



Príomhoifigeach Faisnéise

Oifig an Phríomhoifigeach Faisnéise,
FSS, Ospidéal Dr Steevens,
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2nd February 2022

Mr. Denis Naughten
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re: PQ ref 2872/22

“To ask the Minister for Health his policy on the utilisation of health data including big data and on biotechnology within the health sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Naughten,

Thank you for your above correspondence which has been referred to my office for response. The HSE recognises the clinical, operational, and wider societal value of the health data it collects during the administration of its services to the public.

Due to the volumes of data available, the use of big data technologies and associated design principals is a key enabler in realising the value of this data for the efficient running of the health service and the provision of the best possible care to the public. In 2019, the HSE founded the Integrated Information Service (IIS) under the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OoCIO) to provide the technical, governance, and organisational expertise required to make the best use of “big data” within the HSE. A key component of this has been the creation by the IIS of a central cloud based platform for the ingestion, storage, processing, and dissemination of large volumes of data from a variety of sources within the health system. This cloud based platform is colloquially referred to as the “Data Lake” within the HSE and has been has played a key role in the HSE’s response to the Covid pandemic supporting areas such as test and trace, vaccinations, digital Covid cert production, etc.

The Data Lake has been designed and implemented with security, extensibility, and interoperability as core design principals to allow for its growing secure use and integration with other eHealth technologies.

The “Data Lake” also acts as a data dissemination point for the secure provision of data to relevant stakeholders such as the Department of Health, Central Statistics Office, other government departments, third level institutions etc. Given the nature of the data available to it within the Data Lake, the HSE is committed to ensuring that



legal and best practice requirements of data protection, governance, and cyber security are met and where possible exceeded.

The HSE will also utilise external expertise to augment and support the requirements within the biotech domain, elements of this data can also be ingested into the data lake thus providing a complete data set.

If you feel that the question has not been fully answered or you require any further clarity, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Fran Thompson' is written over a horizontal line.

Fran Thompson,
Interim Chief Information Officer, OoCIO, HSE.