

REGIONAL HEALTH FORUM - DUBLIN NORTH EAST

FÓRAM RÉIGIÚNACH SLÁINTE - BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH AGUS AN TÓIRTHUISCEART

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 24TH JULY, 2023 AT 2:00PM

IN THE BOARDROOM, HSE OFFICES, BECTIVE STREET, KELLS, CO. MEATH
& VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members Present (*in person*)

Cllr. Adrian Henchy

Cllr. Gillian Toole

Members Present (*online*)

Cllr. Daryl Barron

Cllr. Michelle Hall

Cllr. Howard Mahony

Cllr. Trevor Smith

Cllr. Mary Callaghan

Cllr. Deirdre Heney

Cllr. Brigid Manton

Cllr. Kieran Dennison

Cllr. Tom Kitt

Cllr. David Maxwell

Apologies

Cllr. Christy Burke

Cllr. Ray McAdam

Cllr. Aoibhinn Tormey

Cllr. Donna Cooney

Cllr. Kevin Meenan

Cllr. Sean Kelly

Cllr. Emer Tóibín

Not in attendance

Cllr. Tom Behan

Cllr. Michael Gallagher

Cllr. Patricia Roe

Cllr. Séamus Coyle

Cllr. Conor Keelan

Cllr. Aiden Fitzpatrick

Cllr. Brian McKenna

HSE Representatives Present (*in person*)

Mr. Liam McHale, Communications and Parliamentary Affairs, CHO Dublin North City & County

Ms. Martina O'Byrne, Head of HR, Midlands Louth Meath CHO

Mr. Frank Kennedy, Disability Manager, Meath

Ms. Katherine Kellett, Regional Health Office – HSE DNE

Ms. Lorraine Timmons, Regional Health Office – HSE DNE

HSE Representatives Present (*online*)

Ms. Mellany McLoone, Chief Officer, CHO Dublin North City & County

Ms. Sarah McCormack, National Healthy Ireland Lead, Health & Wellbeing

Pelumi Ologuniger, Ireland East Hospital Group

Cllr. Adrian Henchy chaired the meeting.

1. Election of Chairperson

Cllr. Adrian Henchy, Chairperson, sought nominations for the position of Chairperson of the Forum.

Cllr. Adrian Henchy was nominated for the position on the proposal of Cllr. Kieran Dennison and seconded by Cllr. Deirdre Heney.

As there were no other nominations for the position of Chairperson, Cllr. Henchy was declared re-elected as Chairperson.

2. Election of Vice Chairperson

Cllr. Adrian Henchy, Chairperson, sought nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson of the Forum.

Cllr. Michelle Hall was nominated for the position on the proposal of Cllr. Kieran Dennison and seconded by Cllr. Gillian Toole.

Cllr. Hall withdrew her nomination.

Cllr. Gillian Toole was nominated for the position on the proposal of Cllr. Kieran Dennison and seconded by Cllr. Howard Mahony.

As there were no other nominations for the position of Vice Chairperson, Cllr. Toole was declared elected as Vice Chairperson.

3. Adoption of minutes of meeting held on Monday, 22nd May, 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 22nd May, 2023 were adopted by the Forum on the proposal of Cllr. Gillian Toole and seconded by Cllr. Kieran Dennison.

Cllr. Gillian Toole requested details on funding for respite services in County Meath. It was agreed that the Disability Manager would speak to Cllr. Toole directly.

4. Health Service Executive Updates

Mr. Liam McHale, Communications and Parliamentary Affairs, CHO Dublin North City and County, gave a report to the meeting which dealt with the following:

- HSE publishes 2022 Annual Report and Annual Financial Statements;
- HSE launches Health Services Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan;
- HSE NCCP launches new guideline for breast cancer treatment;
- Avoid sick and dead birds when out and about over Summer.

The following outlines comments and queries raised by members and responses from HSE representatives:

Reports of staff welfare concerns in the HSE and mechanisms in place for staff who are experiencing issues

The members was advised to contact the Chief Officer's office directly.

Delays in recruitment process

It was agreed that the HR Manager would discuss this matter with the member directly.

The report was noted by the Forum.

5. Presentation on Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan

Ms. Sarah McCormack, National Healthy Ireland Lead, Health & Wellbeing, gave a presentation to members on the Healthy Ireland Implementation Plans.

The following outlines comments and queries raised by members and responses from Ms. McCormack and HSE representatives.

Concerns in relation to implementation of plan and how this will be managed and rolled out

In 2013, the Department of Health published *Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 – 2025* which focused on living healthier lifestyles and preventing chronic disease. It highlighted the need to focus on the improvement of individuals' health and wellbeing by creating healthier environments that promote and support people to adopt healthy behaviours.

Since the publication of the framework, significant progress has been made to implement its vision within the HSE and to create a shift in the approach to delivering healthcare.

The *Health Services Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2023–2027* builds on previous plans and identifies four strategic priority areas with six key principles and 72 key actions. It recognises the implementation of the forthcoming Health Regions and the need for health and wellbeing to be integrated and embedded into the operational delivery of health services across the Regions in partnership with communities. It represents an important milestone in our effort to remain focused on prevention as well as treatment. It gives direction to promote health and wellbeing and prevent chronic disease in health services and further strengthens partnerships as we work together to improve the health of our growing population.

Concerns in relation to health and wellbeing for those in hospitals or long stay units and efforts to improve

It is recognised, for the older population in particular, a level of deterioration can happen quite rapidly when during a hospital stay and while confined to a bed. Work takes place within hospitals to ensure patients try to maintain their physical activity levels to some extent, e.g. getting up every day, getting dressed, etc.

Difficulty in getting appointments with GPs

Agreement in relation to challenges for health services in relation to general practice and waiting lists and recognition of possible deterioration of health in some instances while waiting for services.

HSE stance on vaping and impact on services

Vaping is becoming a huge challenge within the HSE and although great work has taken place with the Tobacco Free Ireland Programme, and the current smoking prevalence has been reduced 18%, the trend in the use of e-cigarettes is a growing concern internationally.

Legislation is currently in progress to regulate the sale and marketing of e-cigarettes and in addition the HSE are working with a number of agencies on programmes and resources to tackle the problem.

The best thing you can do for your health is not to smoke or vape. The HSE offer free support and advice on options that help with nicotine withdrawal.

Request for further details on the Healthy Ireland programme and local authorities
Healthy Ireland takes a 'whole of Government' and 'whole of society' approach and works collaboratively with Government departments, local authorities, public bodies, schools and education institutions, sports, voluntary and community groups to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone in Ireland.

In 2016, the Government approved the Healthy Ireland Fund (HIF) to support the implementation of health and wellbeing programmes and projects. The HIF is rolled out locally via the 31 local authorities and new Healthy City / County Co-ordinators have been established in each area.

Cross referencing of implementation plans against legislation and public policy
HSE policy leads work in collaboration with the policy division of the Department of Health to constantly examine all the evidence and any risk factors. Any legislation is evidence-based and evaluated prior to implementation.

More involvement of community pharmacies in terms of health promotion
The HSE welcome every organisation getting involved in the delivery of supporting the population.

6. Regional Health Forum – Annual Report 2022-2023

The report was noted by the members.

7. Consideration of Committee(s) of Forum

It was agreed that the Forum would continue with one Committee.

8. Motions

That the HSE and the Department of Education and Skills begin a pilot scheme of Spell to Communicate (S2C) in the Louth / Meath areas to assist and support families and children waiting for public speech and language therapy services?

Cllr. Gillian Toole

Cllr. Gillian Toole outlined the context to her Motion and gave the background to how Spell to Communicate (S2C) and the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM) originated and developed in the US, together with a description of how the method works in practice.

She stated that this cognitive therapy has helped in many cases of people with autism who may be completely non-verbal or have very limited verbal skills, referencing that in some cases there is a misconception that people who cannot speak reliably are assessed as less intelligent. She outlined the benefits for professionals in assisting them to making a diagnosis for people with Autism, Tourette's Syndrome, developmental co-ordination Disorder and other conditions.

Acknowledging the lack of scientific evidence on the method, Cllr. Toole requested that the HSE commence a process of research, perhaps with a third level institution. She referred to the current waiting lists for services and the challenging behaviours being experienced by parents as well as the Constitution and treating all children of the nation equally.

Cllr. Michelle Hall referred lack of an evidence base for the service modal and as such cannot be used in schools. She also stated that there has been a lot of reluctance from professional organisations to endorse this particular intervention and that the Irish Association of Speech & Language Therapists (IASLT) have stated that S2C may be a form of facilitated communication.

Cllr. Hall stated that reports of positive outcomes are generally from people who are facilitating the therapy, not the actual persons it is being used on. She outlined that the Department of Education can only endorse evidence based interventions for children with autism, stating that there are numerous alternative interventions which are evidence based and if these were appropriately funded, there would be no need to introduce yet another method.

Cllr. Hall agreed with Cllr. Toole in relation to children that are non-verbal and their ability to communicate and proposed that if there was any organisation willing to carry out the research and there were schools with trained personnel, perhaps it could be introduced as a pilot scheme.

Cllr. Hall noted that as the intervention is not recommended by the IASLT, and is widely questioned around the world, she would be reluctant to endorse it.

Cllr. Brigid Manton stated that having worked in the educational system over the years, she has concerns on introducing a pilot program that is exclusively for one method.

She stated that not all children who are non-verbal have movement difficulties and that while prompting as a teaching method can be used in some circumstances, in actual fact, her experience would dictate that it's a combination of methods really that works best for all children. She spoke of special education teachers in the autism unit at her school and their general agreement that no single method alone will work; that it is necessary to employ a number of difference educational methods depending on the learning style and ability of the child.

Cllr. Manton stated that she accepted the response given to the Motion.

Cllr. Howard Mahony stated that Cllr. Toole is endeavouring to obtain support for her Motion in order to endorse some research and he had no objection to that.

However, after reading the response and listening to other members, he was now undecided. Cllr. Mahony requested a presentation on the matter in advance of the members making a decision.

The Chairperson, Cllr. Adrian Henchy, informed members that the response to the Motion was provided by Mr. Joe Ruane, Head of Service, Midlands Louth Meath CHO, but that he was absent for this meeting.

Ms. Martina O'Byrne, Head of HR, Midlands Louth Meath CHO, spoke about the gap in research and evidence and informed the meeting that there are currently no plans to introduce the intervention across the CHO.

Ms. Mellany McLoone, Chief Officer, CHO Dublin North City & County, concurred with the comments from the members and outlined the difficulties in getting a department to take responsibility for a pilot, issues around the provision of clinical governance and the reluctance of therapists to actively engage in this controversial method.

She expressed agreement with Cllr. Manton's comment that one size does not fit all and noted opinions about the model's varying effectiveness within the autism and special needs communities.

Ms. McLoone referred to a pilot autism protocol that is being trialled at present in CHO Dublin North City & County and in Community Healthcare West and suggested an update for members from a National Clinical Lead on Autism, stating that the information would provide some reassurance to members that the whole autism pathway is being explored.

Ms. McLoone also stated that she is very conscious of the huge challenges in relation to children's disability services at present and while the protocol is not a panacea, it is another solution that is being examined in terms of meeting the needs of children.

Cllr. Gillian Toole thanked members for their contributions, particularly those with expertise in the field. In reference to no one size fits all, Cllr. Toole stated that the current educational model works for some and does not work for others, therefore, some children are falling between multiple stools.

Cllr. Toole agreed to an update on the pilot autism protocol and welcomed any further information on the matter.

9. Questions

When will the Minister for Health, Department of Health, Health Service Executive and the National Immunisation Advisory Committee begin an immediate investigation into European Commission Excess mortality data and suspend administration of Covid-19 mRNA vaccines until completion of an investigation?

Cllr. Gillian Toole

Cllr. Gillian Toole outlined that the information provided in the response was only up to March 2023 and requested more recent data.

What was the itemised spend per CHO on Covid-19 PPE for the years 2020, 2021 and 2022? To include expired and unused products; sanitiser, gloves, goggles, ventilators et al?

Cllr. Gillian Toole

Cllr. Gillian Toole referenced the double entry on gloves in the response.

Ms. Mellany McLoone informed members that the costs outlined for PPE also include supplies for all private nursing homes and that there is separate expenditure in relation to Covid-19, therefore spending does not impact budgets in other services.

10. Chairperson's Correspondence

There was no business under this item.

11. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the Regional Health Forum - Dublin North East will take place on Monday, 25th September, 2024.

Signed:

_____ **Chairperson**