DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND CHILDREN
AN ROINN SLÁINTE AGUS LEANAÍ

The Health Service Reform Programme

Health Strategy

In 2001 the Government announced its Health Strategy, *Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You*, to provide vision and strategic direction for the development of the health and personal social services.

Vision

The *Vision* expressed in *Quality and Fairness* is for a Health System that:

- supports and empowers you, your family and community to achieve your full health potential,
- is there when you need it, that is fair and that you can trust,
- encourages you to have your say, listens to you and ensures that your views are taken into account.

Goals

The Strategy set out key objectives for the health system, based on four national goals:

- Better Health for Everyone
- Fair Access
- Responsive and Appropriate Care
- High Performance

Frameworks for Change

It was recognised that in order to achieve these goals the health system would need to be reformed; the following areas were identified as the core Frameworks for Change:

- Reforming the acute hospital system
- Funding the health system
- Strengthening primary care
- Developing human resources
- Organisational reform
- Developing information

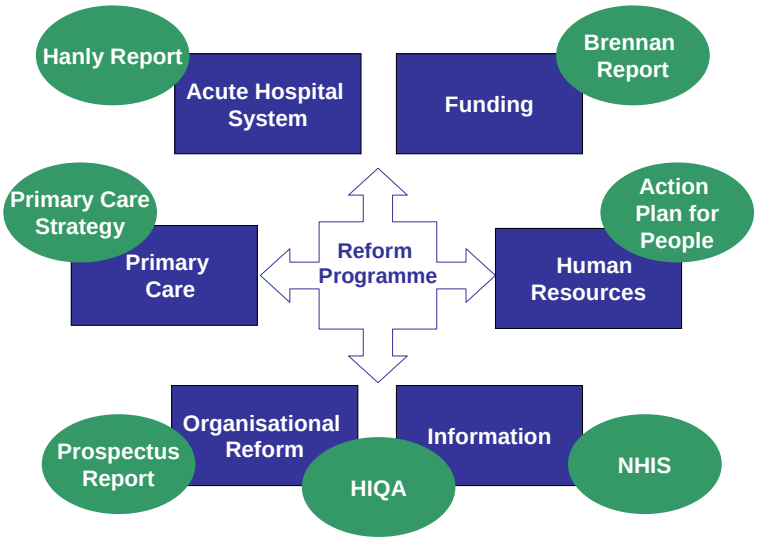
Reform Programme Background

The *Health Service Reform Programme*, announced in June 2003, outlined a range of reforms to help deliver a more responsive, adaptable health system that meets the needs of the population effectively and at an affordable cost.

The structural aspects of the Reform Programme emerged largely from the recommendations in:

- An independent audit of the organisational structures and functions in the health system (Prospectus Report).
- Examination and evaluation of the financial systems, practices and procedures in the health services (Brennan Report).

It also reflects Government decisions in relation to reforming the other areas outlined as Frameworks for Change:



Following the Government decision, an information and consultation exercise was undertaken which directly reached over 20,000 staff working in the health system.

Key Elements of Reform

The *Health Service Reform Programme* is focused on improving patient care, providing better value for money and enhancing health care management. Key elements include:

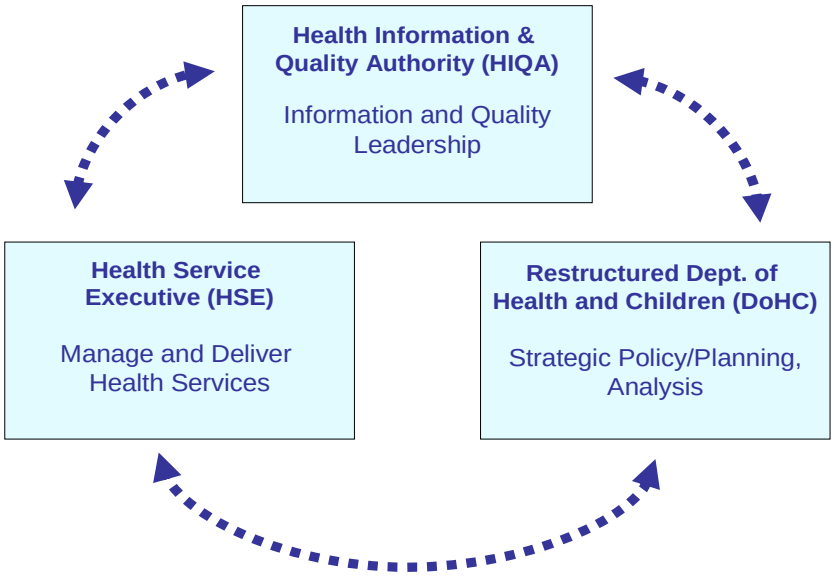
- Rationalisation of health service agencies to reduce fragmentation, including abolition of the health board/authority structures.
- Establishment of a Health Service Executive (HSE) as a single national entity to manage the health services.
- Reorganisation of the Department of Health and Children, to help improve policy development and oversight.
- Establishment of a Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) to promote quality care throughout the health system.
- Strengthening governance and accountability across the system.
- Modernisation of supporting processes (Service Planning; Management Reporting etc.) so that they are in line with recognised international best practice.

Reform Programme Deliverables

- An improved health system which provides consistent national, regional and local patient-centred care;
- A better planned, managed and performance measured system in which needs, services, funding and outcomes are systematically interlinked;
- A health system which maximises the use of resources by delivering the right care in the right setting; and
- Provides a better working environment for staff.

Structures and Roles

In the reformed health system the key new/restructured bodies are the Health Service Executive, the Health Information & Quality Authority and the Department of Health and Children.



Health Service Executive

The Health Service Executive, established on 1 January 2005, is the first ever body charged with managing the operation of the health service as a unified system bringing together the roles of a number of agencies that previously operated as separate entities.

The objective of the Executive is:

"to use the resources available to it in the most beneficial, effective and efficient manner to improve, promote and protect the health and welfare of the public."

The HSE is a single organisation responsible for ensuring access to cost effective and consistently high quality health and personal social services throughout the country, tasked with making the best use of resources allocated by Government. The HSE is the largest employer in the State, employing over 100,000 people either directly or indirectly and with a budget in excess of €12 billion.

Health Information & Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), was established on 15th May 2007. HIQA will promote the delivery of health and personal social services by setting and monitoring standards for service delivery and undertaking special investigations on issues relating to patient safety.

HIQA incorporates the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services with specific statutory functions in relation to residential care of children, older people and people with disabilities and the Irish Health Services Accreditation Board.

The main functions of HIQA include:

- Setting standards
- Monitoring healthcare quality
- Health Information
- Health Technology Assessment

Department of Health and Children

The Department is responsible for supporting the Minister for Health and Children, who is politically accountable to the Oireachtas for the health service

In November 2005, the Department was restructured to enable it to refocus activities on strategic overview, policy analysis and evaluation and providing advice to the Government on health policy.

The Office of the Minister for Children was created within the Department in December 2005 to maximise the co-ordination of policies for children and young persons and to provide a strong focus at the highest level. The Office brings together a range of functions from the Departments of Health and Children; Justice Equality and Law Reform; and Education and Science.

Key function of the Department include:

- Supporting the Minister in setting the objectives for health policy, the overall strategy for achieving them, the means of financing and ensuring that Government objectives are met.
- Strategic policy and planning, seeking to ensure that the population's health is enhanced, in a "whole of government'" approach to healthcare.
- Supporting the Minister in reviewing the HSE's annual Service Plan and three year Corporate Plan; analysing if they concur with Government policies and objectives and whether the health service is delivering targeted outcomes and value for money.
- Providing an effective legislative and regulatory framework for the health system.

The Department receives monthly reports from the HSE on progress made against the annual service plan and regular top level meetings take place as part of the monitoring process and to inform policy development.

The Department, HSE and HIQA interact closely in implementing the Health Service Reform Programme.

Health Reform Legislation

The Health Reform Programme is supported by legislation, principally the Health Acts 2004 and 2007. This legislation enabled the establishment of the HSE and HIQA, the abolition of the Health Boards and other bodies and made provision for consultation and handling of complaints.

Health Act 2004

The Health Act 2004, enacted in December 2004, provides the legal framework underpinning the reform of the health services into a single unified system:

- Effective 1st January 2005, the Health Service Executive was established and assumed responsibility for the management and delivery of the health and personal social services.
- The Eastern Regional Health Authority, health boards, area health boards and other agencies set out in the Act were dissolved and their functions, staff, and assets were transferred to the HSE.
- The object and functions of the HSE were set out including preparing and submitting a three year Corporate Plan, annual Service Plans and a Code of Governance to the Minister for approval and publishing an Annual Report and financial statement.

The Act also includes provisions for the following:

- Establishing Regional Health Forums to allow public representatives to share their views with the HSE regarding how services are being managed and delivered.
- Setting up a statutory complaints framework.

Health Act 2007

The Health Act 2007, enacted in April 2007, provided for the establishment of the Health Information and Quality Authority on a statutory basis incorporating the Office of the Chief Inspector of Social Services and the Irish Health Services Accreditation Board.

The Act also includes provision for *protected disclosures*, or "whistleblowing" safeguards, whereby employees making protected disclosures in good faith and on reasonable grounds are protected from penalisation in the workplace and from civil liability.

Other Legislation/Regulation

Regulations establising the Regional Health Forums and setting standards for the HSE in dealing with members of the Houses of the Oireachtas were made in 2005. In 2006, regulations were made which established a statutory complaints process for the health service. The regulations, which took efect from 1st January 2007, are designed to ensure high and uniform standards of complaints management.

Other recent legislation contributing to the Reform Programme include:

- Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005
- Medical Practitioners Act 2007
- Pharmacy Act 2007

Widespread consultation took place during the preparation of this legislation which is designed to modernise service delivery and ensure patient safety.

For More Information:

Health Reform:	www.healthreform.ie
Department of Health and Children:	www.dohc.ie
Health Service Executive:	www.hse.ie

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