



An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health

# Department of Health Statement of Strategy 2025-2028





# Table of Contents

Foreword by the Minister	4
Introduction by the Secretary General	5
Overview	6
About the Department of Health	7
About the Statement of Strategy	8
Strategic Priorities	8
Internal and External Environments	9
<b><u>Strategic Priority 1</u></b> Promote and Protect Public Health	10
<b><u>Strategic Priority 2</u></b> Bring Care Closer to Home	12
<b><u>Strategic Priority 3</u></b> Make Access to Healthcare Fairer and Faster	14
<b><u>Strategic Priority 4</u></b> Strengthen Governance and Partnerships	16
<b><u>Strategic Priority 5</u></b> Evolve to Meet Future Challenges and Opportunities	18
Appendix I: Programme for Government Commitments	20
Appendix II: Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Health	20

# Foreword by the Minister

**The Department's Statement of Strategy 2025-2028 is published at a time of significant expansion in our health services. This document highlights our priorities over the coming years to fulfil our mission of improving the health and wellbeing of people in Ireland.**

Over the past five years we have added more than 25,000 staff to our health workforce, including over 9,700 extra nurses and midwives, over 4,000 health and social care professionals and over 2,300 additional doctors and dentists. The Health Budget (excluding disabilities) has risen from €20.1 billion in 2020 to €27.4 billion for 2026, an increase of over 36%. This unprecedented investment will support us in implementing the transformation agenda set out in Sláintecare, underpinned by a strong focus on productivity and value for money.

As detailed in this new Statement of Strategy, my Department is committed to further improving health and social care services so that everyone can get the care they need, when and where they need it. Leveraging key initiatives - such as the Public Only Consultant Contract - will facilitate the shift to a seven-day health service.

We will provide more options for people to access care closer to their home, integrating care within the newly established Health Regions and reducing dependency on hospitals. We will deliver fairer and faster care by reducing health inequalities, expanding capacity and boosting capital infrastructure, leading to better health outcomes for patients.

Promoting and strengthening public health is essential to maintaining a sustainable, resilient and responsive health system. Achieving our goals will require close collaboration with our many partners, including effective governance and oversight to ensure efficiency, productivity and accountability.

Finally, strengthening my Department's internal capabilities is vital to carrying out our work. We must continue to modernise and digitise services by embracing innovation and adopting new technologies to support us in achieving our other strategic priorities.

Alongside Ministers of State Butler, Murnane O'Connor and O'Donnell, my colleagues in the Department and our partners, I look forward to leading a health service that is patient-focused, safe and effective in meeting the needs of the people of Ireland.



**Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD**  
**Minister for Health**



# Introduction by the Secretary General

**I am pleased to present the Department of Health's new Statement of Strategy, which reaffirms our dedication to improving health and social care services for the citizens of Ireland. With the publication of this document, we have an opportunity to focus on the next steps towards achieving the ambitious health-related commitments set out in the Programme for Government and implementing Sláintecare, one of the most significant reform programmes commissioned by the State.**

The remit of the Department of Health is varied and complex. Our work directly affects people at all life stages and it is vital that we plan ahead for the future to ensure our health system is modern and fit-for-purpose. The challenges facing our health system are significant, but so too are the opportunities. We will continue to provide strong leadership and oversight in the sector, working in partnership with the HSE and our other agencies to deliver services that meet people's needs.

A high-performing Department with robust organisational structures in place provides a solid foundation for achieving our goals. We are committed to fostering a culture that enhances our own capabilities and it is crucial that our teams are empowered and resourced sufficiently, allowing them to operate within a culture that values and applies innovative ways of thinking and working. To this end, we will continue to invest in our staff and ensure opportunities to develop their skills are made available, while utilising data and technology to make informed decisions and drive our work forward.

This document was developed in consultation with key stakeholders including healthcare organisations, other government departments and our staff. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Department, the HSE and our other partners across the health and social care sector for their continued dedication and engagement.

We will do our utmost to deliver on the Department's mission of improving people's health and wellbeing, while ensuring that our service are responsive, equitable, and sustainable. Together we can look forward to implementing this Strategy and working to make a real difference to the public throughout the country.



**Robert Watt**  
**Secretary General**

# Overview



## Vision - The Department's Vision for the People of Ireland

A healthier Ireland, with improved health and wellbeing for all, and with the right care delivered in the right place at the right time.



## Mission - Why the Department exists

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



## Values - How the Department works

- Engaging with the public and patients
- Respect and fair and equitable treatment for all
- Collaboration, innovation and forward thinking
- Professionalism, leadership and accountability
- Integrity, impartiality and value for money



## Enablers - Supporting the Department to achieve its strategic priorities

- Empowered teams and cross-functional working
- Data, technology and digitisation
- Funding, structures and infrastructure
- Embedded Research and Innovation
- Stakeholder collaboration and alignment

# About the Department of Health

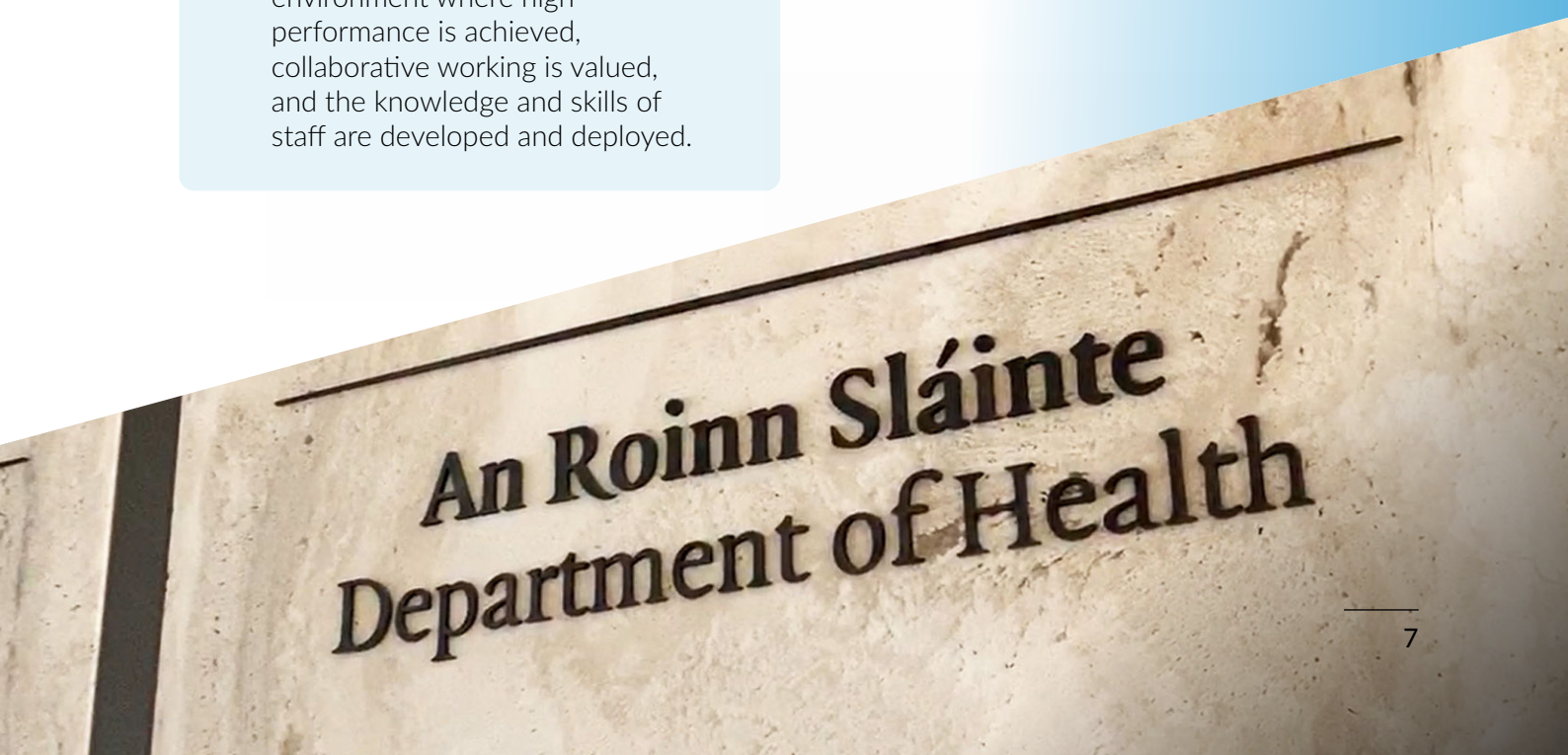
The Department of Health has around 700 employees working together across multiple divisions and units to deliver on a very broad mission and mandate. Further information about who we are is available online at: [www.gov.ie/health](http://www.gov.ie/health) and [whodoeswhat.gov.ie/health](http://whodoeswhat.gov.ie/health).

## **The functions of the Department of Health are to serve the public and support the Minister for Health, Ministers of State, and the Government by:**

- Providing leadership and policy direction for the health sector to improve health outcomes.
- Undertaking effective governance and performance oversight to ensure accountable and high-quality services and systems.
- 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.

The Department works with the relevant agencies and bodies, together with a wide range of other stakeholders across government, within our sector and internationally, to deliver health and social care services to the people of Ireland.

There are 19 bodies under the aegis of the Department of Health, including the Health Service Executive (HSE), which is the largest of our agencies. More information on the HSE, including its corporate plan and annual reports, is available at [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie).



**An Roinn Sláinte**  
**Department of Health**

# About the Statement of Strategy

This Statement of Strategy sets out the direction for the Department of Health's work between 2025 and 2028, with consideration to the commitments set out in the [Programme for Government](#) and the fundamental principles of Sláintecare. Input was sought and received from agencies under our aegis and from other Government Departments, in addition to internal consultation across our own Department.

This Statement will be used to guide development of the Department's strategies, which will be published on the [Department of Health website](#). Five strategic priorities have been identified to steer our work and enable us to achieve our goals. These priorities were chosen in response to the health, wellbeing, and social care needs of the people of Ireland, and in the context of significant national and international change, demands and demographics.

This Statement does not seek to set out a strategy for the entire health sector, however it considers the wider context within which the Department of Health operates and is mindful of the important role played by the various partners and stakeholders that contribute towards our shared vision. Progress will be reflected each year in the Department's Annual Reports.

## Strategic Priorities



1.

Promote and protect public health



2.

Bring care closer to home



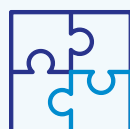
3.

Make access to healthcare to fairer & faster



4.

Strengthen governance and partnerships



5.

Evolve to meet future challenges and opportunities



# Internal and External Environments

## Our Internal Environment

The Department's organisational structure must be robust and fit for purpose. It is vital that our teams are empowered and resourced sufficiently, to provide oversight of our agencies and collaborate with our partners.

We will prioritise an evidence based policy approach, utilising data to make informed decisions and technology to drive our work forward, embracing innovation in line with Making Innovation Real - the Public Service Innovation Strategy, and Better Public Services - Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy.

## Our External Environment

This document is informed by the Programme for Government commitments and priorities. The wider economic outlook and Ireland's changing demographic profile with the associated necessary reforms and increased costs will be vital factors impacting achievement of our goals. We will prioritise retaining public trust and continue to engage with the public and partner with patients in policymaking.

International trends, evidence and obligations shape our environment, and the Department maintains strong levels of engagement with the European Commission, World Health Organisation and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Department is committed to eliminating discrimination, promoting equality and protecting the human rights of staff and patients, as outlined in the Public Sector Duty under Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014.



# Strategic Priority 1

## Promote and Protect Public Health

### Why is this a priority?

- Current demographic trends and health capacity projections show that ensuring good public health is essential to maintain a stable, efficient, and sustainable health service for the people of Ireland.
- Promoting and strengthening public health means raising awareness of health risks and helping people to live healthier lives, in line with [United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 - Good Health and Wellbeing \(SDG 3\)](#). Encouraging and enabling the public to make health-conscious choices and increasing uptake of screening programmes is essential to reducing health inequalities and early illness prevention.
- By working across national, EU and international settings to prevent, prepare for and respond to future public health threats, we will enhance the resilience and responsiveness of our health system to safeguard the population of Ireland.



### Actions and Outcomes

- » Renew the **Healthy Ireland Framework**, which will encompass the new **Obesity Policy and Action Plan** and **National Physical Activity Framework and Action Plan**.
- » Promote **health and wellbeing in diverse settings** across the nation through Healthy Workplaces, Healthy Campuses, Healthy Prisons, Healthy Clubs, Healthy Cities and Counties, Healthy Ireland at your Library and through Arts and Health programmes.
- » Complete a **Diabetes Services and Policy Review** and progress recommendations.
- » Develop a comprehensive strategy to combat the **harms related to certain types of online activity**, considering the **Online Health Taskforce's recommendations** to improve digital well-being.
- » Explore restrictions on the sale of **high caffeine energy drinks**, including a ban on their sale to children.
- » Following publication of the new **National Sexual Health Strategy, 2025-2035**, we will extend access to free contraception and HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and publish an HIV Action Plan.
- » Ban the sale of **tobacco products** to people under the age of 21 and introduce wide-ranging **restrictions on vaping**, including packaging, flavours, point of sale advertising and a ban on disposable vapes.
- » Tackle **harmful alcohol consumption** through effective regulations.



- » Implement a new **national drugs strategy** that reduces the harms associated with drug use and diverts those found in possession of drugs for personal use to health services.
- » Raise awareness of **skin cancer** and explore ways to ban commercial sunbed use.
- » Expand Ireland's **population health screening programmes** and implement Ireland's Roadmap to Cervical Cancer Elimination.
- » Develop policy in relation to the **national immunisation programme** as required.
- » **Support community groups** such as Men's Sheds, Women's Sheds and Active Retirement communities and access to social activities through **Social Prescribing**.
- » Promote measures that **improve life expectancy** for Travellers, people who are homeless and high-risk drug users.
- » Collaborate and contribute to the development of a **life sciences strategy** at a national and European level.
- » Implement the recommendations of the National Clinical Trials Oversight Group and continue to transform the **clinical trials landscape** in Ireland.
- » Explore the **impacts of climate change on public health** through a "One Health" perspective.
- » Reform the **Pharmacy Act** to modernise the legislative framework governing pharmacy practice.
- » Develop a new **National Pandemic Preparedness Strategy** in line with strengthened EU and international law, informed by national and international best practice and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- » Support the work of the **Covid-19 Evaluation**, led by the Department of an Taoiseach.



# Strategic Priority 2

## Bring Care Closer to Home

### Why is this a priority?

- Increasing care provided in communities is a key element of Sláintecare, to ensure people are treated in the most appropriate setting while enhancing patient outcomes. Expanding care in the community means a reduced dependency on hospitals via increased local levels of primary and social care, providing accessible and timely healthcare closer to home.
- Bringing community health services and hospitals together regionally supports a more patient-centred approach to healthcare, driving integration between care settings at a national, regional and local level.
- As community, social and primary care services work together in a region, services can be better delivered to meet the specific needs of the local population. This provides for improved levels of efficiency and productivity, with a consistent, standardised quality of care across the country.



### Actions and Outcomes

- » Expand the **Enhanced Community Care (ECC) Programme** and increase the number of primary care centres, shifting healthcare delivery from hospitals to community settings, where clinically appropriate.
- » Monitor and review the **integration of acute and community services under the Health Regions** and the underlying model of integrated service delivery.
- » Support **older people to live at home and in their own communities** by increasing home care hours, expanding the Enhanced Community Care Programme and by designing a Statutory Homecare Scheme.
- » Develop **dementia care** by implementing the dementia model of care and increasing the availability of community dementia supports like day care, day care at home, young onset dementia supports and dementia advisers.
- » Invest in **palliative care** to achieve full national coverage of hospice and community services, develop a new national policy on palliative care for children and fund the National Adult Palliative Care Policy.
- » Enhance provision of **accessible and comprehensive mental health services** through the implementation of Sharing the Vision and Connecting for Life.
- » Provide a comprehensive **women's health programme** in general practice and explore expanding the programme in a primary care setting, integrating and linking with existing women's health services.





- » Develop policy to support the implementation of **virtual wards** at scale both regionally and nationally.
- » Increase **support for carers** by providing training, establishing clearer pathways to services, and improving access to respite.
- » Finalise the **Strategic Review of General Practice** and work to implement its recommendations to ensure that general practice can continue to deliver services effectively.
- » Further **expand the services provided by pharmacists** and introduce a Common Conditions Service.
- » Modernise and expand **integrated Cardiovascular services**, including primordial and primary prevention, acute treatment, secondary prevention and rehabilitation.
- » Expand the **Acute Oncology Service** and facilities for people being treated for cancer, ensuring they do not have to go through the general emergency department.
- » Review the **National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology** to ensure more eye services are provided in the community.
- » Improve access to modernised oral healthcare services through implementation of the **National Oral Health Policy**.



# Strategic Priority 3

## Make Access to Healthcare Fairer and Faster

### Why is this a priority?

- A core aim of Sláintecare is to provide timely, affordable access to services while also addressing fundamental health inequalities, in line with *UN SDG 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing*. A more equitable health service means people have access to services based primarily on their needs, not ability to pay.
- Expanding eligibility and reducing waiting times are vital in improving access to healthcare. This supports the goal of ensuring people receive the right care, at the right place, at the right time.
- Integrating community and hospital care within health regions supports planning, building capacity and progressing health digitalisation enables service improvements and informed decision-making, allowing better access for patients to high quality healthcare.



### Actions and Outcomes

- » Reduce **waiting times** for scheduled procedures, so that all patients are within the Sláintecare targets of 10 and 12 weeks and continue the transition to regular hospital care being available to patients seven days a week.
- » Improve **Urgent and Emergency Care services** by delivering integrated services in the evenings, at weekends and bank holidays, targeting wait times in emergency departments and ensuring discharges are timely.
- » Utilise an evidence-based approach to **mental health service development and improvement** through policy implementation and legislative reform, from early intervention through to specialist inpatient services.
- » Implement the **Paediatric Model of Care** in paediatric settings across the country, opening the National Children's Hospital and retaining a focus **on paediatric spinal surgery** by increasing staffing and resources to ensure adequate surgical capacity.
- » Strengthen our **nursing home sector** by establishing more public nursing home beds, including dementia-specific provision, and provide a career pathway for healthcare assistants.
- » Establish a fair and equitable approach to the **funding of health and social care services** through a population-based resource allocation model.

- » Extend **free GP services** to children up to at least 12 years.
- » Enhance **Women's health** including the development of a new National Maternity Hospital, continued expansion of specialist services in endometriosis, eligibility to State-funded IVF and availability of free period products.
- » Launch and implement the **National Rare Disease Strategy 2025-2030**.
- » Ensure a **transgender healthcare service** that is based on clinical evidence, respect, inclusiveness and compassion with a new clinical programme for gender healthcare and an updated clinical model of care.
- » Develop and modernise **digital health infrastructure** to ensure that our assets are fit-for-purpose and that our health data is connected to enable care coordination to support the drive to improve health outcomes and experiences for patients and those who give them care.
- » Expand **health infrastructure** by progressing the development of four elective hospitals in Cork, Dublin (two) and Galway and establishing surgical hubs in Cork, Dublin, Limerick, Galway, Sligo and Donegal.
- » Progress the implementation of [Digital for Care: a Digital Health Framework for Ireland 2024-2030](#), focusing on areas such as the full digitisation of Irish healthcare records and information systems, publishing an Artificial Intelligence (AI) strategy for Health and promoting greater use of remote health monitoring and virtual care.
- » Implement key **National Strategies**, including the National Trauma Strategy, National Cancer Strategy, National Maternity Strategy and Strategic Plan for Critical Care.
- » Oversee increased capacity and continued strategic reform of the **National Ambulance Service** to effectively position it to treat more patients in the right care setting at the most appropriate level of clinical need.
- » Work in collaboration with the education sector, regulators, and professional bodies to improve **the availability of health professionals and reform their training** to support integrated care across the health service.
- » Ensure **sufficient numbers of GPs** are trained to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population and recruit GPs internationally where possible. Provide resources and referral pathways for GPs to establish practice and deliver services, including through provision of supports in rural and deprived areas.
- » **Build capacity in primary care therapy services** and ensure more timely access to primary care therapy services regardless of location.
- » Improve the **sustainability of expenditure on medicines** and ensure that the reimbursement process is effectively resourced.
- » Improve **Clinical Genetic services** and Integrate Genetic and Genomic testing into routine clinical care.
- » Develop a **National Hearing Care Plan** including recommendations regarding how to develop a holistic model of care for the diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss in the Irish population.
- » Enhance **access and delivery of treatment services** that respond to changing patterns of problem drug and alcohol use across the HSE health regions.
- » Establish the **Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority**, commence the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Act 2025 and enact supplementary legislation.



# Strategic Priority 4

## Strengthen Governance and Partnerships

### Why is this a priority?

- The health and social care sector comprises many and varied strands and organisations that play a vital role in providing care to the people of Ireland. Constructive engagement, collaboration and oversight underpin the delivery of high quality and safe services across all health and social care providers, leading to improved health outcomes for patients.
- The Department of Health plays a vital role in providing good governance in the sector and the aegis bodies under its remit. Effective governance structures and regulatory frameworks support improve monitoring, performance and accountability.
- Strengthening our partnership with the HSE and other agencies results in more productive, efficient health and social care services that provide better value for money.



### Actions and Outcomes

- » Deepen our **partnerships** and ways of working with our agencies, government departments and other stakeholders.
- » Enhance **agency performance and capability** including conducting Periodic Critical Reviews on aegis bodies.
- » Strengthen **governance** of the HSE and ensure **alignment** with governmental priorities by enacting the Health (Amendment) Bill.
- » Develop the Department's **performance oversight** role in a more strategic outcome-based direction through implementation of the Health Service Performance Assessment (HSPA) Framework.
- » **Promote productivity** by continuing to support the work of the Savings and Productivity Taskforce and ensuring full transparency in published data on hospital productivity and use of public funds.
- » **Maximise the impact of the existing health and social care workforce** through development of advanced practice, optimisation of skill mix and scoping the introduction of new roles.
- » Implement the recommendations of the Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on the **Rising Cost of Health-Related Claims**.





- » **Deepen collaboration between the healthcare systems** on the island of Ireland, building on the model and success of the all-island paediatric cardiac service into other bespoke all-island services.
- » Build strategic collaborations and alliances with **EU partners** to develop policy and legislation on cross border health threats, health products, disease prevention and the promotion of good health.
- » Prioritise **Patient safety** with the introduction of a court supervised mediation-based process for managing neonatal brain injury medical negligence cases and consider establishing a dedicated medical negligence court.
- » Introduce legislation for **Protection of Liberty Safeguards** for the health and social care sector.
- » Publish a national policy and introduce legislation on **adult safeguarding** for the health and social care sector.
- » **Consult with and involve persons with disabilities** in the development of legislation which affects them, through their representative organisations, in line with our legal obligations arising from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- » Progress a **review and reform of the Dentists Act 1985** to strengthen the regulatory framework, the regulator and governance and oversight of the dental sector.
- » Support the work of the 'Non-Statutory Inquiry into the Licensing and **Use of Sodium Valproate** in Women of Child-Bearing Potential in the State.'
- » Develop and lead on **nursing policy**, including the [Framework for Safe Nurse Staffing and Skill Mix](#) in long-term residential and community care settings, and developing integrated career pathways for nursing/midwifery.
- » Prepare for and implement the Departments programme for the **Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU** (July to December 2026) and support the wider Government objectives and priorities.
- » Utilise evidence, including outputs from the Workforce Planning Projection Model to inform **workforce planning** activities, including expanding the scope and capacity of the Workforce Model.

# Strategic Priority 5

## Evolve to Meet Future Challenges and Opportunities

### Why is this a priority?

- A high-performing Department is essential to support the delivery of all of our strategic and operational priorities. Ensuring staff are valued and empowered improves efficiency and productivity, allowing them to contribute to the achievement of the Department's goals.
- Embedding innovation and utilising data and emerging technology will strengthen the Department's ability to develop policy and make evidence-informed decisions.
- Enhancing capabilities in areas such as corporate governance, risk management and data protection results in a stronger operational structure, enabling the Department to perform its functions to the highest standard.

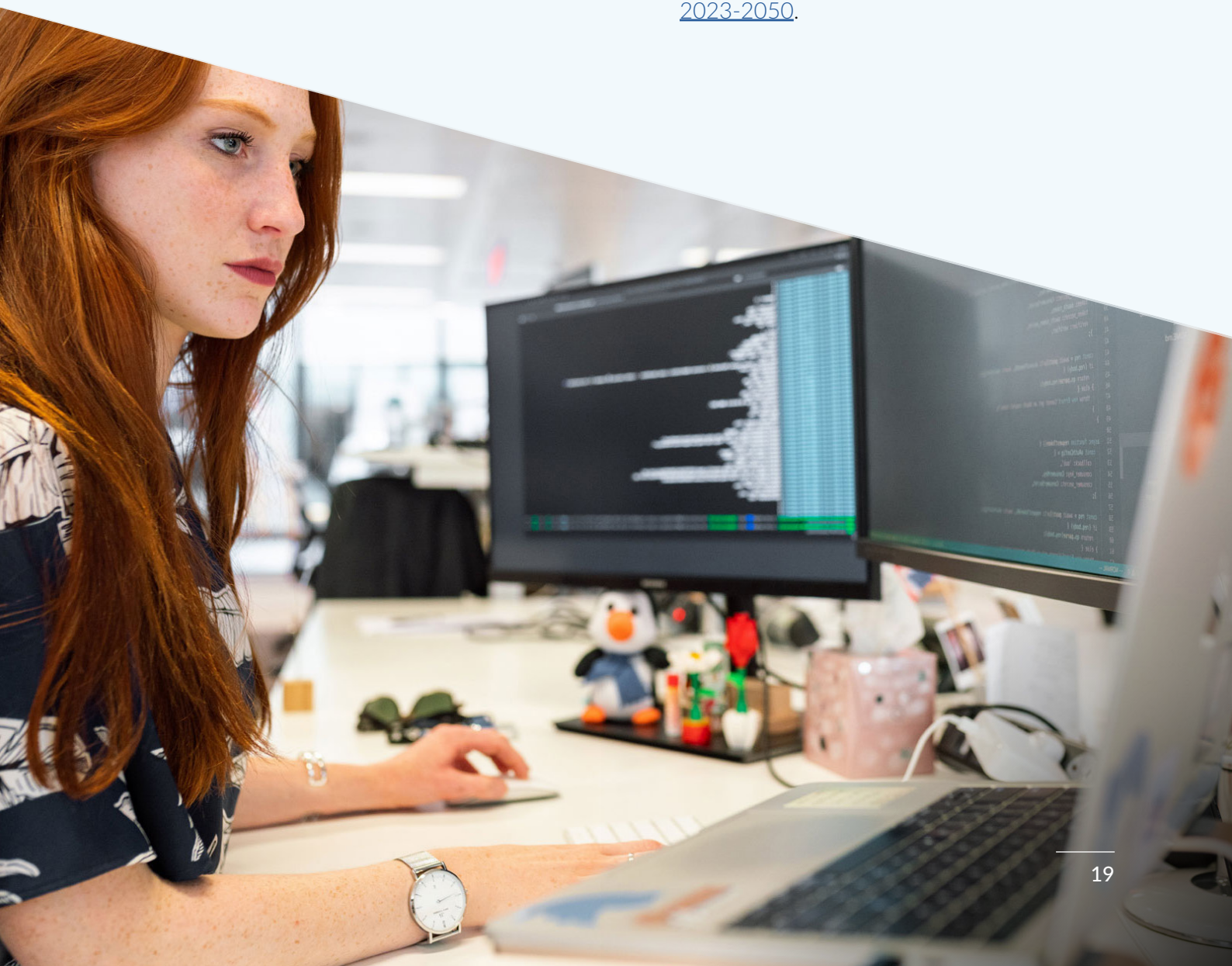


### Actions and Outcomes

- » Follow the principles set out in [Civil Service Renewal 2030](#) to ensure an innovative, agile Department that improves the lives of people in Ireland.
- » **Become a more open Department** through increased public, patient and stakeholder engagement, participation and empowerment.
- » **Utilise an evidence base approach** to inform and support strategic policy development through enhanced data management, analysis, research and evaluation.
- » **Promote a culture of innovation** to support new and enhanced ways of working.
- » Embed and evolve our **HR People Strategy**, ensuring it remains aligned with organisational goals, strengthen talent management practices, champion diversity and foster a culture of inclusivity and empowerment to meet future challenges and remain an employer of choice.
- » Review internal processes and identify potential **efficiencies and improvements** in our statutory functions such as responding to Parliamentary Questions, Freedom of Information requests and public representations to the Minister.



- » Ensure that the Department and its agencies comply with the **Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty**, including identifying and addressing any issues arising and reporting on developments in our Annual Reports.
- » Recognise and embed the **specific needs of the Disability sector** in a range of policies and action areas across the Department.
- » Ensure adherence to the Department's **Corporate Governance Framework** and promote awareness and work to ensure compliance with **data protection** obligations.
- » Explore the use of **Artificial Intelligence** to enhance internal productivity, streamline workflows, and support more efficient operations across the Department.
- » Strengthen our approach to **Risk Management** by embedding the Department's Risk Management Framework and supporting the Risk Committee in its oversight role to ensure effective governance, assurance, and responsiveness to emerging risks.
- » Progress **ICT, accommodation, and internal services** to support core functions and future needs with a focus on cyber security, business continuity, green initiatives and blended working.
- » Ireland has adopted a whole-of-Government approach to meeting its **climate commitments**. Those objectives are being taken forward by the Department and the health sector through the Climate Action Plan process, the Health Sectoral Adaptation Plan and the [HSE Climate Action Strategy 2023-2050](#).



# Appendix I: Programme for Government Commitments

The Programme for Government: [Securing Ireland's Future](#) was published in January 2025 and contains commitments relating to a wide range of sectors, including health and social care.

# Appendix II: Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Health

A list of bodies under the aegis of the Department of Health can be found here: [Bodies under the aegis of the Department of Health](#).





**An Roinn Sláinte**  
Department of Health