
Appendix 3

**Description of major
functional groupings**

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In considering the 58 individual agencies reviewed as part of the Audit, it was clear that the health system carries out a significant range of critical functions. Agencies were classified under each function on the basis of information supplied by them or set out in their terms of establishment. In certain cases, it was unclear whether or not an agency had a primary function. To avoid arbitrary or misleading assignment of primary functions, some agencies appear in more than one functional area. A detailed analysis of agency functions, including overlaps, interdependencies and inter-relationships was carried out. The results of this analysis are set out in Appendix 6 following. The agencies were classified as follows:

Development and implementation of national strategies and policies

These agencies have largely been established to strengthen system support for the particular policy areas concerned. Such agencies are typically involved in:

- Contributing to, or developing, national strategies for their particular area of interest/expertise
- Driving and coordinating the implementation of a national strategy
- Advising the Minister/Department of Health and Children in relation to a particular area of interest
- Liaison with international and inter-sectoral bodies

Relevant agencies:

Crisis Pregnancy Agency, National Children's Advisory Council, National Council on Ageing and Older Persons, Office of Tobacco Control, Women's Health Council

National advisory and coordinating functions

In addition to the agencies established to support particular national strategies or policies as described above, there are a number of discrete agencies that have been established to provide specialist input at a national level in the following areas:

- Advice to the Minister/Department of Health and Children in relation to a specialist area of interest
- Interdepartmental or international specialist coordinating agencies e.g. having a liaison role with international and inter-sectoral bodies in relation to specialist areas. Unlike the agencies established to support particular national strategies or policies, these agencies are usually involved in other functions as well as their coordinating role

Relevant agencies:

Advisory

Comhairle na nOspidéal, National Hospitals Agency (in development), Poisons Council

Coordinating — interdepartmental

Food Safety Authority of Ireland, National Children's Office, Special Residential Services Board

Coordinating — international

Food Safety Promotion Board, Health Research Board, Institute of Public Health

Service planning and delivery (including finance)

Service planning and commissioning, service delivery and service monitoring and evaluation are carried out across a wide range of health and social services provided by several agencies. These services can be categorised as follows:

- National/centralised services (e.g. blood transfusion services)
- Regional services (e.g. health and social services provided by, or through, each of the health boards)
- Stand-alone services

Relevant agencies:

National

Adoption Board, Irish Blood Transfusion Services Board, Irish Medicines Board, Special Services Residential Board

Regional

Eastern Regional Health Authority, Area Health Boards (3), Regional Health Boards (7)

Other

Board for the Employment of the Blind, Drug Treatment Centre Board, Hospital Bodies Administrative Bureau, Hospitals Trust Board, Statute-based Hospitals (6)

Shared/joint services

A limited number of services are currently delivered on a shared or joint basis in the Irish health care system. These include:

- Traditional shared services including back-office processes such as payroll
- Delivery of front-line services on a joint basis, e.g. breast screening

Relevant agencies:

Traditional shared services

GMS Payments Board, EHSS

Joint service delivery

HeBE, National Breast Screening Board

System-wide HR

The following functions are carried out by a number of agencies on a system-wide basis:

- National negotiations on pay and employment conditions
- Industrial relations
- Recruitment and retention

- Organisational and personal development
- Manpower planning

Relevant agencies:

Health Services Employer's Agency, Office for Health Management

Professional registration, regulation and development

The registration, regulation and development of professional groupings is a function which contributes to both quality of care and the protection of the patient/client, in addition to supporting the professions involved. Agencies in this area deal with matters which include:

- Maintenance of registers of practicing professionals
- Setting of professional guidelines and standards for conduct
- Conducting fitness to practice inquiries
- Setting of professional qualifications
- Accreditation of courses and training bodies
- Regulation of number and type of posts

Relevant agencies:

Comhairle na nOspidéal, Dental Council, Medical Council, National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery, National Social Work Qualifications Board, Nursing Board, Opticians Board, Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, Post-graduate Medical and Dental Board, Pre-hospital Emergency Care Council

Monitoring and inspection (including quality assurance)

Agencies involved carry out functions under two broad categories:

Inspection/quality control

- Inspection of premises
- Setting of guidelines and standards for practice
- Monitoring of particular organisations and management of a particular service
- Evaluating the quality and responsiveness of services
- Monitoring of standards set

Quality assurance/service evaluation

- Setting of quality and accreditation standards
- Operation of accreditation and other quality programmes
- Accreditation of organisations
- Service evaluation and review

Relevant agencies:*Inspection/quality control*

Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Irish Medicines Board, Office of Tobacco Control, Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, Social Services Inspectorate, Mental Health Commission

Quality assurance/monitoring and evaluation

HIQA (in development), Irish Health Services Accreditation Body

Monitoring and evaluation

Area Health Boards, ERHA, Regional Health Boards

Research and development

Agencies involved in research and development in the health service typically:

- Commission specialist research
- Carry out research
- Disseminate research findings

Relevant agencies:

Food Safety Authority of Ireland, Food Safety Promotion Board, Health Research Board, Irish Blood Transfusion Service Board, Office of Tobacco Control, Statute-based hospitals (6), Health Services Employers Agency, Institute of Public Health

Health information

Agencies involved in health information typically:

- Compile relevant statistics
- Identify, collect, classify, record and store information
- Promote and facilitate the use of stored data
- Provide information to the media or public

Relevant agencies:

GMS Payments Board, National Cancer Registry, National Disease Surveillance Centre, HIQA (in development)