Office of the Organisational Change Unit

(Health Regions Programme)

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Date: 6th February 2025

To: Deputy Cian O'Callaghan

Re: PQ 1924/25

Due date: 06/02/2025

PQ 1924/25

To ask the Minister for Health to provide a detailed update on implementation of the new HSE health regions; if the hospital groups and CHOs have been stood down; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

  -Cian O'Callaghan (cian.ocallaghan@oireachtas.ie)

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

In line with Sláintecare Report 2017 objectives, the implementation of HSE Health Regions involves the establishment of six regions with responsibility for the planning and coordinated delivery of health and social care services within their respective defined geographies. These arrangements aim to improve the health service's ability to deliver timely integrated care to patients and service users, care that is planned and funded in line with their needs at regional and local level.

Health Regions were established on 4 March 2024.

Implementation update

- The design of the Health Regions Executive Management Team (EMT) structure was agreed and all six Regional Executive Officers (REOs) were in place by mid-April 2024. Twenty Integrated Healthcare Areas (IHAs) have been agreed as geographic sub-components of the Health Regions, with IHA Managers taking up posts from 1st October 2024. The purpose of the Integrated Health Areas is to be an enabler in the delivery of integrated care at local level, across the care process, for all patients and service users.

- From 1st October 2024 to 3rd March 2025, interim arrangements for Integrated Healthcare Areas (IHAs) are in place with a plan to implement agreed future state structures towards the end of Q1 2025.

- Hospital Groups (HG) and Community Health Organisations (CHOs) were stood down from 1st October 2024 with the exception of the South West will transition to new arrangements towards the end of Q1 2025.

- Responsibility and accountability has transferred from the CHOs and HG Senior Management Teams to the new Health Region and Integrated Health Area Managers. Substantial progress has been in appointing the wider Regional Management Teams and we are concluding the various recruitment processes at present.

- The geographic realignment of HGs was completed at the end of February 2024. The geographic realignment of staff within former CHOs is being progressed by the REOs in their Health Regions.

- The high-level framework that sets out the service arrangements within the IHAs was approved in December 2024 by the Health Regions Steering Group, following extensive collaboration with key stakeholders, including patients and service users, internal clinical and operational representatives, Heads of Service, General Managers, and voluntary providers. Health Regions are currently mapping the framework for their individual regions.

- An expert group chaired by the Department of Health tasked with developing a population-based resource allocation methodology has been established and is working to develop the new methodology.

- Patients and service users are at the heart of the new reform design. There are patients and service users on our project steering groups that have developed a Patient and Service User Engagement Model for the new health regions. Implementation has commenced. Recruitment is underway for the Patient and Service User Partnership Leads for each region and for a National Patient and Service User Lead.

- A proposal on partnership arrangements with Voluntary Organisations has been approved and work is ongoing to implement this, recognising the importance of the voluntary sector.

- A programme of work is in place led by our Human Resources function to ensure the workforce changes are supported. We recognise this is very substantial change programme that impacts on our people and as a result our HR function are actively engaged in the programme. Staff transition at national and regional level is underpinned by agreed reassignment principles.

- Change and Innovation Hubs have been established within each Health Region to provide the necessary expertise and change management support to the Health Regions and front line teams to support the successful implementation of the Health Regions.

- In line with the HSE Health Regions Implementation Plan, the Department of Health has agreed to increase the number of Regional Health Forums from four to six to reflect the Health Region geographies. This will ensure alignment between the regions and elected representatives in that region.

- A programme evaluation (which assesses both the process and outcomes) has commenced and is being led by the Department of Health. The HSE is committed to ensuring ongoing independent evaluation of the reform programme and outcomes are taken on board as the programme progresses.

Engagement on an ongoing basis with a wide range of stakeholders remains a key programme priority. There will be a continued emphasis on embracing new ways of working across multi-disciplinary teams to deliver the key objectives of patient-centred integrated care.

While the Health Regions and IHAs are now established, the programme continues to ensure that the reforms are implemented in a consistent and timely way to achieve the core Sláintecare objectives.

Yours sincerely,

Damien McCallion

Chief Technology and Transformation Officer and Deputy CEO