suitable for management in the ambulatory setting. Five additional clinics opened in 2022 bringing a total of 13 clinics nationally
- Two Endometriosis Supra-Regional hubs in Tallaght and Cork for complex care for endometriosis for the first time
- Regional Fertility Hubs – to facilitate the management of a significant proportion of patients presenting with fertility-related issues at this level of intervention. Five clinics were open

nationally in 2022: National Maternity Hospital, Rotunda, Coombe, Cork University Maternity Hospital, Galway

- Period Poverty initiative: funding of €0.07m was allocated for this in Budget 2022 which funded 26 local authorities and 16 NGOs, including family resource centres, food banks and those working with people experiencing consistent poverty, addiction and/or homelessness to progress period poverty initiatives
- Gov.ie/menopause: The Dept. developed a one-stop-shop for information on menopause and menopause symptoms in support of the National Awareness Campaign
- “Embedding Women’s Mental Health in Sharing the Vision” report publication, which recommends the first ever Women’s Mental Health Charter to enshrine an enhance the provision of mental health services and supports for women and girls in Ireland.

Budget 2022 provided an additional €5 million to the dedicated multi-annual **Women’s Health Fund** to implement a programme of actions arising from the work of the Women’s Health Taskforce, which was established by the Department of Health to improve women’s health outcomes and experiences of healthcare. A significant number of key initiatives were funded through the Women’s Health Fund.

**Budget 2022 also ring-fenced €31m** in funding for new Developments for **Women’s Health**. This includes:

- €8.66 million additional funding for the National Maternity Strategy
- €9 million to fund the free contraception scheme for women aged 17-25, which was launched on the 14th September, 2022
- €5.3 million to grow access to “see and treat” gynaecology clinics; specialist menopause clinics; and specialist endometriosis services
- €1.34 million to support initial establishment of a perinatal genetics service
- €0.71m investment in tackling period poverty for the first time
- €0.54million to establish an expert Obstetric Event Support Team to support services and sites that report severe maternity incidents
- €0.25m additional investment in Sexual Assault Treatment Units.
- Period poverty mitigation was co-ordinated across Government by the Period Poverty Implementation Group, chaired by the Department of Health, with representation from most Government Departments. Funding of €714,000 was allocated to the Department to combat Period Poverty in Budget 2022, with €200,000 allocated to the HSE for a programme focussed on the Traveller and Roma communities and €514,000 to the Department directly. The most urgent focus was on reaching those most in need (e.g., the homeless, those living with addiction, minorities including Traveller and Roma women, and those experiencing consistent poverty).
- In 2022, 26 Local Authorities were funded by the Department to progress the **Period Dignity Support Programme**. 16 NGOs, including family resource centres and those serving people living with addiction, homelessness, consistent poverty and other vulnerable groups were also allocated funding. Some Local Authorities were allocated additional top-up funding, following successful implementation initially. The allocation for 2023 will be increased to €814,000.

## SEXUAL HEALTH

- The **free contraception** scheme was introduced in September 2022 for women aged 17-25. The scheme covers the cost of consultations with GPs and family planning centres and prescriptions for a wide range of contraceptive options. Almost 2,400 GPs and almost 1,900 pharmacies signed up to provide services and products under the scheme. Approximately €32m will be allocated to support the scheme in 2023. The scheme will be expanded to women aged 26 from January 2023 and to women aged 30 and under from September 2023
- A **home STI testing service** was launched on a nationwide basis in October 2022, providing an additional STI testing capacity of 33%. People can order test kits online, for use in their own home, and then return them. Those with reactive results are then contacted for in-person appointments at their local STI clinic. The home STI testing service was allocated €3m in 2022 and will have an expanded budget of €4m in 2023.

## TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

- During 2022 significant progress was made in relation to the independent review of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018. In line with statutory and government commitments the Minister for Health initiated the review at the end of 2021. The Review was overseen by an independent chair Ms Marie O Shea, BL, with expert input from a range of key stakeholders. The purpose of the review was to assess the operation of the Act and where necessary to make recommendations in relation to barriers to service
- The Minister of Health secured cabinet approval to legislate for the designation of safe access zones around healthcare facilities in June 2022. The General Scheme of a Bill was published in August 2022. Since that time Department officials have worked with the Office of the Attorney General and other relevant stakeholders to draft the text of a Bill.

## MEDICINES

The Department managed ongoing issue medicine issues during 2022, including medicine shortages. Achievements during the year in this area include:

- Implementation of the Falsified Medicines Directive for medicines supply chains and continued involvement in the Safety Features Oversight Group to oversee progress in embedding this into practice.
- Establishment of the sodium Valproate Stakeholder Group to oversee the further implementation of actions identified as necessary for the safe use of this medicines in women of childbearing potential.
- Provision under the Misuse of Drugs CT 1977 of 74 Ministerial licences to clinicians to treat patients with cannabis-based products.
- Management of a monthly collection and delivery of prescribed cannabis-based products from the suppliers in the Netherlands directly to Irish patients
- Continued operation of the Medical Cannabis Access Programme in conjunction with the HSE including the addition of cannabis-based products for use in the programme
- Establishment of National Research Ethics Committee for performance studies of in vitro diagnostic devices

- National implementation of Regulation (EU) 2014/ 536 on clinical trials of medicinal products for human use
- National implementation of Regulation (EU) 2017/746 on in vitro diagnostic medical devices
- Negotiated new legislative proposals from the EU Commission on behalf of Ireland, including Regulation 123 of 2022 on a reinforced role for the European Medicines Agency in crisis preparedness and management for medicinal products and medical devices
- Negotiated Regulation 112 of 2022 as regards transitional provisions for certain in vitro diagnostic medical devices and the deferred application of conditions for in-house devices
- Negotiated, on behalf of Ireland, extension of Brexit related derogations to support ongoing supply of medicines.

## HEALTH INFORMATION POLICY

Fairer and faster access to the right type of healthcare can be strongly supported by a fit for purpose national health information system underpinned by clear and certain rules on the need to share health information both for individual patient care and treatment and for developing a high performing evidence-based health service.

In 2022 the Department worked on a Health information Bill designed to achieve those objects and also support the digital transformation of health records. A Memorandum for Government on the Principles and Policies of a Health Information Bill was approved by Government in April 2022, with the General Scheme expected to be approved in 2023.

The Department also reviewed and updated the data protection subject access rules to health information that had been in place since 1989. The new access provisions facilitate a faster process and ensure an individual's right of access to their health information and are set out in the Data Protection Act 2018 (Access Modification) (Health) Regulations 2022.

## PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

The Minister for Health is the Competent Authority for the assessment of non-Irish qualifications under Directive 2005/36/EC for five health and social care professions for the purposes of recruitment to the publicly funded health sector in Ireland. The five professions are Psychologist, Audiologist, Clinical Biochemist, Environmental Health Officer and Orthoptist. The process is administered by the Validation Unit on behalf of the Minister.

In 2022, a total of 51 non-Irish qualifications were validated across the five health and social care professions under the Minister for Health's remit. This is broken down as follows: 44 Psychologists, 6 Audiologists, 1 Clinical Biochemist.

## GENETICS AND GENOMICS

The Department is committed to the promotion of personalised medicine to improve patient care and outcomes. In December 2022, significant progress was made in this area through the launch of the [National Strategy for Accelerating Genetic and Genomic Medicine in Ireland](#). In November 2022, Ireland also officially entered Europe's [1+ Million Genome Initiative](#) (1+MG). This initiative will support the development of a federated genomic data infrastructure across Europe. To support the implementation of this work, the HRB has committed funding to a team of Irish researchers developing Ireland's [Genomic Data Infrastructure \(GDI\)](#) project.

- [Press release on Irish entry into 1+MG](#)

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## CHAPTER 4

# IMPROVE OVERSIGHT AND PARTNERSHIP IN THE SECTOR

The Department of Health is responsible for ensuring that processes, governance structures and regulatory frameworks are in place in the health and social care sector, to provide effective oversight. The Department works in partnership with the HSE and all of its agencies to deliver key strategies and reforms, including through strong performance monitoring and management, with a focus on financial control and outcomes.

## GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE

An **oversight agreement** between the Minister for Health/Department of Health and the Health Service Executive was signed in September 2022. The Agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister for Health/ Department of Health and the HSE and sets out the governance and accountability framework which underpins the relationship between the HSE and the Department.

## HEALTH SYSTEM PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK (HSPA)

- The Health System Performance Assessment Framework (HSPA) provides an overview assessment of Ireland's health, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators. It provides a move from the traditional activity-based indicator measurement in the system to a more outcome-based performance measurement which can be linked to relevant policies and reform measures. Following the launch of the conceptual HSPA Framework in 2021, work continued in 2022 on the development of an interactive HSPA visualisation platform, with the population of Framework indicators, using reliable and quality available data, with a view to releasing the Platform publicly in 2023
- Robust governance structures have been established to oversee the implementation of HSPA in the health system and this includes a high-level steering committee and an international advisory board
- Operational time bound workstreams have also been established in the areas of data infrastructure, policy implementation, planning, and performance management
- Liaison and co-operation continued with EU Colleagues in 2022 through the European Commission HSPA Expert Group and smaller community of practice groups

### Health Bill 2021

- The Health Bill 2021 seeks to amend the Health Act 2004 to provide for changes to HSE corporate and service planning processes amongst other provisions
- The General Scheme of the Bill was approved by the government in February 2021, pre-legislative scrutiny was completed in July and drafting of the Bill was initiated during 2021 with the first draft of the Bill received in October 2022
- Drafting is being considered in the context of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022 which is amending some of the same provisions of the Health Act, to ensure appropriate alignment with the proposed amendments.

## **THE WOMEN'S HEALTH TASKFORCE**

The **Women's Health Taskforce** is a partnership model with members from the Department, the HSE and many external partners with an interest in improving health outcomes for women in Ireland. In 2022 the Policy Committee met 10 times and considered and advised on 11 of the Department's policies and worked closely with the Department's Management Board Policy Forum.

## **STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING**

A Strategic Workforce Planning Unit was established in the Department of Health in 2020 following a Programme for Government commitment to establish an expert unit to work with the education sectors, regulators, and professional bodies to improve the availability of health professionals and reform their training to support integrated care across the entire health service.

Significant progress has been made working with the Higher Education Sector and Professional Bodies to increase student training for the health sector.

### **Increasing Student Training Places**

Department of Health officials continue to work in close collaboration with Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Higher Education Sector to increase the number of student training places across Medicine, Nursing and Midwifery and Health and Social Care Professionals.

#### **Medicine Student Places**

- In September 2022 an agreement was secured with the Irish Medical Schools for additional 200 Irish/EU medicine student places by 2026. The agreement began with an additional 60 Irish/ EU students in September 2022, climbing to 120 in September 2023, and up to 200 by 2026. This agreement with the medical schools will see the number of Irish/EU student places available in medicine increasing from 730 in 2021 to 930 in 2026.

#### **Nursing and Midwifery Student Places**

- Over the period 2014 to 2021 first-year nursing places in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) grew from 1,570 to 2,032 – an increase of almost 30%
- An additional 135 places were agreed for undergraduate nursing students in 2022.

#### **Health and Social Care Professions Student Places**

- The Department is working with HSE National Office for HSCPs, to develop a governance framework for clinical placements for HSCPs to support the expansion of student places in 2023 and future years.

### **National Taskforce on NCHD Workforce**

In September 2022, the Minister for Health established the **National Taskforce focused on the NCHD** (non-consultant hospital doctors) Workforce. The purpose of the Taskforce is to put in place sustainable workforce planning strategies and policies to address and improve NCHD experience to support present and future retention of NCHDs in Ireland.

The Taskforce began to develop recommendations on immediate priority areas, including a more standardised approach to meeting the infrastructure needs of the NCHD clinical education, training and working environments and facilities. There is a particular focus on addressing issues impacting on work-life balance and the health and wellbeing of NCHDs.

### **Increasing Doctor Training Places**

There have been significant increases in number of doctors in training. €4.6m was provided in Budget 2023 for additional intern and post-graduate medical training places. This measure supports medical workforce planning and more doctors in specialist training programmes. This represents a target increase of 133 specialist training doctors in the health service.

Over the last 5-year period to 2022, Basic Specialist Training Posts increased by 19% and Higher Specialist Training increased by 14%.

### **Health and Social Care Professionals**

- The Department worked in collaboration with the HSE National Health and Social Care Professions Office to develop an Advanced Practice Framework for Health and Social Care Professionals.

### **Public Health Consultants**

- Ireland's first ever Consultants in Public Health Medicine were appointed in March 2022
- 34 Consultant in Public Health Medicine posts were on boarded during 2022 as part of the agreement to establish a new consultant-led hub and spoke model for Public Health.

### **Health Workforce Planning Strategy and Planning Projection Model**

- In 2022, the Department progressed a project to develop a Health and Social Care Workforce Planning Projection Model for Ireland to address the long-term workforce planning needs of the health sector. This work is being undertaken with the support of the Directorate-General for Structure Reform Support (DG Reform of the EU Commission) under the auspices of their Technical Support Instrument (TSI) to provide the technical expertise to deliver on this ambitious project
- The objective of this project is the development of scenario-based projections of health and social care workforce supply and demand which informs health and social care long term workforce planning. The project provides the necessary tools, processes, and technical capacity to produce rolling health and social care workforce planning action plans and implement targeted policy measures for health and social care workforce reform.

## **NURSING AND MIDWIFERY POLICY**

- In June 2022 Minister Donnelly launched the Report on Phase 2 of the *Framework for Safe Nurse Staffing and Skill Mix in Adult Emergency Care Settings in Ireland*
- This is the second Report of the Framework for Safe Staffing and Skill Mix - the policy for determining nurse staffing levels and skill mix in Irish care settings
- The Report sets out, for the first time, a methodology to determine the appropriate number of nurses and healthcare assistants required for Emergency Departments and Injury Units based on the number of patients presenting and their care needs
- Testing of the framework was underpinned by a programme of research which demonstrated, in addition to reduced waiting times, other positive patient benefits including a significant reduction in the proportion of patients that leave Emergency Departments without being seen for treatment. Nursing staff reported an increase in job satisfaction during the pilot and improvements in quality of care being delivered.

## NORTH SOUTH, EU AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

### North/South and UK

The Department continued to meet its objective of enhancing and deepening North-South Cooperation in Healthcare, through:

- working with the Department of the Taoiseach to identify the Daisy Lodge Project for Shared Island funding
- maintaining good engagement with the Department of Health Northern Ireland, in the absence of formal structures for the North South Ministerial Council sectoral and plenary meetings
- oversight related to delivery of the health and social care projects under the EU cross-border programme INTERREG VA with Northern Ireland and Scotland, with several projects closing during the year. The Department also worked with relevant partners to prepare for the successor PEACEPLUS programme.

The Department also supported the reactivation of the Scottish Irish Health Forum in 2022 to examine the work to date and to identify new possible workstreams.

### Brexit

The Department of Health engaged in several structures throughout 2022 to manage the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union

### EU



With an agenda shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, the **French Presidency of the Council of the EU** (January – June 2022) focused on strengthening European public health and the European Health Union (EHU); emergency preparedness, anticipation, and response.



The **Czech Presidency** (July – December 2022) identified the response to the health consequences of the war in Ukraine, alongside the implementation of Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, and COVID-19 vaccine procurement and European cooperation, as its priorities.

Ireland was represented by the Department at the five **2022 EPSCO Health meetings** and was fully engaged in the discussions and negotiations around legislative and non-legislative files on topics, such as, for example, cross-border threats to health, European Medicines Agency, European health data space, substances of human origin, medical devices, drugs, cancer screening, EU COVID-19 vaccine procurement, and long-term care.



The 2022 **EU4Health Programme** budget was € 0.835 billion. The Department worked closely with the HRB, as well as the HSE, to drive engagement in EU4Health across the wider health sector. 13 nominations for Direct grants and Joint Actions were made by the Department.

The Department has five projects included in **Ireland's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**: two funded projects (Award of the contracts for ePharmacy system and eHealth National Financial Management System) and three reform projects (The Sláintecare Consultant Contract, Chronic Diseases Management Programme and Community Health Networks). Engagement with projects leads has continued throughout 2022 to ensure that targets and milestones were met.

In 2022, the Department of Health was involved in an on-going **Technical Support Instrument (TSI)** reform project, where the European Commission supported Ireland in strengthening its health workforce planning.

## **International**

At an International level, Ireland fully engaged in the World Health Organisation (WHO) processes to:

- negotiate a WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response
- consider amendments to the International Health Regulations.

In parallel Ireland engaged with the EU Commission and Member States in the preparation of the EU Global Health Strategy.

## **CLINICAL INDEMNITY**

- Twenty-six claims were lodged with the Cervical Check Tribunal by its final closing date of 26 July 2022. Of these, seven claims were still pending as of 31 December 2022.
- Payments continued to be made to applicants under the CervicalCheck Non-Disclosure Ex-Gratia Scheme
- 18 Payments were made in relation to Medical Defence Union refusals including settlement costs, plaintiff bill of costs, defendant bill of costs and legal cost accountancy fees.

## **MEDICINES, CONTROLLED DRUGS & PHARMACY LEGISLATION**

- Ongoing governance of the PSI and HPRA, including regular governance meetings, ensuring compliance with the Code of Practice of State Agencies.
- Ensuring agencies are adequately resourced and meeting the deliverables as set out in agencies Corporate Strategy.
- Appointments to the boards of HPRA and PSI.
- Successful completion of the Irish Institute of Pharmacy Work Plan for 2022 with continued professional development training delivered to pharmacists.
- Work to establish the proposed non-statutory inquiry into historical use of sodium valproate for women of child-bearing potential in the State was progressed. Following advice from the AGOs, terms of reference were revised, and a final version agreed with patient groups by year end.
- Commissioned HRB to conduct an evidence review on the 'Cost, safety, and environmental impacts of reprocessing single-use medical devices.'

- Multiple medical device vigilance actions were escalated by the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) to the Department of Health and were managed and coordinated effectively and comprehensively via multi-part internal and external stakeholder collaboration, oversight and coordination.
- Worked with the Health Ministries of France and Germany to bring a proposal on the Medical Device Regulations to the European meeting of health ministers in Dec. 2022.

## **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Governance and performance monitoring meetings were held monthly with HSE Mental Health Services. Funding was provided to allow further implementation of the national mental health policy *Sharing the Vision*, to enhance CAMHS and adult services, to continue to develop the national clinical programmes and recovery orientated services. The Model of Care for the National Clinical Programme for Dual Diagnosis was approved by the Chief Medical Officers Council (HSE) in April 2022. A new model of care for CAMHS Intellectual Disability launched in September 2022.

Budget 2023 saw another record allocation of €1.2 billion, comprising almost €58m in additional funding. This includes almost €14 million for new developments and €43.8 million for existing levels of service, along with a further €10 million in once off funding for minor capital works as well.

## **PROFESSIONAL REGULATION**

The governance arrangement between the Department and CORU continued in 2022. Core funding of €5m was provided to enable CORU undertake its statutory role. A total of 41 appointments were made to Council and CORU's registration boards.

The governance arrangement between the Department and the Medical Council continued in 2022 with one new appointment made to the Medical Council Board. The Department also sanctioned the implementation of a Workforce Plan for the Medical Council in 2022 which allowed for the recruitment of an additional 25 staff.

In 2022, the Minister approved a funding package for medical English language training to assist Ukrainian doctors and dentists in gaining registration in Ireland.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

The Department continued to engage at EU level in 2022, across Government Departments and with Official Agencies, ensuring food safety and environmental health remains a priority in the development of National and EU policy. The Department continues to protect the well-being of its citizens and maintain Ireland's reputation as a leader in food safety by, the continued development and investment in physical infrastructure at Dublin Port and Rosslare Europort, through Governance and supporting the Official Agencies and by transposing EU legislation into national law.

- In May 2020, the European Commission announced its intention to revise the Food Information to Consumer (FIC) Regulation to support healthy and sustainable food purchasing decisions and reduce food waste. In order to establish an Irish position, the Department established an Interdepartmental Working Group to facilitate engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders both within and outside government.

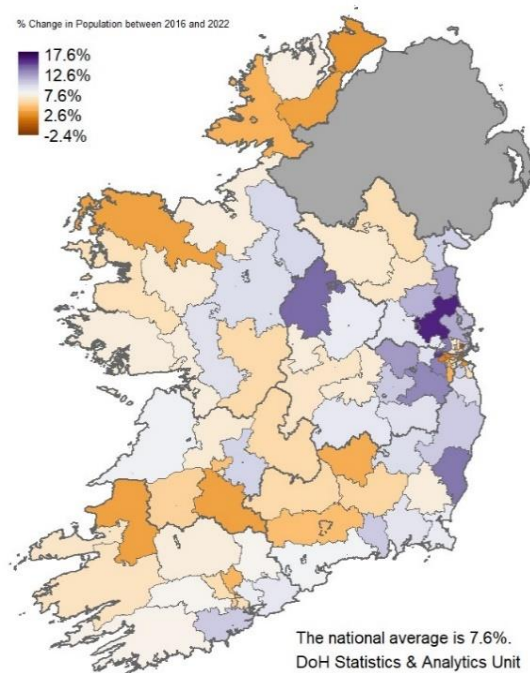
On 12 May 2022, the Department held a virtual stakeholder event, in conjunction with other Government Departments, to gather views from the broad range of stakeholders on the draft legislative proposals, and on the potential opportunities and impacts to Ireland.

- The Department in conjunction with the HSE Environmental Health Service (EHS) worked with multiple Departments and Agencies to support the operation of efficient and effective food safety control systems at both Dublin Port and Rosslare Europort. This cross-sectoral approach minimised the impact on public health
- In Q2 2022, as part of the overall State facilities in Dublin Port, Yard 4, the HSE EHS Border Control Post became operational, allowing the State to efficiently handle increasing volume of consignments, as a direct result of Brexit.
- A legislative programme is developed annually by the Department and revised quarterly in consultation with the HSE EHS and the FSAI. In 2022, the Department introduced 12 Statutory Instruments (S.I.s) in this area and processed some 109 EU Food Regulations

## HEALTHCARE STATISTICS

The Department supported improved oversight of the health sector by facilitating secure access to accurate timely data within the Department. During 2022 the Department:

- Published the annual '[Health in Ireland Key Trends 2022](#)' report providing summary statistics on health and healthcare over the past 10 years including demographics, population health, hospital and primary care, health sector employment and expenditure.
- Provided statistical and analytical support for the successful delivery of the Healthy Ireland Wave 8 Survey and [Summary Report](#).
- Undertook detailed population profiling of the new HSE Health Regions and Community Health Networks and delivered an interactive visualisation tool to support decision making.
- Led on the development of a prototype public visualisation platform for the Health System Performance Assessment Framework indicator set, for deployment in 2023.
- Provided the data analytics required for the National Patient Safety Office's [2021/2022 National Healthcare Quality Reporting System](#) report which, in addition to the established domains, included additional analysis of COVID-19 and Women's Health.
- Established a framework for reporting on international comparison of waiting lists based on source data.



The Department engaged in ongoing efforts to strength the Irish health information system and enhance the quality of official statistics. During 2022 the Department:

- Achieved [Irish Statistical System Code of Practice](#) (ISSCoP) certification for the Department of Health's Eurostat Joint Questionnaire data collection. The Irish Statistical System comprises those parts of the public sector involved in the collection, processing, compilation or dissemination of official statistics. ISSCoP certification from the CSO means the Department's annual submission of non-monetary healthcare statistics to Eurostat adheres to the Code of Practice.
- Was one of three national agencies, along with the CSO, which underwent a Peer Review by Eurostat of compliance with the European Statistics Code of Practice. This peer review made one recommendation for improvement by the Department, which will be implemented in 2023
- Facilitated two international assessments of Ireland's Health Information System under EU-Commission backed projects: [TEHDAS](#) (Towards European Health Data Space); and [PHIRI](#) (Population Health Information Research Infrastructure)
- Secured Government approval to develop the general scheme of a Health Information Bill.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

# **BECOME AN ORGANISATION FIT FOR THE FUTURE**

The Department must ensure that it has the right capabilities, people, structure and culture to advance its mission and strategic objectives. It is committed to ensuring that all staff are valued and empowered to contribute and perform at a high level.

The Department continues to strengthen policy capability and collaboration in the Department via provision of policy education, peer support and guidance in best practice throughout the policy development process.

## **CORPORATE OPERATIONS OFFICE**

The Department's Corporate Operations Office manages a range of functions to ensure that the organisation operates efficiently, identifying and implementing business process improvements as required. These functions include:

- Information management
- Risk management
- Business and strategic planning
- Coordinating responses to public representations
- Freedom of information
- Corporate governance frameworks
- Innovation
- Coordination of the Department's engagements with the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Support to the offices of the Minister, Ministers of State and Secretary General

In 2022, the Corporate Operations Office managed 13,646 Parliamentary Questions, approximately 16,000 Representations and 415 Freedom of Information requests on behalf of the Department.

## **STATEMENT OF STRATEGY**

- The Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 sets out the Department's vision, mission and strategic priorities over a 3-year period. The Strategy includes overarching priorities, with progress measured in the Department's Annual Reports.
- The five priorities in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 are:
  - Manage COVID-19 and promote public health.
  - Expand and integrate care in the community.
  - Make access to healthcare fairer and faster.
  - Improve oversight and partnership in the sector.
  - Become an organisation fit for the future.
- The Statement of Strategy 2021-2023 establishes the Department's commitment to human rights and equality, in line with the Public Sector Duty (Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014).
- Committed actions for the 2021-2023 strategic period include the undertaking of a self-assessment, oversight of our aegis bodies, implementation of related national strategies and progress reporting in our Annual Report.

## **PROTECTED DISCLOSURES**

Thirteen individual potential disclosures were made to the Minister in 2022. All of these Protected Disclosures were made under Section 6 or Section 8 of the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014. This means the disclosures were not from employees of the Department and instead related to a worker or workers employed in a public body under the Minister/Department's remit, in the period covered by this report. No Protected Disclosures were received from a worker employed by the Department of Health.

## **INTERNAL AUDIT**

Four internal audit reports were completed in 2022, providing substantial assurance, and moderate assurance in one and three instances respectively. Corresponding recommendations were developed with a view to further strengthening relevant governance, administrative and control frameworks. The capacity of IAU to deliver its remit will be further developed in 2023.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

- At the end of 2022 there were 640 staff (623.5 Whole Time Equivalents) employed by the Department.
- A Strategic HR and Workforce Planning Sub-Committee of Management Board was established to advance both Strategic HR and workforce planning priorities.
- The Department launched its Blended Working Policy, and associated flexitime accrual pilot policy, on 30 June 2022.
- In collaboration with colleagues from across the Department, a Culture Project was established, aimed at ensuring a positive, robust and supportive culture across all Units and Divisions of the Department.
- A Working Group for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) met monthly to proactively implement and promote a culture of awareness and respect for equality, diversity, and inclusion within the workplace.
- A range of people management, technical, regulatory and soft skills training were delivered under the Department's L&D programme to meet strategic learning priorities. On average, staff in the Department undertook 1,705 training days in 2022.
- As COVID-19 restrictions eased, the Department's in-person monthly Induction sessions were re-established to welcome and acclimate new joiners to the Department.
- The Department's programme of Wellbeing supports continued with monthly wellbeing events being organised in the areas of Physical, Mental, Social and Financial Wellbeing.
- The Department's Social Club was re-established and hosted a number of both virtual and in-person employee events and activities.
- A pilot exit interview programme was established to gather insights from staff as to their reasons for leaving the Department to support employee engagement and retention initiatives.
- Two projects from the Department of Health were selected as finalists in the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards.
- The Department of Health remains ahead of the public service employment target for persons with disabilities with 6.25% of staff declaring a disability in 2022.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

The Department's Internal ICT Unit supports and develops a modern centralised, standardised and rationalised ICT infrastructure to support improved business systems allowing the Department to effectively address its business requirements.

The Department works closely with the National Cyber Security Centre and with other public service bodies in addressing cyber security issues.

During the year, and in response to changes brought about by Blended Working arrangements, the Department:

- Extended and improved VPN connectivity for secure remote working
- Continued to improve the Cyber Security infrastructure and monitoring
- Developed a suite of incident response plans, including Business Continuity and Cyber Incident
- Implemented a mandatory Cyber Security Awareness Training programme for all staff

## **RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

The Department completed the rollout of eDocs, an electronic records management system in Q3 2022. An 'Introduction to Records Management' Presentation was also developed which now features in the Department's monthly induction days. An Archives Awareness Month (September) was developed to highlight the Department's history and archives to colleagues.

## **DATA PROTECTION**

The Department of Health is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of data subjects.

The Data Protection Unit was established to provide advice and support to Business Units and the Management Board to meet the Department's data protection obligations set out in data protection legislation.

Throughout 2022, Data Protection Unit continued to assist the Department with its GDPR compliance.

- Through the provision of advice and support to Business Units on a range of data protection queries and issues, including legislative consultations, data protection impact assessments (DPIA) and updates to the Department's record of processing activities (ROPA).
- By continuing to raise awareness of data protection in the Department through the development of data protection guidance notes, templates, and information emails for staff.
- The Department rolled out an update to the mandatory online training course in 2021, which is available to all staff on an ongoing basis.
- A review and update of data protection policies and procedures across the Department was commenced following a review of data protection compliance in 2021.
- Data Protection Unit provided assistance to members of the public on data protection queries and requests for access.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by the UN and its Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ireland has taken a 'whole-of-government' approach towards achieving the SDGs, with each Minister having responsibility for implementing targets relevant to their respective policy areas.

The majority of health-related action under the SDGs is set out in SDG 3, Good Health & Well-Being. Information about the progress made on these and other SDG actions can be found at: [Ireland's Hub for Sustainable Development Goals](#).

### New Children's Hospital

Sustainability is embedded in the design of the new children's hospital (NCH). The design positively addresses resource demand, building emissions, waste streams, noise, air quality, transport and ecological impact. NCH is also designed to meet the Building Energy Rating A3' standard including the installation of the most efficient energy systems delivering 60-70% per square metre reduction in energy running costs when compared to the existing children's hospitals.

The hospital received a BREEAM Excellent Rating in Design and is one of only a small number of hospitals in the world to have achieved such a rating. BREEAM is the world's leading sustainability assessment method for master planning projects, infrastructure and buildings.

## **POLICY COMMITTEE**

The Department's Policy Committee draws on the diversity of experience of colleagues from the Department of Health to consider and provide constructive challenge and feedback on policy issues submitted for its consideration.

The Committee:

- Continuously promoted best practice principles and guidelines for policy processes in the Department of Health.
- Reviewed and provide feedback on any substantive policy proposals or projects against agreed criteria at various stages.
- Advised the Management Board Policy forum, via the Chair, of the work of the Policy Committee and on any identified long-term strategic and/or cross-cutting policy issues.
- Facilitated the identification of interdependencies and links between policy areas.
- Promoted an ethos of collective support for policy projects and colleagues engaged in policy work by providing a forum for constructive feedback and sharing knowledge, experiences, and expertise across different policy units.

## Appendix 1: Corporate Information

### DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH MANAGEMENT BOARD IN 2022

**Robert Watt**

Secretary General

**Tracey Conroy**

Assistant Secretary

Acutes Hospitals Policy

**Greg Dempsey**

Deputy Secretary

Governance and Performance

**Fergal Goodman** (until 2 July 2022)

Assistant Secretary

Health Protection

**Dr Tony Holohan**

Chief Medical Officer (until 1 July 2022)

**Rachel Kenna**

Assistant Secretary

Nursing/Midwifery Policy, Professional Regulation, Workforce Planning, & Allied Health Professionals

**Siobhán McArdle** (from 10 January 2022)

Assistant Secretary

Social Care, Mental Health and Drugs Policy

**Louise McGirr**

Assistant Secretary

Health Sector Employment and Industrial Relations Policy

**Muiris O'Connor**

Assistant Secretary

Research & Development & Health Analytics

**Professor Breda Smyth**

Chief Medical Officer (appointed 5 October 2022)

Office of the Chief Medical Officer

**Derek Tierney**

Assistant Secretary

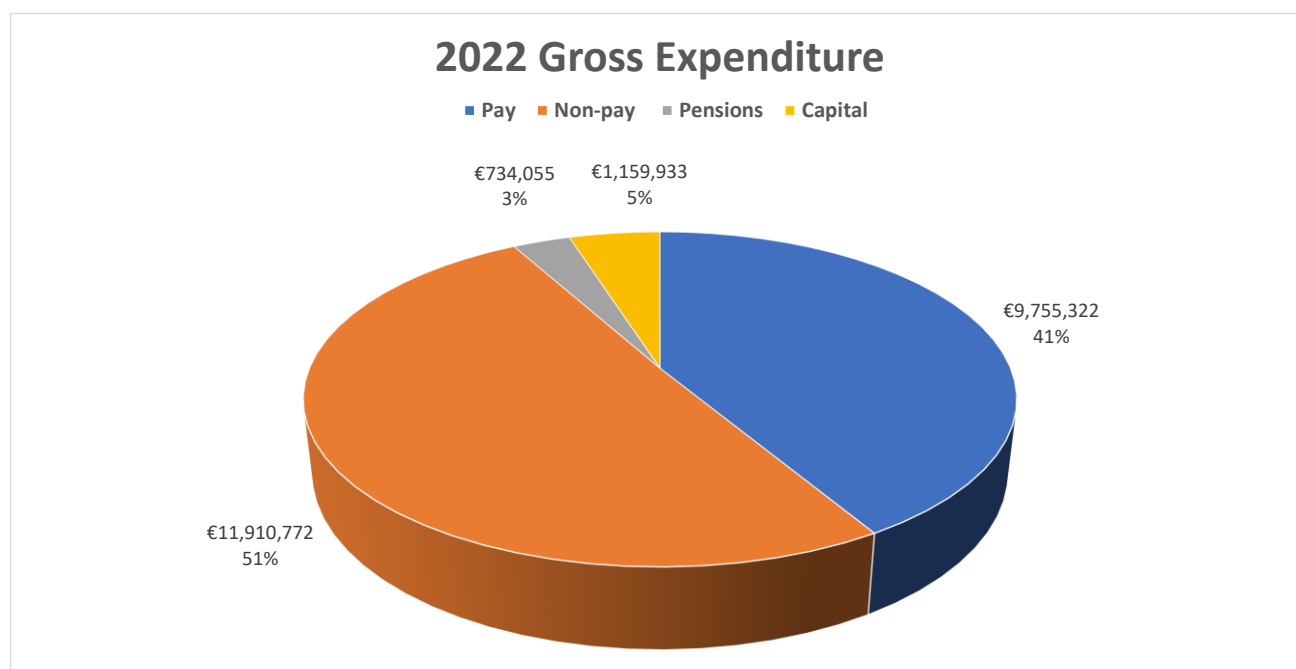
Health Infrastructure

### CORPORATE PROFILE

At the end of 2022 there were 640 staff (623.5 Whole Time Equivalents) employed by the Department. In addition to supporting the Minister for Health, the staff of the Department also supported the three Ministers of State.

The Department managed a gross budget of over €23.585bn in 2022. Budgeted appropriations-in-aid in the year were €0.441bn, leaving a net budget of €23.144bn. Gross expenditure in the year was €23.56bn and appropriations-in-aid were €0.458bn. This resulted in net expenditure of €23.102bn.

Gross expenditure incurred by the Department of Health in the year represented 25.99% of total general government expenditure in the year. Net expenditure represented 30.77% of central government exchequer issues in the year. Gross expenditure in the year consisted of disbursements of €23.179bn to the HSE, €223million to other agencies with €158million incurred by the Department.



*Note – figures in above chart are in thousands*

## 2022 PARLIAMENTARY RESPONSES AT A GLANCE

The Department of Health answered almost a quarter of all the Parliamentary Questions posed in 2022.

<b>Parliamentary Questions (excluding withdrawn/disallowed)</b>	<b>13,646</b>
<b>Of which referred to the HSE for Direct Reply</b>	<b>8,861</b>
<b>Representations Received</b>	<b>16,000 (approx.)</b>
<b>Topical Issues Raised</b>	<b>362</b>
<b>Topical Issues Selected</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Seanad Commencement Raised</b>	<b>184</b>
<b>Seanad Commencement Selected</b>	<b>94</b>

## FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The Department processed 402 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests in 2022, 236 of which were from the media. The FOI team coordinated the Department's response to these requests by logging, assigning to the correct area and working with requesters and decision makers to ensure the Department meets its obligations under the FOI Act. The team also assisted members of the public in accessing information outside the formal FOI process, for example where the information was already in the public domain.

## PROMPT PAYMENT

Details of the Department's Prompt Payments obligations during 2022:

Details	Number	Value (€)	Percentage (%) of <u>total number</u> of payments made
Total payments made in 2022	3,076	33,437,153.18	100%
Payments made within 15 days	2,502	30,425,249.88	81%
Payments made within 16 days to 30 days	463	2,583,927.43	15%
Payments made in excess of 30 days that were subject to LPI and compensation costs	111	427,975.87	4%

The total prompt payment compensation and interest paid by the Department in 2022 was €9,087.66, comprising €2,997.66 in interest payments and €6,090 in compensation payments.

## ENERGY USAGE IN 2022

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is defined as "a process whereby public authorities seek to procure goods, services and works with a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle when compared to goods, services and works with the same primary function that would otherwise be procured." Approximately €12 billion a year is spent by the State on the procurement of goods, services and works. This provides Ireland's public sector with significant opportunity to influence the provision of more resource-efficient, less polluting goods, services and works within the marketplace.

Circular 20/19 highlights the Government's priority in promoting the wider use of environmental and social considerations in public procurement with specific regard to the Climate Action Plan. Specifically, the Circular instructs Departments to consider including green criteria in public procurement processes in the following circumstances where:

- clearly defined, quantifiable, verifiable and measurable criteria have been developed by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and are relevant to the specific procurement process; and
- the cost can be met within a Department's existing budget without impacting on service delivery.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published a guidance document on Green Public Procurement that provides step-by-step instructions and criteria for implementing green public procurement in line with policy and legislation for use when procuring goods and services across the public sector. This will support the Department in the implementation process to facilitate Green Public Procurement.

Priority areas of procurement activity are identified as most suitable for inclusion of environmental measures including construction; energy; transport; food and catering services; cleaning products and services; paper; clothing and textiles; information and communications technology.

There will be a phased introduction of green criteria across Government and Public Sectors targeting priority products and services as well as building appropriate green criteria into the OGP Frameworks as they arise and providing support and guidance to procurers.

Starting with the 2020 Annual Report, the Department reports annually on progress in relation to Green Public Procurement.

The Department is required to produce a Resource Efficiency Action Plans (REAP). It is actively engaging in measures to improve efficiencies in the context of energy, waste, water and recycling. A Green Team is in place to ensure that the Department targets set out in the REAP will be implemented and to significantly reduce the environmental impacts of the Department's activities. The Green Team undertakes employee engagement processes to educate staff regarding water conservation, energy saving and waste management. It is also an active participant in OPW Optimising Power @ Work campaign and continues to pursue and progress energy initiatives across the Department. With the aid of the Green team, the Department will run engagement campaigns for all staff.

#### GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT ANNUAL RETURN 2022

<b>Reference year 2022</b>	<b><u>Total number of contracts signed over €25,000 by priority sector</u></b>	<b><u>Total value of contracts signed over €25,000 by priority sector</u></b>	<b><u>Total number of contracts signed over €25,000 by priority sector <i>which have</i> <u>incorporated GPP</u></u></b>	<b><u>Total value of contracts signed over €25,000 by priority sector <i>which have</i> <u>incorporated GPP</u></u></b>
<b>Priority Sector*</b>				
Energy-related Products				
Food & Catering Services				

Heating Equipment				
ICT Products & Services	3	518,693	0	0
Indoor Cleaning Services				
Indoor & Outdoor Lighting				
Office Building Design, Construction & Management				
Paper Products & Printing Services				
Textiles Products & Services				
Transport				
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>518,693</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
* Ten sectors for which GPP criteria have been developed by the EPA, based on common EU criteria with adaptations to reflect the Irish market and procurement practices				
<b>Reference year 2022</b>	<b><i>Total number of contracts signed over €25,000 by other sector</i></b>	<b><i>Total value of contracts signed over €25,000 by other sector</i></b>	<b><i>Total number of contracts signed over €25,000 by other sector which have incorporated <u>GPP</u></i></b>	<b><i>Total value of contracts signed over €25,000 by other sector which have incorporated <u>GPP</u></i></b>
<b>Other Sectors**</b>				
Professional Services	27	26,296,744	4	2,663,323

Training				
Laboratory Equipment				
Facilities Management				
Media				
Furniture				
Research	7	460,956		
Marketing				
Licensing	2	1,539,104		
Veterinary & Farming				
Digital Services	1	302,800		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28,599,604</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2,663,323</b>

## Appendix 2: Agencies under the aegis of the Department

### **Non-Commercial State Bodies**

Dental Council  
Food Safety Authority of Ireland  
Food Safety Promotion Board - safefood  
Health Information and Quality Authority  
Health Insurance Authority  
Health Products Regulatory Authority  
Health Research Board  
Health and Social Care Professionals Council (CORU)  
Health Service Executive  
Irish Blood Transfusion Service  
Medical Council  
Mental Health Commission  
National Cancer Registry Board  
National Paediatric Hospital Development Board  
National Treatment Purchase Fund  
Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland  
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland  
Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council

### **Commercial State Bodies**

Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI)

## Appendix 3: Department of Health Publications

In 2022 the Department produced 240 publications all of which are available for download on our website at <https://health.gov.ie/publications-research/publications/>

