



Message from the Tánaiste

The Tánaiste, Ms Mary Harney, TD, has been appointed Minister for Health and Children with effect from 29th September, 2004. On taking up her role, the Tánaiste welcomed the challenges presented by the Health Service Reform Programme. "The challenge now is to implement the reform. My commitment to implementing the reforms is driven with only one motive in mind: the patients' interests" said the Tánaiste. "The reform provides us with challenges but more importantly with opportunities to change not just the structures but how we approach problems and decisions in the health services in the future. The high quality, commitment and dedication of all health service staff is proof that there is capacity to change. The new structures enable innovative approaches to be taken in the future. I look forward to working with the health service staff in this new era. The unprecedented nature of structural reforms being put into place directly complements the Government's established record of financial investment in the improvement of health and personal social services over many years. Investment, new structures and the opportunity to change how we work are some of the vital ingredients needed to improve the quality and experiences of the health service for patients, clients and the public and equally make the health services an attractive environment in which to work.

I welcome the work undertaken to date by my own Department on the drafting of legislation for the new structures, the establishment of HIQA, Governance and the restructuring of the Department. In addition, my Department and the interim HSE continue their important work on Financial Transition, Service Planning, Streamlining agencies, HR/IR, Population Health to put in place a changed approach to the management and delivery of services." said the Tánaiste

Recent Developments

The momentum for the Health Service Reform Programme continues to gather pace as the vision behind the reform programme is translated into action. A number of critical milestones have been reached recently including:

- Decision that the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) headquarters will be based in Cork City.

- Appointment of Mr Pat McGrath as chairperson of the HIQA. Mr McGrath is Group Managing Director of the Project Management group (PM), which employs over 1,100 people in Ireland, UK, Poland and other areas of Europe; he has extensive management experience and is excellently qualified for the role.

Continued overleaf

- In her capacity as Minister for Health and Children, The Tánaiste now takes over from her predecessor, Minister Micheál Martin TD, as chairperson of the National Steering Committee for the Health Service Reform Programme.
- Ms. Helen Murray has been appointed to the Department as Information Project Officer for the reform programme and will be responsible for developing and managing the reform programme communications strategy.

Reform Outlook

The following key developments are expected to take place in the near future:

- **Legislation:** Publication of the bill that will establish the new health service structures.
- **HIQA:** A key policy aim of the national Health Strategy is to deliver high quality services that are based on evidence-supported best practice. The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is being established to advance this aim. It is envisaged that the HIQA will have three distinct but related functions.
 - Carrying out the health information functions assigned in the National Health Information Strategy particularly in the assessment of major developments in information and ICT and in the setting of standards for the development of information systems;
 - Promoting quality improvement and quality assurance programmes and implementing accreditation within the health service; and
 - Developing capacity in the system to undertake health technology assessment.

The next steps will be the appointment of a Project Officer to make arrangements for the establishment of the HIQA and the nomination of a Board.

- **National Consultative Forum:** The forum will take place on November 24th and will be attended by a broad range of interests, both statutory and voluntary from the health and personal social services areas. This unique event provides the opportunity for comment on progress on the implementation of the health strategy including the reform programme and to review emerging trends.

Focus on Reform

Do you know about the Streamlining of Agencies?

As part of the Health Service Reform Programme a number of agencies will be streamlined into the HSE on its establishment day. The following agencies have been identified for streamlining in the short term in that context:

Health Service Employers Agency, The Health Boards Executive, the Office of Health Management, Comhairle na nOispideal, the GMS (Payments) Board, and the National Disease Surveillance Centre.

Find Out More

Visit our website www.healthreform.ie to keep up to date on the latest news and developments regarding the health reform programme.

On behalf of the Health Service Reform Programme

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