

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Annual Report 2023



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## Abbreviations

CHO	Community Healthcare Organisation	NPPP	National Policy Priority Programme
COPD	chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	NRT	nicotine replacement therapy
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools	NSHS	National Sexual Health Strategy
DoH	Department of Health	PACC	Physical Activity for People with Chronic Conditions
EBI	extended brief intervention	PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
FRC	Family Resource Centre	RCPI	Royal College of Physicians of Ireland
GP	general practitioner	RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
HEAL	Healthy Eating and Active Living	RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
HFME	Healthy Food Made Easy	SE&C	Stakeholder Engagement and Communications
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus	SHC	Sláintecare Healthy Communities
HP&I	Health Promotion and Improvement	SHCPP	Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme
HSE	Health Service Executive	SH:24	free online sexual health service
H&W	Health and Wellbeing	SMS	self-management support
ICGP	Irish College of General Practitioners	SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
IMSA	Irish Men's Sheds Association	STI	sexually transmitted infection
IT	information technology	TFIP	Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee	UK	United Kingdom
LDO	local development officer	UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
MECC	Making Every Contact Count	VOD	video on demand
MHFI	Men's Health Forum in Ireland	WCQ	We Can Quit
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment		
NGO	non-governmental organisation		

# Foreword

Helen Deely

*Assistant National Director, Health and Wellbeing*



The HSE Health and Wellbeing annual report for 2023 highlights our strategic achievements and ongoing efforts to promote community health and reduce health inequalities across Ireland. Aligned with the principles of Sláintecare reform, we are committed to moving from an illness-focused model to one that prioritises prevention, early intervention, and self-management of chronic disease.

Throughout 2023, we focused on several key areas. Research and evidence was utilised to effectively implement national Government policies and equip our teams with the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver impactful initiatives that address community health needs.

Collaboration with both voluntary and statutory organisations, such as schools, local authorities, Tusla, Sports Ireland, and the community and voluntary sector, has expanded our capacity to improve population health outcomes beyond mere traditional healthcare boundaries. These partnerships are pivotal in enhancing service delivery, reducing health disparities, and empowering communities to actively mobilise local involvement and empower citizens to self-care.

In targeting health inequalities, the evidence points to a clustering of behavioural risk factors of tobacco use, alcohol use, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity as well as physiological risk factors in areas of deprivation. People living in deprived areas are at much greater risk of developing multiple chronic diseases, thus creating greater demands on health services and dying younger. Through Sláintecare Healthy Communities, we continue to focus on delivering targeted interventions to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups within society and those most at risk of developing a chronic disease. Investment in prevention and early intervention has been integral to embedding behaviour change within

routine care for all healthcare professionals through the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) programme, for example.

Digital health technologies have played a crucial role in delivering precise interventions and enhancing accessibility to healthcare services. Initiatives like the QuitManager patient information system and online referral systems have streamlined processes and referrals. We remain committed to providing clear, accurate, and accessible health information through various platforms and media channels. Our continued investment in large-scale campaigns and informative websites ensures that the public remains informed and engaged in health and wellbeing initiatives. These include QUIT, MyChild.ie, AskAboutAlcohol.ie, MyOptions.ie, Man2Man.ie, Sexualwellbeing.ie and Healthpromotion.ie.

As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated staff, valued stakeholders, and collaborative partners for their unwavering support and commitment. Together, we have made significant strides towards creating healthier communities and reducing health disparities across Ireland.

Looking ahead, the introduction of six new Health Regions represents a transformative step in the HSE. Each Health Region will have the autonomy to develop and implement strategies addressing the social determinants of health for its local communities. We will embrace new ways of working to deliver on those strategies and work with our partners to promote healthier behaviours from early childhood to old age, thereby reducing the incidence of chronic diseases and improving the overall quality of life for our population.

# SECTION 1

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## HSE Health and Wellbeing



# SECTION 1

## HSE Health and Wellbeing

### Overview of Health and Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing (H&W) in the Health Service Executive (HSE) aims to provide services that keep people healthy and well and reduce the likelihood of chronic disease and premature mortality, with a focus on individuals and communities at greatest risk.

**Healthy Ireland** is the overarching Government policy that presents a roadmap for achieving improved health and wellbeing for all in society. The Health and Wellbeing function of the HSE has responsibility for the strategic implementation and oversight of Healthy Ireland within the health services. There are also five Hospital Group and nine Community Healthcare Organisation (CHO) Healthy Ireland plans.

The key goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework are outlined in Figure 1.

#### Purpose statement

We will promote and support healthy living and healthy behaviours for all age groups of our population and our staff as part of our core business in the delivery of health and social care services.

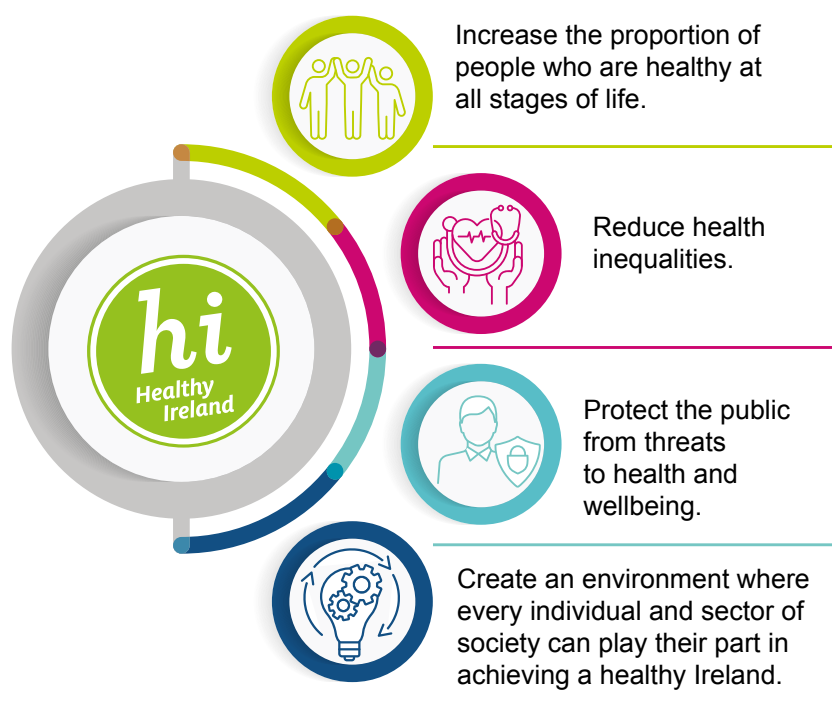


Figure 1: Key goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework



## The National Policy Priority Programmes (NPPPs) consist of five programmes:

- Tobacco Free Ireland
- Healthy Eating and Active Living
- Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme
- Alcohol and Mental Health and Wellbeing.

The NPPPs have three supporting teams:

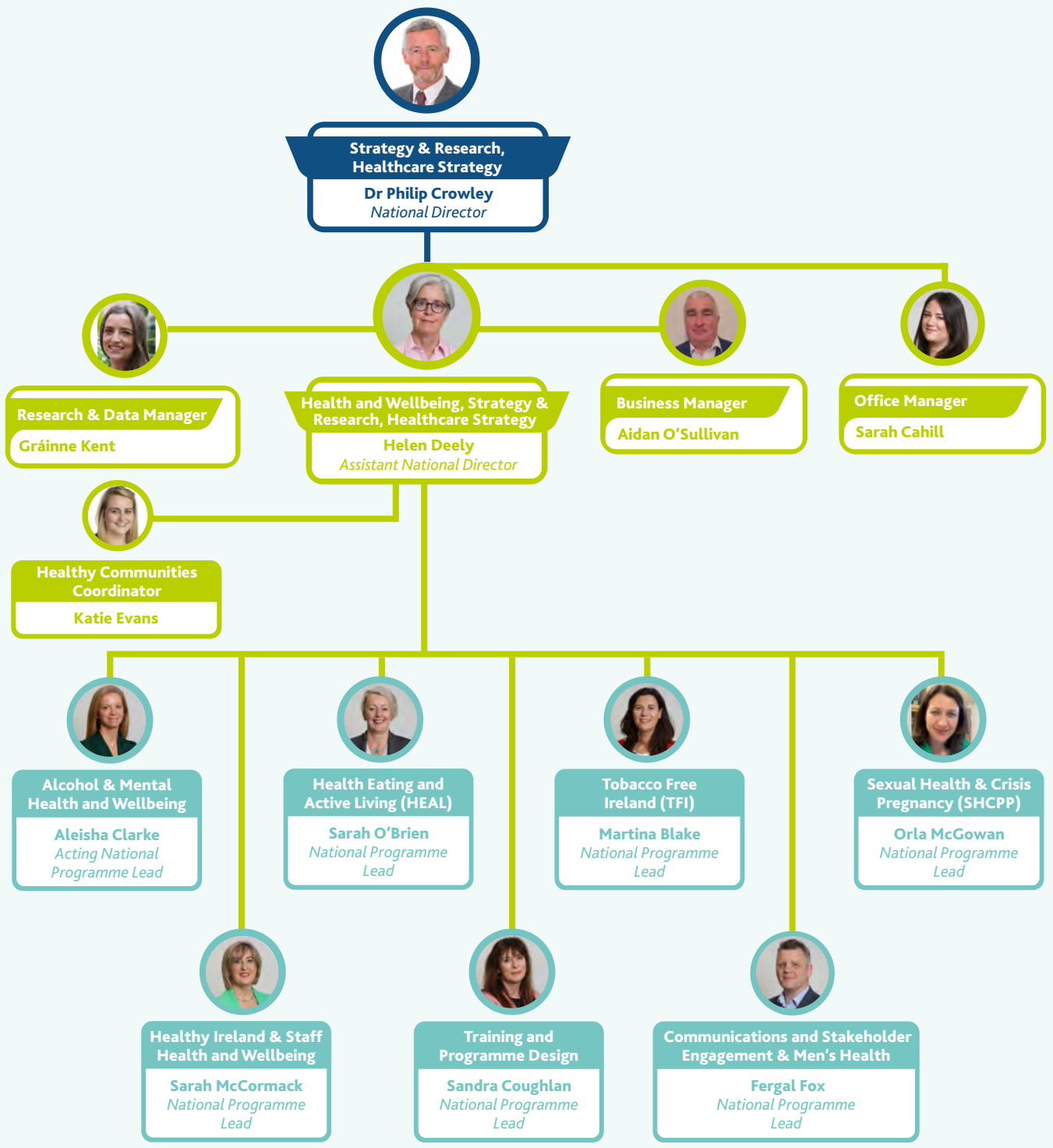
- Training and Programme Design
- Stakeholder Engagement and Communications
- Business Team

The NPPPs were established in 2016 to provide expertise, strategic advice, and direction to deliver these Healthy Ireland goals and address lifestyle determinants of health through identifying evidence-

based best-practice policies. They provide leadership and expertise for the implementation of Government policies. They have a broad remit in respect of specific policy areas, including strategic planning to embed core health and wellbeing deliverables into community and acute services; service/programme design and specification; communications; research; and quality assurance. Each programme has developed multiannual implementation plans, guided by relevant Government policies and strategies. The implementation of these is supported by a cross-divisional Implementation Group and Stakeholder Network.

The work of HSE H&W is focused on prevention and early intervention to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the population. In order to support and embed health and wellbeing in the health service, HSE H&W works closely with community and acute planning teams as well as operational functions (see Figure 2).





**Figure 2: Organisational structure of HSE Health and Wellbeing Division, 2023**

# Key achievements in 2023



19,313



people engaged with HSE stop smoking services

253,992

visits to Quit.ie

7636

Quit plans

07/07/23



date of HSE Healthy Ireland Conference: 'The Time is Now – Act Today to Shape a Healthier Tomorrow'

50



number of HSE staff working specifically on Sláintecare Healthy Communities programme

1,318,239+



condoms and

688,381

lubricant sachets provided via the National Condom Distribution Service

108,562

STI home-test kits ordered

18



number of CarePALS two-day workshops delivered to staff working in Older Persons Services

325



number of adult disability day-service sites that received Skills-to-Practice sessions in Active Healthy Me programme

13



number of HSE publications in 2023, such as:

- Health Services Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2023–2027
- Public attitudes to implementing financial incentives in stop smoking services in Ireland
- Relationships and Sexuality Education 1 and 2
- Training and Programme Design Implementation Plan 2024–2027

3566



stop smoking referrals received from GPs via Healthlink Online

3062



number of people who availed of online Stress Control sessions, with

18,371

views

6631



number of participants in Steps to Health Challenge

14%

increase in steps between Week 1 and Week 5

14,530



number of MyOptions calls received

1228

webchats

*The MyOptions freephone helpline provides factual information and judgement-free counselling to those experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.*

19/09/23



launch of On Feirm Ground 2, programme for health and wellbeing of farmers

5589



number of Social Prescribing service users

1765



number of lifestyle assessment checks delivered with Irish Heart Foundation



31,648



number who completed the self-assessment tool on AskAboutAlcohol

17,015

number who completed the drinks calculator

1,000,000

video views on Snapchat

## Other Highlights 2023



- HSE Social Prescribing Echo Network developed
- Minding Your Wellbeing programme adapted for older people and those in higher education
- Two new community-based specialist weight management services for children and young people established
- Two winners at the Irish Healthcare Awards: TFIP and SHCPP

51



number of We Can Quit courses delivered

27



number of training courses completed for Engage: Connecting with Men

14

participants per course

€100,000



awarded to Alcohol Programme from Department of Health to evaluate Know the Score school-based programme

3062



number of HSE staff who completed MECC e-learning modules

1423

completed in-person MECC workshops

6



number of Physical Activity for Health Officer pilot projects supported

126



Living Well programmes delivered in person or online to

1444

people across **7** CHOs.

65



number of Minding Your Wellbeing tutors across the country

13



number of programmes delivered by Foundation for Programme in Sexual Health Promotion

6087



number of participants in Healthy Food Made Easy courses

920%



increase in video views of H&W social content (over 37 million views)

187

healthcare professionals trained

37



episodes of Talking Health and Wellbeing podcast

36,000

downloads

16,700

views on YouTube

€54,320



received from Creative Ireland on the theme of Celebrating Culture Diversity through the Arts for Staff Health and Wellbeing

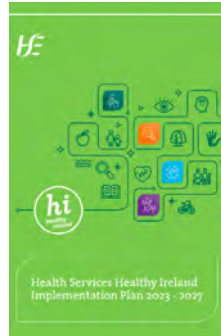




## Healthy Ireland in the HSE

### Health Services Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2023–2027

In July 2023, HSE CEO Mr Bernard Gloster launched the second HSE Healthy Ireland Plan – **Health Services Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2023–2027** (HSE 2023a). This new plan sets out four strategic priorities with 72 actions designed around the vision of Healthy Ireland, where ‘everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential’. Mr Gloster recognised the launch of the plan as another key step forward in achieving the goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework.



HSE CEO Bernard Gloster and Sarah McCormack, National Programme Lead for HI and Staff H&W, at the launch of the implementation plan at the Healthy Ireland Conference.



Keynote speakers and H&W staff at the Healthy Ireland Conference.



## Healthy Ireland Conference

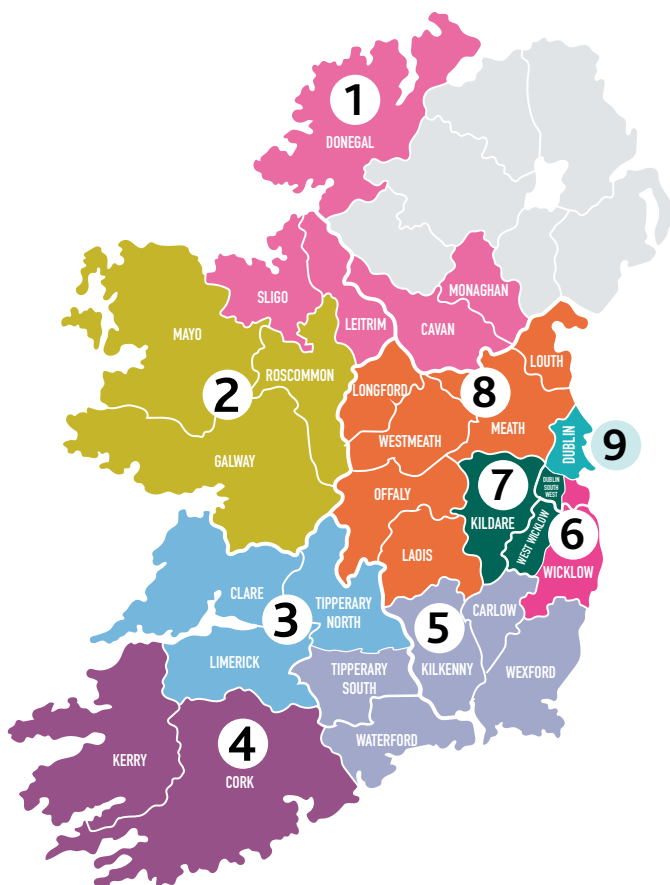
The first **HSE Healthy Ireland Conference**, titled 'The Time is Now – Act Today to Shape a Healthier Tomorrow', was held in the Convention Centre in Dublin on 7 July 2023. It attracted over 400 delegates, with 19 exhibitors from Hospital Groups, CHOs (see Figure 3) and National Health and Wellbeing Programmes, showcasing the many resources available to support the adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviours and building healthy environments. Keynote speakers included Dr Machteld Huber, founder of the Institute for Positive Health, the Netherlands; Prof. Diarmuid O'Donovan, Global Health, Queen's University Belfast; and Prof. Ciaran O'Boyle, RCSI Centre for Positive Health Sciences, as well as several HSE senior leaders and national directors.

## Healthy Ireland Merchandise

A bespoke online store for the ordering of Healthy Ireland merchandise was developed, tested and activated in 2023. It allowed a number of CHOs to order merchandise directly from the contracted supplier via the online store. This functionality will be extended to all CHOs and Hospital Groups in 2024.

## Healthy Ireland Communications

Work continues on the redesign of the Healthy Ireland web content as part of the redevelopment of the Health and Wellbeing website. Other communication methods comprise the regular submission of news features and articles to *Health Matters* and the *Health and Wellbeing* e-zine, and weekly updates.



**Figure 3: Map of Ireland showing the nine HSE Community Healthcare Organisations**



# Staff Health and Wellbeing

## Activities and developments

### Staff Health and Wellbeing resources

In 2023, a suite of resources, including evidence-based guidance and brochures, were redesigned, initiated or developed for staff and managers. For example:

- *Staff Health and Wellbeing: Resources and initiatives for adopting healthy behaviours*
- *Your Health and Wellbeing: Supporting you to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviours – a leaflet and poster for staff attending occupational health services*
- *How to Guide for HSE Managers: Taking action to support staff personal health and wellbeing* (in progress).



### Lifestyle assessment checks

The HSE continued its arrangement with the Irish Heart Foundation for the delivery of lifestyle assessment checks as requested and funded by CHO and Hospital Group managers. Approximately 1,765 lifestyle assessment checks were delivered in 2023. These checks aim to raise awareness of an individual's specific risk factors for cardiovascular disease using motivational interviewing techniques. It provides a person-led brief intervention and appropriate signposting to enable employees to modify their behaviours and hence improve and promote their heart health.

### Staff Incentive Funding 2023

The HSE Healthy Ireland Incentive Funding for staff health and wellbeing continues to play a pivotal role in improving staff health

and wellbeing. In 2023, €914,274 was invested across nine CHOs and six Hospital Groups. Investment in outdoor spaces, quiet areas, bike racks and bike shelters were among the top five areas of investment.

### Staff Health and Wellbeing Practitioner Network

The Staff Health and Wellbeing Practitioner Network continued to meet to support the standardisation of programme delivery as well as other key aims, with four meetings delivered in 2023. Input through this forum informed the development of the Staff Health and Wellbeing brochure and the managers support guide currently in development.

### Creative Ireland fund for celebrating cultural diversity

Grant funding of €54,320 was received from Creative Ireland in 2023 on the theme of Celebrating Culture Diversity through the Arts for Staff Health and Wellbeing. There were 10 funded projects, which included an intercultural musical collaboration performed and recorded by staff to play in waiting rooms; a series of multicultural singing workshops where staff were invited to sing and share a song from their culture; and a photography competition on the theme of cultural diversity.





# Arts and Health

## Activities and developments

### Per Cent for Arts

The development of a Per Cent for Arts procedure document for staff working on capital projects was initiated in 2023, working in partnership with a nominated lead person from HSE Capital and Estates. This procedure aims to increase the update by the HSE in the funding available under the Government's Per Cent for Arts scheme.

### Creative Ireland fund for Arts and Health through Music and Display of Art

On receipt of applications from the HSE, Creative Ireland awarded €60,150 to expand Arts and Health through Music and the Display of Art. The hospital-based projects focused on both inpatients and outpatients and aimed to cultivate wellbeing, foster welcoming environments, and build a sustainable foundation for future arts integration within the HSE.

### Identification of arts projects in HSE settings

The HSE in collaboration with the RENEW National Arts and Health Working Group and Réalta, the national body for arts and health in Ireland, undertook a mapping exercise in 2023 to examine the landscape of arts and creative activities across healthcare settings. The pilot mapping exercise successfully revealed a diverse array of artistic approaches and activity types, with a strong emphasis on participatory arts. However, it also highlighted the need for alternative methods to capture this information for all of the HSE and the development of a process for recording projects as they are delivered.



Art-making workshop at Creative Life, Mercer's Institute for Successful Ageing, St James's Hospital, Dublin.



Music and movement class for outpatients and staff in the Age-Related Unit at Tallaght University Hospital, Dublin, facilitated by music therapist and performer Clara Rose Monahan (far left).



Art by the bedside at Tallaght University Hospital.



### Healthcare professional resources

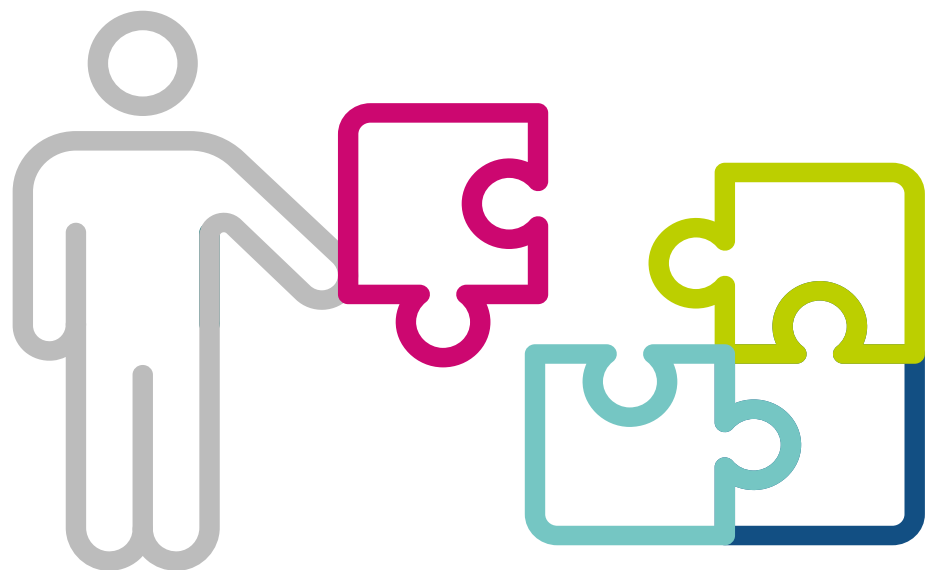
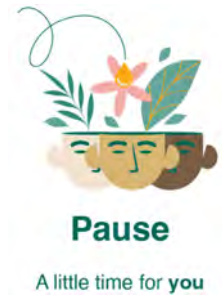
A proposed Display of Arts in Healthcare guidance document was developed in 2023, offering practical guidance for staff on selecting and displaying art in their facilities. The guide emphasises a patient-centred approach, ensuring chosen artwork aligns with individual needs and sensitivities. This document will be finalised in 2024, working with HSE Estates.

### Disability and older persons

Working in partnership with Réalta, workshops in the areas of disability and older persons took place in 2023, exploring the specific needs of these populations within Arts in Healthcare. Work is currently underway for the development of guidance documents for managers and staff who are involved in arts and creativity as part of their service delivery.

### PAUSE evaluation

The Pause resource, originally designed by the Irish Hospice Foundation for public bereavement support, was adapted and offered to HSE staff through a partnership to combat pandemic-related mental health concerns. This pilot programme, testing a physical box of creative prompts and activities for brief moments of stress, relief and joy, took place across six HSE hospitals. Overall, while the Pause pilot demonstrates the potential for supporting staff wellbeing, significant development and adaptation would be required for wider adoption across the organisation. Taking this into consideration, it was decided not to roll out the Pause resource in its current form.



# Healthy Ireland External Partners

## Activities and developments

### HSE Local Community Development Committee representatives

The HSE Healthy Ireland Office continued to support the HSE representatives on the network of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) across the country in 2023. They provide the evidence base and guidance for the implementation of the Healthy Ireland Fund through Healthy Ireland in the Department of Health for initiatives delivered as part of the Healthy Ireland Healthy City and Counties structure.

### Healthy Ireland @ Your Library

Through Healthy Ireland @ Your Library, the HSE Healthy Ireland Office identified the opportunity to utilise and promote existing health and wellbeing resources, such as webinars and online sessions, to the network of 330 libraries across the country. Working with HSE H&W Communications, a selection of existing HSE Health and Wellbeing webinars and sessions were identified and will be hosted as in-person events in the libraries in 2024.

### Age Friendly Ireland Healthy Islands Project

Working with Age Friendly Ireland, HSE Healthy Ireland received proposals from 11 islands, which are off the coast of counties

Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Cork, to develop and co-create sustainable creative health and wellbeing initiatives. Funding will be allocated in 2024 to deliver on these projects.

### Age Friendly Ireland Tablets Project

In collaboration with Age Friendly Ireland, HSE Healthy Ireland identified an opportunity to preload key health and wellbeing information, such as free exercise videos, Minding Your Wellbeing programmes, and key health promotion leaflets on mental health, healthy eating, quitting smoking and reducing alcohol consumption, as part of the roll-out of 300 computer tablets to vulnerable older adults. The use of this information by the participants is being monitored with feedback and learning to be reported in 2024.

### HSE Health Promotion and Improvement link person

To strengthen our links at local level and working with the H&W Heads of Service, a Health Promotion and Improvement (HP&I) link person was identified for each city and county in Ireland in 2023. The purpose of this link person is to ensure that there is strong connection and collaboration between the HSE and the work of the Healthy City and County coordinators.



Participants at a workshop for the Age Friendly Ireland Tablets Project.







## Activities and developments

### Smoking cessation

In 2021 and 2022, the focus for the SHC programme was on securing staff, training, and engaging with local community partners. In 2023, we started to see the dividends, with service delivery now embedded in the targeted communities. As a result, we are reaching more people than ever before in these areas. Stop smoking advisors in each area provided one-to-one support to help those who smoke with their quit attempts. Considerable increases in stop smoking activity occurred in 2023, resulting in 2,664 appointments with tobacco users in 2023, which was over double that of 2022. The advisors also developed partnerships with local pharmacies to facilitate the provision of free nicotine replacement therapy and stop smoking medication.

Forty We Can Quit (WCQ) group programmes were delivered in 2023, and almost 400 participants took part, which is the highest number to date. By taking part in a WCQ group programme, participants get weekly support to quit from their local facilitator and from



other people in their group as well as access to free nicotine replacement therapy and stop smoking medication. In 2023, over 70% of those who set a quit date remained quit at four weeks, highlighting the effectiveness of group support.

### Social Prescribing

Social Prescribing is an effective way of engaging people in non-clinical activities and services in their communities to promote their health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities. It continues to be a very successful SHC programme. Throughout 2023, link workers in SHC areas continued to establish strong relationships with a range of health services locally to enable or empower individuals to access local services to improve their health and wellbeing. There were almost 3,000 referrals to Social Prescribing services in 2023, which is a considerable increase from 2022. The problems of social isolation, fear and loneliness, and often associated inactivity have negative consequences for health and can particularly impact older age groups,



WCQ facilitators from the Bray Area Partnership: Susanne Martin (far left) and Jennifer O'Sullivan (far right) celebrating with participants at the completion of a WCQ programme in Bray, Co. Wicklow.





those with chronic health problems, those with mental health difficulties and psychosocial needs, carers, single parents, and migrant, immigrant and minority ethnic groups. Almost 60% of individuals who engaged with SHC Social Prescribing services in 2023 did so due to social isolation.

### Parenting programmes

Universal parenting programmes delivered as part of the SHC programme offer simple and practical strategies to help people deal with the normal ups and downs of family life. In 2023, almost 700 individuals enrolled in parenting group courses, while almost 1,000 individuals engaged in parenting workshops across the SHC areas. Taking part in a SHC parenting programme can help empower parents or caregivers to create healthy and connected families and improve wellbeing for everyone. Across the SHC areas, a number of community partners, such as Family Resource Centres and LDCs, help to deliver parenting group programmes and workshops. In 2023, we commenced a pilot programme whereby home school liaison officers and special education teachers from DEIS schools in Limerick City

were trained to deliver positive parenting programmes in their schools. We hope that this will increase engagement from parents and caregivers in the Limerick area into the future.

### Community Food and Nutrition

The Community Food and Nutrition component of the SHC programme consists of two elements: the community food and nutrition worker role and the Healthy Food Made Easy (HFME) programme. A skilled community food and nutrition worker in each SHC area helps improve the local food environment, address food poverty, and activate agreed national campaigns. Throughout 2023, the community food and nutrition workers collaborated with statutory and voluntary partners to develop and implement innovative responses to local needs. 2023 was a very successful year for HFME; almost 300 group courses were delivered with over 2,700 individuals engaging with the programme.



Community food and nutrition worker Sinéad Costello from the EDI Centre, Longford showcasing her work at a local community event in 2023.



Home school liaison officers and special education teachers in Limerick celebrating the completion of their Parents Plus Healthy Families training in September 2023 with local SHC coordinator Ger Fahy.



### Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

The MECC programme supports healthcare workers to address chronic disease prevention and lifestyle behaviour change with their patients in routine clinical consultations. It works with local health professionals to ensure they have the capability to deliver brief interventions and advice to all patients regarding the key risk factors for chronic disease (i.e. smoking, alcohol use, physical activity, mental wellbeing, diet and nutrition). Over 1,700 healthcare staff working in CHOs completed the MECC e-learning modules and 1,100 staff attended in-person workshops in 2023.

### Future priorities

In 2021 and 2022, the focus was on securing staffing and getting SHC services up and running. In 2023, we engaged with local staff and delivery partners to ensure service delivery was embedded in these communities. We will continue to build on this for 2024, while aiming to increase participant numbers and course offerings. In addition, there will be increased efforts to improve communications around the SHC programme; for example, the development of new creative assets for parenting programmes. It is important that the SHC programme is adaptive to the needs of the local community. We will therefore continue

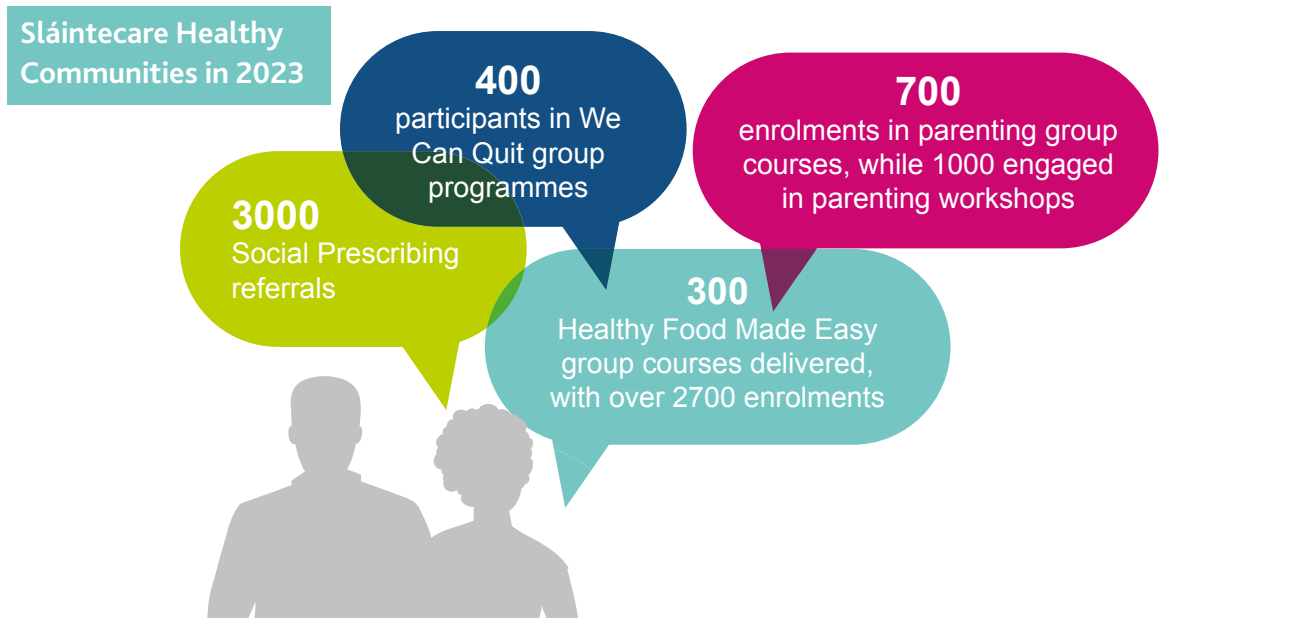
to work to ensure that the programmes offered improve the health and wellbeing of people living in these communities.



L to R: Keith Ryan (HSE SHC, HP&I officer), David Morrissey (LDO, Clondalkin), Gráinne Meehan (LDO, Tallaght) and Alan McDonnell (HSE SHC, HP&I officer) at a South Dublin County Council public service day to promote the SHC programme.



L to R: Evelyn Doherty (public health nurse), Michael D. McAndrew (Midwest Radio), Paul Gillen (SHC coordinator) and Edel Deane (assistant director of Public Health Nursing) at the SHC health fair in Teach Greannai, Ballina, Co. Mayo in October 2023.



## SECTION 2

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# Health and Wellbeing Programmes



## SECTION 2

# Health and Wellbeing Programmes

HSE H&W services take a whole-of-population approach to supporting people to stay healthy and well throughout their lives. They work collaboratively and cross-sectorally at national and local level to implement the Healthy Ireland actions and deliver improved population health outcomes for all.

**The following priority programmes are included in this section.**





# Tobacco Free Ireland Programme

## Priorities of national programme

The Tobacco Free Ireland Programme (TFIP) has a remit to mobilise the health services to improve health and wellbeing and play its part in achieving a reduction in smoking prevalence to less than 5% of the population by 2025. The TFIP works to ensure implementation of the HSE actions contained within the Government **Tobacco Free Ireland Strategy** (DoH 2013) and the **HSE Tobacco Free Ireland Programme Implementation Plan 2022–2025** (HSE 2022a).

## Activities and developments

### Stop Smoking Clinical Guideline

In 2023, the TFIP began developing a new eLearning module to support implementation of the **Stop Smoking National Clinical Guideline** (DoH 2022). This online training resource for healthcare professionals focuses specifically on stop smoking medications – which medications to recommend or prescribe, how they work, etc. The eLearning module will go live on HSeLanD on 31 May 2024.



The TFIP also developed a prescribing tool for general practitioners (GPs), in partnership with the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), in the form of a **mouse mat** as well as a **stop smoking medications at a glance** resource. These mouse mats issued to all GP surgeries in Ireland were part of a wider promotional **suite of resources** to encourage treatment of tobacco dependence and

subsequent referral to dedicated stop smoking services. The number of referrals from GPs to the QUIT service has increased month-on-month since it went live. In 2023, some 3,566 referrals were received from GPs via the online portal Healthlink, which compares to 1,857 in 2022 and 707 in 2021. The TFIP is currently working with the ICGP to develop further educational resources and to highlight the availability of electronic referral to stop smoking services to maximise the key role that primary care can play in tackling the harm caused by smoking in Ireland.

**ASK** ASK every patient about tobacco use & record smoking status at every visit

**ADVISE** ADVISE on the risks of smoking, the benefits of quitting & the most effective way of quitting

**ACT** 1. Prescribe  
2. Refer: HSE Quit Service (via Healthlink)

**Prescribe**

Varenicline (Champix)		Combination Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)	
Can be used alone OR with NRT*		LONG ACTING NRT (PATCH)	SHORT ACTING NRT
WEEKS	DOSE	24 hr	16 hr
Week 1 - Continue smoking			
Day 1-3	0.5mg x 1 daily	1 - 4	*21mg or 14mg
Day 4-7	0.5mg x 2 daily	5 - 8	*14mg or 7mg
Week 2 - 72 Stop smoking		9 - 10	7mg
Day 8-10	1mg x 2 daily	11 - 12	7mg
* For patients with severe renal impairment, see SPC & PIL		Higher dose more suitable for people who smoke more heavily, refer to SPC and PIL for more information	

**Refer**

Intensive Behavioural Support from a Stop Smoking Advisor

Combined pharmacotherapy & behavioural support is 4 times more effective when compared with quitting unaided. Medication & intensive behavioural support is available FREE for all attending HSE Stop Smoking Services (regardless of medical card status)

For pregnant women consider Vape Patch or Short Acting NRT

Options for Short Acting NRT: Gum, Lozenges, Inhaler, Mouth Spray

Logos: QUIT We can help, HSE, Ht, ICGP

QR codes for National Stop Smoking Clinical Guidelines and further info on medications.

The TFIP hosted information sessions and webinars during 2023 for the Asthma Society of Ireland, COPD Ireland, and the CervicalCheck screening programme in support of clinical guideline implementation.

### Tobacco Free Campus/Environments

The Tobacco Free Campus Quality Improvement Bursary for 2022/23 concluded on 1 June 2023 with an awards ceremony attended by 109 individual services. The event was officially opened by CEO Bernard Gloster. Significant funding was awarded to a record number of sites who had engaged in quality improvement work relating to tobacco-free environments. Awards were presented to services by Dr Philip Crowley, National Director of HSE Strategy and Research. The event





was a celebration of all the staff who worked to implement tobacco-free policies within their services, despite ever-increasing workloads and ongoing challenges across the health service. There was considerable energy and engagement throughout the day, which added greatly to the success of the event.



Some 2023 winners at the HSE Tobacco Free Campus Awards ceremony, representing Newpark Primary Care Centre; Carrick-on-Suir Primary Care Centre and St Brigid’s Hospital; Waterford Primary Care Centre; and Community Care Headquarters, James’s Green, Kilkenny.

The TFIP collaborated with the HSE Patient Safety Together team to host a National No Smoking Day **webinar** on the risks created by tobacco smoking within our health services. Smoking-related patient safety incidents recorded in acute hospitals on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) between 2018 and 2022 were analysed and summarised in a patient safety supplement – ***The Risk of Smoking in Our Acute Hospitals*** (HSE 2022–23). The purpose of the supplement is to raise awareness of the significant risks of smoking in healthcare settings and to support staff and managers to put measures in place to mitigate these risks. It also empowers staff to provide support for patients by means of referral to stop smoking services and by providing access to stop smoking medications.

### Research and publications

The TFIP in partnership with the Centre for Health Policy and Management at Trinity College Dublin hosted colleagues from CHOs, partners from external organisations, and policymakers on 28 February 2023 for a mini-conference at Wood Quay Venue in Dublin. It was titled **Nobody Left Behind: Exploring New Ways to Tackle Smoking Inequalities** and guest speakers included Dr John Ford from Queen Mary University of London and Dr Rikke Siersbaek from Trinity College Dublin.

A realist review examining how and why financial incentives may help people to stop smoking was presented at this event and a **research brief** was published (Siersbaek *et al.* 2023). The final realist review paper will be published in an academic journal in 2024 and will inform a pilot programme for implementing financial incentives in Irish stop smoking services.

Also, two TFIP research papers were published in academic journals during the year:

- **Public attitudes to implementing financial incentives in stop smoking services in Ireland** (Cosgrave *et al.* 2023a)
- **Is the public ready for a tobacco-free Ireland? A national survey of public knowledge and attitudes to tobacco endgame in Ireland** (Cosgrave *et al.* 2023b).

### Stop Smoking Service activity

Significant investment through the SHC and Enhanced Community Care Chronic Disease Management programmes has greatly increased the availability of stop smoking services across communities in Ireland. Coupled with the availability of free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products for those who engage in a quit attempt with HSE support, significantly more people are engaging with the service, and quitting using the recommended treatments of behavioural support and stop smoking medicines, as outlined in the National Stop Smoking Clinical Guideline (DoH 2022).



The impact of the investment in stop smoking was evident in 2023, as record numbers of people sought help to stop smoking from HSE services. In total, 19,313 people (102.5%) engaged with HSE stop smoking services during the year, which exceeded the National Service Plan (NSP) target of 18,849 (see Table 1). The quit at 4-week key performance indicator was 57.7% at year-end, which also exceeded the NSP target of 48%.

**Table 1: Intensive smoking cessation support and Quit plans, 2020–2023**

Intensive cessation support		QUIT plans	
Year	Number	Year	Number
2020*	7089	2020	7755
2021**	8593	2021	6420
2022	12,477	2022	6316
2023	19,313	2023	7636

\* Service impacted due to COVID-19 pandemic.

\*\* Service impacted due to COVID-19 pandemic and HSE cyberattack on 14 May 2021.

In 2023, data showed that 75% of those engaging with the HSE Stop Smoking Services during their quit attempt used recommended stop smoking medicines/NRT products. This is a significant increase on the numbers of clients using these products in their quit attempts in previous years (2022 – 66% vs 2021 – 67% vs 2020 – 64%). The offer of free NRT is undoubtedly a driver in this increased usage of recommended treatments. Research has previously reported that cost and access are often cited as barriers to uptake. As evidenced in the data, removal of these barriers in 2023 increased uptake.

In 2023, some 51 We Can Quit courses were delivered, with a total of 471 clients engaging with the programme. The quit at 4-week rate for those who set a quit date was 69.4%.

The TFIP trained 44 staff as specialist stop smoking advisors in 2023. In addition, the TFIP team worked to support stop smoking services throughout the year via quality assurance (including data entry audits), help-desk support for the QUITManager IT system (as well as new and updated guidance resources) and two educational symposiums for stop smoking advisors.

### QUIT Campaign

The QUIT Campaign was visible throughout 2023 on TV, video on demand (VOD) and social media channels, with activity particularly heavy in January, March and October. A newly developed QUIT TV advertisement began airing in January 2023. The new campaign showed how people who smoke can start to take back control over their addiction in 28 days with help from the QUIT service.



## QUIT CAMPAIGN ACTIVITY IN 2023



**253,992** visits to Quit.ie



**171,466** users of Quit.ie



**7636** Quit plans



**4445** inbound calls to Quitline

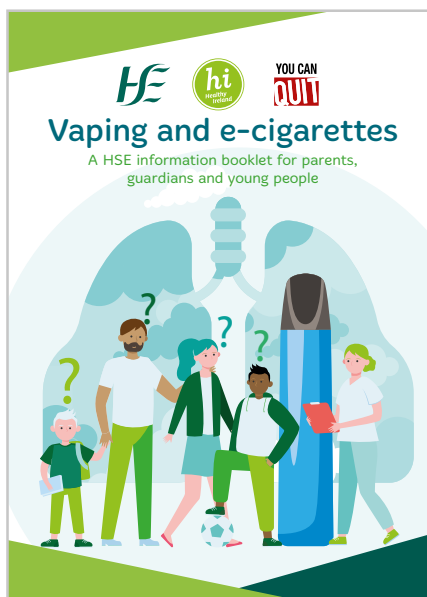


## E-cigarettes and vaping

In November 2023, the TFIP hosted a **webinar** – Vaping and E-Cigarettes: Get the Facts. The webinar, attended by a wide and varied audience, sought to describe trends in e-cigarette use among adults and children and young people in Ireland. It outlined the potential health risks and harms associated with vaping and provided an outline of support for parents, guardians and teachers to protect children and young people from the harms of vaping.

The TFIP also published two new public-facing resources on vaping and e-cigarettes:

- **Vaping and e-cigarettes: a HSE information booklet for parents, guardians and young people** (HSE 2023b)
- **Information and guidance on e-cigarettes for schools** (HSE 2023c).



## Irish Healthcare Awards

In 2023, the TFIP won the award for Public Health Initiative of the Year for implementation of free stop smoking medication through the Sláintecare Community Stop Smoking Initiative.

## International collaborations

The TFIP hosted the general assembly of the Global Network for Tobacco Free Healthcare Services in Dublin in June 2023. This saw some international colleagues join the team in Ireland. The assembly was complemented with a site visit to Grangegorman Primary Care Centre, hosted by Dublin North City and County CHO, where the local stop smoking service was showcased.

Members of the TFIP team also attended the European Conference on Tobacco or Health in Madrid on 26–28 April 2023, where four conference abstracts were accepted and presented by the team as posters:

- Sláintecare Smoke Free Start – smoking cessation in pregnancy
- Leaving nobody behind – health inequalities due to smoking
- QUITManager implementation
- Quality assurance in stop smoking delivery.



The TFIP team, which won Public Health Initiative of the Year 2023, at the Irish Healthcare Awards.



# Mental Health and Wellbeing and Alcohol Programmes

## Mental Health And Wellbeing

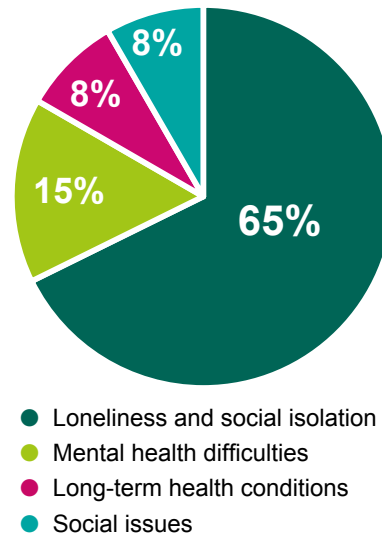
### Priorities of national programme

The overall aim of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme is to promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the population and among priority groups. The programme continues to lead the implementation of the HSE's Mental Health Promotion Plan, *Stronger Together* (HSE 2022b), guided by a cross-sectoral Steering Group. *Stronger Together* aligns with the forthcoming National Mental Health Promotion Plan, which will be published by the Department of Health in 2024. It builds on the core themes and actions, and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme looks forward to working with the Department of Health and other stakeholders on its implementation.



### Social Prescribing

HSE-funded Social Prescribing services continue to grow and there are now 48 services available across the country. In 2023, there were 5,589 service users across these services. The main reasons for referral were loneliness and social isolation (65%), followed by mental health difficulties (15%), long-term health conditions (8%), and social issues (8%) (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Reasons for referral to Social Prescribing services, 2023**

A key development with Social Prescribing in 2023 was the development of the HSE Social Prescribing Echo Network. This is a national learning platform for social prescribing link workers and HSE staff involved in supporting the delivery of Social Prescribing. The first session was held on 13 September 2023, entitled Coaching and Social Prescribing.

Evaluation of Social Prescribing services in Ireland is a key priority of the national team. Research is underway in Trinity College Dublin to pilot wellbeing and community connectedness measurement tools with a number of HSE-funded Social Prescribing services. The purpose of this research is to evaluate usability, acceptability, and feasibility from the perspective of social prescribing link workers and service user beneficiaries. The study commenced in October 2023 and will be completed in June 2024. The findings will determine the most appropriate measures for use across Social Prescribing services.

The University of Galway was also awarded the tender to conduct a realist evaluation of Social Prescribing services in Ireland to understand how Social Prescribing works in an Irish context, for whom it works, and under what circumstances.



### Stress management supports

The online stress management programme Stress Control was delivered in January, May and November 2023. A total of 3,062 individuals took part across the six sessions, with a total of 18,371 views. A HSE stress management programme is currently in development, in partnership with HSE Psychology, which will be completed in 2024.

### Minding Your Wellbeing

The Minding Your Wellbeing programme continued to be delivered in 2023, with 65 Minding Your Wellbeing tutors across the country. The main focus of delivery has been with HSE staff; however, an exciting development in 2023 was adapting the programme for delivery in community settings with older people and in higher education settings. For adapting delivery with older people, an updated programme manual and adapted materials were developed by the University of Galway. A feasibility study was commenced across CHO 3, CHO 5, CHO 7 and CHO 9. The initiative is a collaboration between HSE Health Promotion and Improvement staff; ALONE; Family Resource Centres; and local community organisations. These initiatives will be completed in 2024 and their evaluations will inform the next steps for the roll-out of the programme in community and higher education settings.



### Act Belong Commit

Act Belong Commit is a community-based mental health promotion programme that was first implemented in Western Australia and has since been adapted for use in Norway, Denmark, and Finland. The University of Galway was contracted to conduct a feasibility study to scope how Act Belong Commit could be implemented in the Irish context. The programme encourages individuals to engage in mentally healthy activities (Act Belong Commit) promoted by community partners and supported by a media campaign. Act Belong Commit refers to three actions that have been found to promote positive mental health:

- **Act:** Involves doing something that keeps you physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially active.
- **Belong:** Involves doing something with someone or as part of a group.
- **Commit:** Involves doing something which gives your life purpose and meaning, for example, setting realistic challenges and goals.

The feasibility study will focus on two communities initially and the roll-out will commence in 2024.

### MINDING YOUR WELLBEING IN 2023

-  **65** Minding Your Wellbeing tutors across the country
-  **4** CHOs involved in a feasibility study for adapting the programme for older people and those in higher education
-  **2** communities are the focus of a feasibility study on implementing Act Belong Commit in Ireland





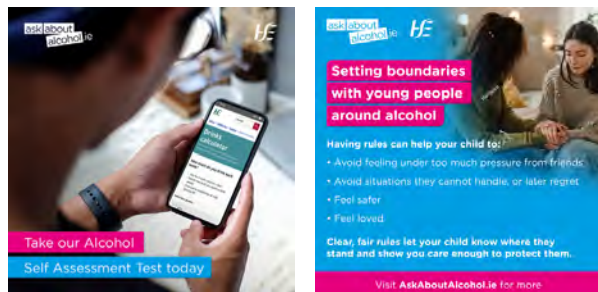
## Alcohol

### Priorities of national programme

The Alcohol Programme aims to achieve a healthier and safer Ireland by working to reduce individual and population alcohol use and health inequalities as well as protecting children, families, and communities from alcohol-related harm.

### Communications campaign

AskAboutAlcohol is the HSE's information campaign on alcohol and alcohol harm. The alcohol content on the HSE website performed steadily in 2023. There was a tenfold increase in completions of the self-assessment tool, which provides individual feedback on people's level of risk from alcohol use. A total of 31,648 people completed the tool, with a similar level of increase on completions of the online



drinks calculator, with 17,015 completions in 2023. There were close to 1 million video views on Snapchat across a number of topics, with content promoting the self-assessment tool performing the best. In 2023, there were 3,100 contacts to the HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline where alcohol was discussed; this is an increase of 689 alcohol-related contacts in comparison to 2022.

### ASKABOUTALCOHOL WEBSITE IN 2023

 **31,648** people completed the self-assessment tool

 **17,015** people completed the drinks calculator

 **1,000,000** video views on Snapchat

 **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL HELPLINE, 2023**  
**3100** contacts discussed alcohol



### Integrated Alcohol Services

In 2023, two new Sláintecare-funded Integrated Alcohol Services (IAS) became operational in CHO 3 and CHO 4, with additional services being developed in CHO 2 and CHO 9. These services are defined as specialist alcohol services operating in community settings providing evidence-based psychosocial and therapeutic interventions and family support as well as developing integrated care pathways between acute, primary care, and addiction services. The Integrated Alcohol Services Working Group established to oversee the design, development, and implementation of the services at a national level met three times in 2023. In 2023, CHO 3 received 190 referrals from a variety of sources, including GPs, self, family or friends, and local services; CHO 4 received 37 complex referrals from the homeless community via Mercy University Hospital, Cork.

A research consultation with service users and providers to inform the delivery of the Integrated Alcohol Service, led by Prof. Catherine Comiskey and her team at Trinity College Dublin, was completed in 2023. The report outlined key recommendations for service delivery improvement across the IAS sites.

### Extended Brief Intervention programme

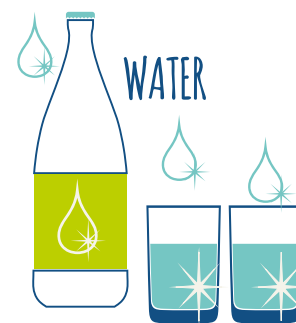
In 2023, a working group was established to pilot an Extended Brief Intervention (EBI) programme in North Dublin (CHO 9). Brief interventions are defined by the World Health Organization as ‘practices that aim to identify a real or potential alcohol problem and motivate an individual to do something about it’ (WHO 2017, p. 2). Brief interventions include screening and assessment that allows the clinician or counsellor to provide information and advice to reduce the risk of harm from

alcohol and other related problems. Extended brief interventions have been recommended as a way of bridging the gap between services provided for those whose drinking behaviours present as high risk or dependent (who can access specialist alcohol treatment) and those at increasing risk (who can access brief interventions).

The SAOR EBI model was written by Jim O’Shea, Paul Goff, Nicola Corrigan and Dr Gail Nicolson. In October 2023, a request for tender was advertised to undertake a process evaluation of the SAOR EBI pilot programme in North Dublin. Training of SAOR practitioners and commencement of the EBI are due to begin in Q1 2024. The process evaluation findings will be used to inform the scaling up and delivery of future SAOR EBI programmes nationally.

### Alcohol research

An alcohol research post was established in Beaumont Hospital, Dublin in 2021 and is joint funded by the HSE Alcohol Programme and the Institute of Public Health to collate and analyse data



on alcohol-related admissions and chronic diseases in Beaumont Hospital. Two studies were published in 2023:

- **Impact of minimum unit pricing on alcohol-related hospital outcomes: systematic review** (Maharaj *et al.* 2023a)
- **Alcohol-related emergency department presentations and hospital admissions around the time of minimum unit pricing in Ireland** (Maharaj *et al.* 2023b).



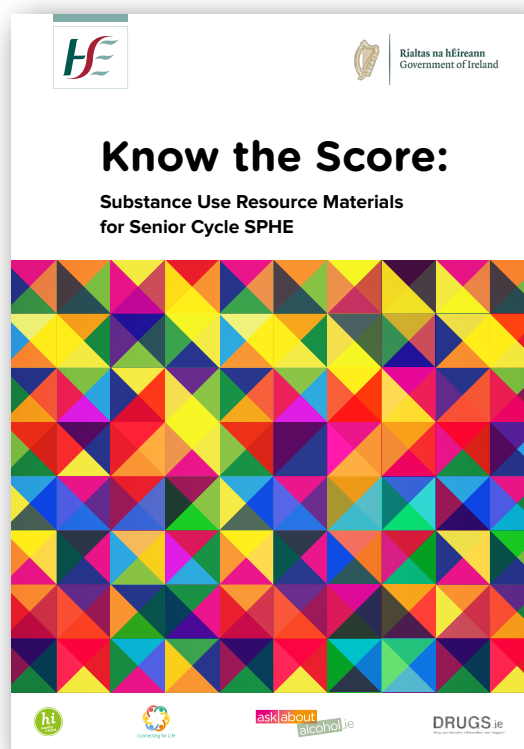
### Prevention resources for schools

To support the new Junior Cycle SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) curriculum and create a continuum of learning, new resources are in development that include topics on alcohol and drugs. In 2022 and 2023, Making Healthier Choices (MHC) 1 and MHC 2 were made available online. MHC 3 is currently in development and will be published in 2024.

In 2023, the HSE Alcohol Programme was awarded €100,000 over three years from the Drugs Policy Unit in the Department of Health to evaluate the Know the Score school-based programme. Know the Score is the first national evidence-informed resource on alcohol and drugs for Senior Cycle students jointly developed by the HSE, Department of Education, and the Drug and Alcohol Task Forces. The resource is aimed at engaging young people in exploring and considering a wide range of topics related to the risks associated with alcohol and drugs.

A research team, led by Prof. Catherine Comiskey at Trinity College Dublin, was awarded the contract to undertake an evaluation of Know the Score, with contracts signed in Q4 2023. The overall aim of the project is to complete an evaluation of Know the Score and therefore inform the development of strategies for effective

implementation and scale-up of school-based prevention programmes and resources into the future. The evaluation will commence in Q1 2024, following the formal establishment of a steering group comprising key stakeholders from the HSE, Department of Education, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD), and Drug and Alcohol Task Forces.





# Healthy Eating and Active Living Programme

## Priorities of national programme

The remit of the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Programme



Healthy Eating  
Active Living  
Programme

is to mobilise the health service to improve health and wellbeing by increasing the levels of physical activity, healthy diet, and healthier weight across service users, staff, and the population as a whole. There is a particular focus on families and children. In this context, the programme works to support the implementation of key national policies – A Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan (DoH, 2016a) and Get Ireland Active: National Physical Activity Plan (DoH, 2016b).

## Healthy Eating Active Living Implementation Plan 2023–2027

Published in December 2023, the programme implementation plan sets out a suite of actions to deliver on our remit by providing leadership at policy and practice level, promoting behaviour change for healthy lifestyles, and strengthening capacity to prevent childhood obesity (HSE 2023d).

## Community Food and Nutrition

The HEAL Programme coordinated six national meetings between Community Food and Nutrition and the Food Poverty Network. These provided opportunities for learning and sharing to focus on addressing the community food environment and the community food and nutrition worker role in the SHC programme. A multi-stakeholder workshop was held on 20 April 2023 to explore the potential for a local whole systems approach to help reorientate community environments to support health and prevent obesity. On 12 December 2023, a workshop was held with community food and nutrition workers on using the Public Health England Local Whole Systems Toolkit.

## Childhood obesity prevention

How we communicate about children's health and obesity matters because it can fundamentally change our understanding of the issues as well as the necessary and possible solutions. On 11 May 2023, the HEAL Programme delivered a workshop to public health, health promotion, child health and communications colleagues, with input from FrameWorks UK and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), providing insights



Panel discussion at the whole systems approach to obesity prevention workshop (L to R): Sarah O'Brien, HEAL; Dr Jenny Mack, Institute of Public Health; Dr Gavin Breslin, Ulster University; Prof. Donal O'Shea, HSE Clinical Obesity Lead; Marian McBride, HEAL; and Vinnie O'Shea, Local Government SHC.



from research in the UK and Ireland as well as guidance for effective communication.

Working with the National Clinical Programme for Obesity and Primary Care in CHO 5 and CHO 7, the HEAL Programme established two new community-based specialist weight management services for children and young people. The Changing Together services provide a holistic whole-family approach designed by people who know what it is like to be a child or young person living in a bigger body. The multidisciplinary teams work with children, young people, and their families to support them to make changes to improve both the child's and family's health and wellbeing.

### Physical Activity Pathways in Healthcare

Engaging in regular physical activity is one of the 'best buys' for improving health and wellbeing. However, only about one in three adults in Ireland are sufficiently active for a health benefit. A physical activity pathway in healthcare aims to leverage the routine contacts that healthcare professionals have with patients every day to promote regular participation in physical activity outside of the health services. In 2023, the HEAL Programme coordinated a number of projects to develop infrastructure and capacity across the health

services to support implementation of a pathway:

- Collaboration with Sport Ireland to inform the development of the physical activity for health officer role and to pilot six Local Sports Partnerships in Counties Mayo, Limerick, Longford, Waterford, Wexford, and Wicklow.
- Development and launch of a short course for healthcare professionals to build on the foundations of MECC and physical activity and behaviour change with the National Institute for Preventive Cardiology.
- Qualitative research, working with the South East Technological University, to develop an understanding of service-user perspectives on and requirements for a physical activity pathway in healthcare.
- A series of workshops with stakeholders to inform development of both the overall pathway model and a tender specification for a digital platform to support implementation. This included a Physical Activity Pathways in Healthcare Symposium on 14 September 2023 in Dublin.

### Staff Health and Wellbeing

The HEAL Programme coordinated two national initiatives that aimed to improve staff health and wellbeing during the year.



At the Celebration of Excellence in Catering event in November 2023 at the Gibson Hotel, Dublin were Health and Wellbeing staff (L to R): Sarah McCormack, Marian McBride, Caroline Gunn, Jacintha Barry, Eimear Cotter, Sarah O'Brien, Helen Deely, Geraldine Sexton and Fergal Fox.



- **Celebration of Excellence in Catering:** This event hosted by the HSE and the Irish Heart Foundation took place on 28 November 2023 in Dublin. Twenty-one healthcare sites received the Healthy Eating @ Work Award in recognition of their work to improve the healthfulness of food, available to over 18,000 staff across the country. Some 15 sites received Gold awards. The event also showcased the Making Meals Matter – Providing a Sustainable Solution project from Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda, where a 42-bed ward used an electronic meal ordering system to minimise food wastage and improve patient experience.

- **Steps to Health Challenge:** The seventh consecutive year of the national challenge took place from 8 May to 11 June 2023. Some 6,631 participants were supported by 880 volunteer peer team coordinators. Nine out of 10 team coordinators reported that team members enjoyed the social aspect and were happy to participate in the challenge. Almost all team coordinators said they would coordinate teams in future challenges.

## Partnerships and collaborations

### Physical Activity for People with Chronic Conditions

One in two Irish adults aged 50+ years live with at least one long-term chronic condition. Physical Activity for People with Chronic Conditions (PACC) is a multiagency collaboration of physical activity and healthcare professionals with academics from the South East Technological University and the Technological University of the Shannon. It aims to identify and test innovative approaches that address the systemic barriers which limit opportunities for people living with chronic conditions to participate in community-based physical activity and recreational sport. PACC is funded from the Dormant Accounts Fund via Sport Ireland.

The HEAL Programme provided additional funding in 2023 to the PACC project titled Quality Assured Education and Training for Exercise Professionals Working with Chronic Conditions. This project aims to address the training and capacity building needs of emerging graduates and those already working in the physical activity sector to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to work safely with people living with chronic conditions.

**Take steps to better health at work**

- Walk to talk
- Move about
- Use the stairs
- Sit less

Steps to Health

[hse.ie/stepschallenge](https://hse.ie/stepschallenge)

HSE hi





### Active Healthy Me

Active Healthy Me is a health, wellbeing, and physical activity e-learning programme for disability day services that aims to enable people with disabilities to be more active and live a healthy lifestyle. The programme is developed and managed by Active Disability Ireland in partnership with the HSE. It consists of six e-learning modules hosted on the Active Disability Ireland e-learning platform, which highlight the benefits, impact, and importance of exercise and being active. It focuses on the value of good nutrition and hydration, while also educating participants on where they can be active in their local community.

In 2023, some 12 HP&I officers were trained to deliver Skills-to-Practice sessions for services. Thirteen Skills-to-Practice services were delivered in 352 sites across 26 counties registered for the programme, with 92% actively engaged with the e-learning platform.



### European Congress on Obesity Conference

Working with the National Clinical Programme for Obesity, the HEAL Programme supported 20 healthcare professionals from across Ireland to attend the European Congress on Obesity at the Convention Centre, Dublin on 17–20 May 2023. The programme hosted a stand to share information and promote resources, such as the booklet *Talking about Weight: A Guide to Developing Healthy Habits* (HSE 2021), MECC training, and the Obesity Model of Care (National Clinical Programme for Obesity 2021).



Members the HEAL Programme, the Association for the Study for Obesity in Ireland, and H&W sponsored attendees at the European Congress on Obesity, May 2023

# Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme

## Priorities of national programme

The Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) has responsibility within the HSE for implementing the **National Sexual Health Strategy** (NSHS) 2015–2020 (DoH 2015) and for the provision of unplanned pregnancy counselling services nationally. The NSHS is the national framework for sexual health and wellbeing and work on the next strategy is underway, led by the Department of Health. The SHCPP comprises six functions: Clinical; Education and Training; Communications; Funding; Research; and Finance and Administration.

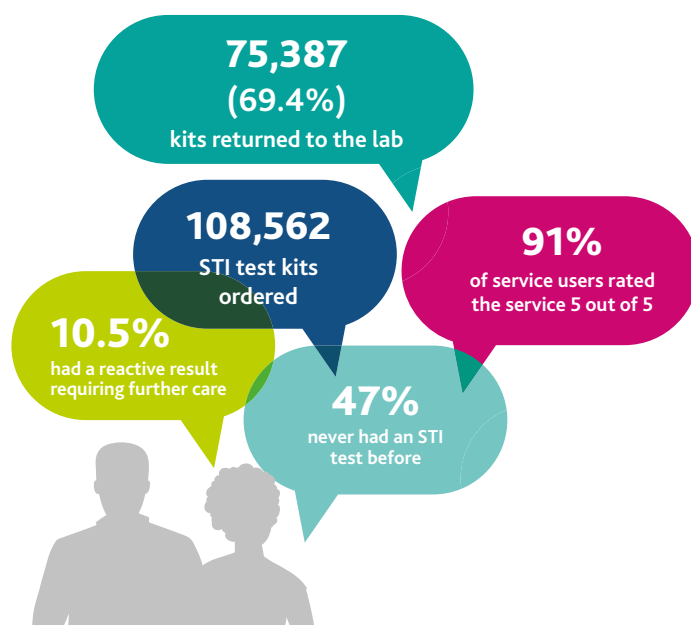
## Key SHCPP successes

- The MyOptions Unplanned Pregnancy Helpline took 14,530 calls and 1,228 webchats.
- Medication was dispensed to 5,273 individuals through the national HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Programme.
- 108,562 free STI (sexually transmitted infection) home-testing kits were ordered.
- For its free STI home-testing across Ireland in partnership with Enfer Medical, the SHCPP and SH:24 won the award for Innovation in Healthcare and Medicine at

the Irish Healthcare Awards on 5 December 2023 at the Convention Centre in Dublin.

- The teaching and learning module Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) 1 and RSE 2 were published to comply with the 2023 Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum specification (SHCPPa 2023; SHCPPb 2023).
- Over 1,318,239 condoms were distributed through the National Condom Distribution Service.

## National Home STI Testing Service in 2023



At the 2023 Irish Healthcare Awards (L to R): Simon McGuinness (Homecare Medical); Dolores Barry (Enfer Medical Commercial Director); Helen Deely (HSE H&W Assistant National Director); Orla McGowan, (SHCPP Lead); Rachael Metrustry (SHCPP Project Officer); Prof. Fiona Lyons (SHCPP Sexual Health Clinical Lead); Caroline Hurley (SHCPP Project Manager); Justin Harbottle (SH:24 Business Development Manager); and host Anton Savage.



## Key actions in 2023

### Clinical Services

The Clinical Services function has responsibility for the clinical actions of the NSHS, which includes the development of clinical practice guidance, information, and resources to support sexual health services in Ireland.

In 2023, the Clinical Services function:

- Continued delivery of the national HIV PrEP Programme. At end-2023, there were 13 public and 17 private approved PrEP service providers in Ireland. Some 5,273 individuals were dispensed PrEP medication at least once in 2023, of whom 1,322 were dispensed PrEP for the first time. The development of a HIV PrEP e-learning programme commenced to increase the number of HSE-approved PrEP providers in Ireland. The e-learning programme will be available on HSeLanD in 2024.
- Continued provision of the national free home-testing service for STIs integrated with public STI clinics. Commenced a remote chlamydia management pilot to enable users with low complexity chlamydia to obtain a prescription for treatment without the need to attend a public STI clinic. In collaboration with Public Health in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, commenced an all-Ireland pilot of oropharyngeal gonorrhoea sampling in users under 25 years old to better understand current gonorrhoea rates in young people.
- Began compiling the report from the Fast-Track Cities HIV scoping study conducted in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. The study report will be published in 2024.
- In collaboration with the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and HIV treatment services, coordinated a national HIV treatment audit to update Ireland's continuum of HIV care and to monitor Ireland's progress towards the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets. The audit results are being analysed and will be published in 2024.

## SHCPP IN 2023



**National Free Home STI Testing Service: 108,562** STI test kits ordered



**National Condom Distribution Service: 1,318,239** condoms and **688,381** lubricant sachets provided



**PrEP Programme: 5273** individuals dispensed PrEP medication at least once



**MyOptions Unplanned Pregnancy Helpline: 14,530** calls received and **1228** webchats



**Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion: 13** programmes delivered, reaching a total of **187** people.

## PrEP PROGRAMME IN 2023



**13** public and **17** private approved PrEP service providers in Ireland



**5273** individuals dispensed PrEP at least once



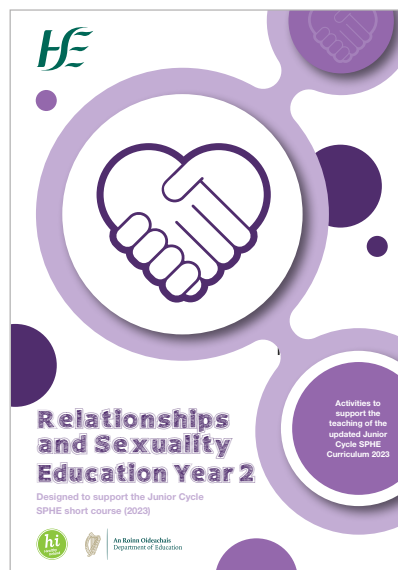
**1322** individuals dispensed PrEP at least once

### Education and Training

The Education and Training function continued to progress actions under its Sexual Health Promotion Training Strategy to enable parents, teachers, and youth workers to address the sexual health education and information needs of children and young people. There was continued support for professionals in promoting the sexual health of a diverse range of population groups, including the general population, older people, people with disabilities, migrants, and ethnic minorities.

In 2023, the Education and Training function:

- Established and hosted the Sexual Health Promotion Practitioner Network, in conjunction with a representative from HSE Health & Wellbeing manager group.
  - Delivered one-day continuous professional development training to all sexual health facilitators.
  - Partnered with CHO 9 to develop and pilot a one-day sexual health promotion training programme for professionals working with international protection applicants.
- Supported and monitored the national roll-out of the updated Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion as well as the policy training, Working Safely and Effectively in Sexual Health Promotion.
  - Updated and republished the teaching and learning modules, **RSE 1**, to comply with the 2023 SPHE curriculum specification. Completed and published the **RSE 2** module.







## TRAINING NUMBERS IN 2023



Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion: **13** programmes delivered, reaching a total of **187** people



Working Safely and Effectively in Sexuality and Wellbeing – Developing Policy and Guidelines: **6** training programmes delivered, reaching a total of **69** people

## Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services

In 2023, the Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services function managed funding arrangements with 24 statutory organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), funded to provide crisis pregnancy counselling, parenting support, community HIV testing, sexual health promotion training, and sexual health outreach. In 2023, the Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services function:

- Continued to provide funding to unplanned pregnancy counselling services in 30 locations throughout the country.
- Liaised with crisis pregnancy counselling services as part of the review of crisis pregnancy counselling in Ireland to inform future planning in relation to these services.
- Provided funding to a range of NGOs to deliver counselling, training, parenting support, and testing.
- Managed and oversaw service delivery and the procurement process in relation to the MyOptions service. The MyOptions freephone helpline and webchat service provides free, non-judgemental information and support to anyone in Ireland

experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, including information about how to access abortion services in Ireland.

- The MyOptions service took 14,530 calls and 1,228 webchats in 2023. Some 12,368 of these calls related to support provided by the MyOptions Information and Counselling service, while 2,162 calls related to medical information and support managed by the nursing line team.

## Research

The Research function commissions research and evaluation studies; monitors trends related to crisis pregnancy and sexual health; and disseminates and supports the implementation of research findings to inform policy and improve practice. In 2023, the Research function:

- Completed a review of crisis pregnancy counselling in Ireland. The outcome of the review was a series of recommendations for the future of the service.
- Published a report summarising the National Condom Distribution Service's activities in 2022 (SHCPP 2023 c).
- Commissioned and provided oversight on a research project, led by the ESRI, analysing Growing Up in Ireland data on sexual health behaviour and literacy of 20-year-olds in Ireland. The first of three reports from the project – an in-depth analysis of self-reported pornography use – was submitted to the project's steering group for review in 2023.





- Managed a competitive research award to the University of Galway for the delivery of a general population sexual health survey (INISH – Irish National Survey of Sexual Health). INISH will assess the current sexual health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours of those living in Ireland over the coming years. The Research function supported the research team with project set-up, initiation, and the development of governance protocols, such as the establishment of a steering group and two public–patient involvement panels, for the life cycle of the study.
- Coordinated Ireland’s participation in the European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS) 2024, including the establishment and coordination of a local steering group and project-specific subcommittees.



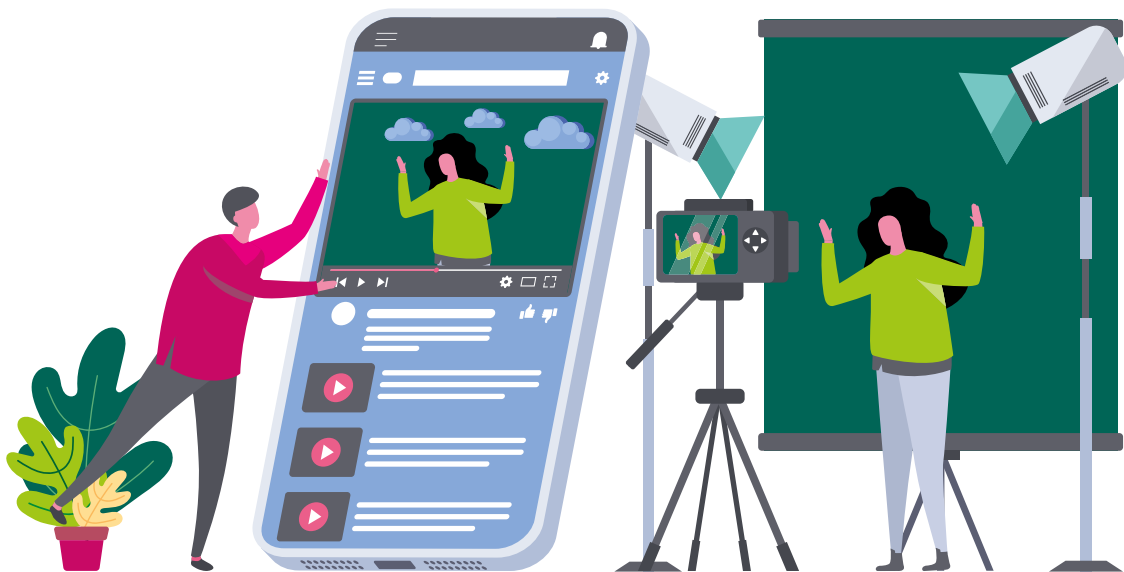
## Communications

The Communications function works closely with the HSE Programmes and Campaigns team to design and implement targeted sexual health campaigns, as well as to develop and disseminate sexual health information. In 2023, the Communications function:

- Expanded out-of-home advertising placements and reach in 2023. For the first time we advertised in FLYEfit gyms, reaching new audiences, and delivered on street projection on South William Street, Dublin, advertising for free STI home-testing.
- Participated in a third-level sexual health roadshow that visited 15 locations across the country. Trialled a new form of precision VOD and display, with strong results and insights to date.
- Partnered with the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) for its annual Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance (SHAG) Week campaign, which distributed **sexual resource packs** to third-level stakeholders. It resulted in over 7,000 orders of posters and leaflets and 42 boxes of STI testing cards.
- In partnership with Munster Technological University Cork, produced a six-part video series about free sexual health services available to students and young people. Topics covered included free prescription contraception and how to access it; free emergency contraception and how to access it; free STI testing; free condoms and where to find them; and the MyOptions service.

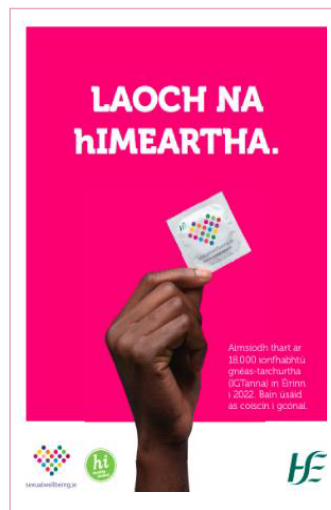


- Promoted these videos across HSE social platforms, including TikTok and Instagram, and through precision VOD. These videos were among top-performing content on social and precision VOD.
- Launched an All About Contraception **video series**. The script was developed by P&C in close collaboration with Dr Ciara McCarthy, HSE GP clinical lead for women's health, and HSE Social, with sign-off from HSE Communications, SHCPP and Primary Care.
- Created 14 videos, covering the range of contraceptive choices and their advantages and disadvantages; common questions about contraception; the free service, emergency contraception, My Options; importance of condom use in preventing STIs and testing.





- Produced three new Irish-language condom promotion creatives. This creative was first shared on the new Virgin Media bilingual dating series, *Grá ar an Trá*, in out-of-home advertising in bars, retail and gym settings as well as on Sexual Wellbeing.ie social platforms.
- Provided sexual health information to **Man2Man**, which is a joint campaign administered by the Gay Health Network and the SHCPP to promote safer sex among men who have sex with men (MSM). It is part of the national HIV Prevention and Sexual Health Awareness programme for



MSM and funded under the National Sexual Health Strategy. In 2023, Man2Man reported 32,700 visits to the website since April 2023, which was the combined Q1 figures with Google Analytics 4 figures since April.

- Launched a new STI testing stakeholder campaign to support a free testing service in May 2023.
- Launched a new Proud and Prepared creative and a new Vaccines creative in June and September 2023, respectively.
- Supported ongoing prevention messages and updates about mpox and shigella.
- Continued to promote condoms, PrEP, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U) across Man2Man advertising channels.



## STRATEGIC DIGITAL CONTENT IN 2023



Video views of social content increased by **920%** – over 37 million views



Engagements increased by **92%** year-on-year (181,000 clicks/swipes)

# SECTION 3

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## Programme Supports



# SECTION 3

## Programme Supports

The work of HSE H&W and its National Policy Priority Programmes is underpinned by a range of programme supports. They work collaboratively and cross-sectorally at national and local level to implement the Healthy Ireland actions and deliver improved population health outcomes for all. Key to this work is Section 39 Non-Acute/Community Agencies, which are being provided with funding under Section 39 of the Health Act 2004.

**The following support programmes are included in this section.**







## Training and Programme Design

### Priorities of programme

The aim of Training and Programme Design is to coordinate, design, develop, and evaluate training programmes, together with the NPPPs, to prevent chronic disease and to support improved health and wellbeing. The programme includes implementation of the MECC framework as well as the implementation of the HSE Education Programme.

National training programmes are developed under each of the respective policy programmes to address key policy objectives. These evidence-informed training programmes are delivered locally through skilled and experienced CHO Health Promotion and Improvement (HP&I) teams. The reach and target audience of these training programmes include key stakeholders to promote health and wellbeing, such as healthcare professionals across all settings, staff from other statutory agencies, community and voluntary organisation partners, education partners, and others.

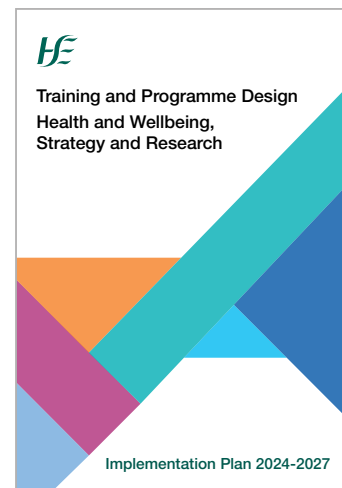
### Activities and developments

#### Implementation Plan 2024–2027

#### A Training and Programme Design Implementation Plan 2024–2027

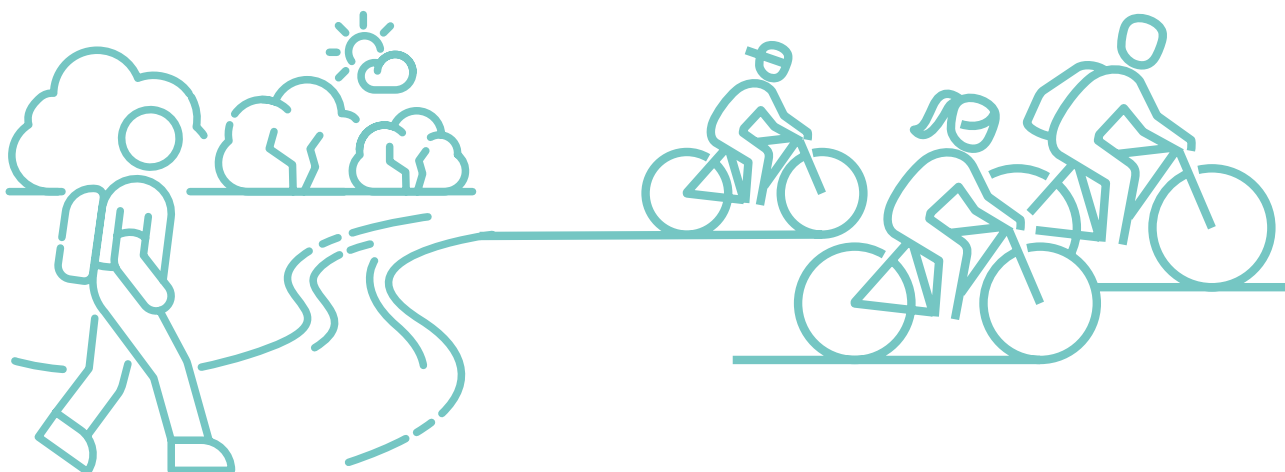
was initiated in 2023 (HSE 2024). Feedback was sought from internal and external

stakeholders to inform the final actions identified. The plan is complete and was published in early 2024.



#### Training Leads Practitioner Network

The consistent delivery of the programmes is supported by Training and Programme Design in partnership with the Training Leads Practitioner Network. The network of nominated health promotion and improvement training leads aims to provide guidance, share good practice, and ensure consistent and standardised delivery of core training programmes.



# Education and Training

## Priorities of programme

The Education Programme works to embed evidence-based health promotion practices in education settings, including early learning and care, primary and post-primary schools, and higher education. Partnerships with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth (DCEDIY), the Department of Education, and the Higher Education Authority guide and support this work. Together we develop supports, resources, and programmes that enable education settings to play their part in creating a healthy Ireland.

## Activities and developments

### Early learning and care

A programme of work to support early learning and care practitioners to promote emotional wellbeing, healthy eating, and active living in their services has been agreed with the DCEDIY. This work, which commenced in 2023, seeks to develop six e-learning modules that will be made available on DCEDIY's Nurturing Skills learning hub; module development will commence in early 2024.

### Primary and post-primary education

Wellbeing in primary and post-primary schools is supported through the development of teaching resources and teacher training aligned to the Department of Education's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice and SPHE curriculum and specifications. This work is guided and supported by our partnerships with the Department of Education the NCCA, and the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

**New SPHE resources published:** In 2023, two new units of learning were added to the HSE Junior Cycle SPHE Resource. They

are aligned to the new Junior Cycle SPHE Specification (2023) and supported by the Department of Education and NCCA. The two new units are:

- Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) 2: This unit builds on the learning in RSE 1 and covers topics such as relationships, consent, selfies, sexting, and reproductive health.
- Making Healthy Choices (MHC) 2: This unit builds on the learning in MHC 1 and covers topics such as food marketing, e-cigarettes and vaping, and alcohol.

In total, six units of learning are now available to download from the **HSE Health and Wellbeing website**.



**Next steps:** Development has begun on RSE 3, MHC 3 and Emotional Wellbeing 2 and 3 in partnership with the NCCA and Department of Education.

**Skills for facilitating SPHE training for teachers:** To support the use of these resources, a two-day training course for post-primary teachers was co-created with HP&I called Skills for Facilitating SPHE. It is supported by the Department of Education



through the provision of substitution cover for teachers who attend. Roll-out of this training began in September 2023, with a positive response from teachers.

It was brilliant. Well-paced, interactive, experiential and well-balanced!

Very useful and engaging!

I really liked the variety of teaching methodologies and actively doing them.

Very well-structured and well put together training!

### E-cigarette Information and Guidance for Schools

Information and guidance on e-cigarettes for schools was published in November 2023 (HSE 2023c). It supports schools in taking a whole-school approach to this challenge. It includes signposts to curricular supports including the SPHE resource and Know the Score, and information for circulation to parents.



HP&I staff participating in the Train the Trainer programme for Skills for Facilitating SPHE in October 2023.



### Teacher training

Teacher training is planned with the Department of Education and delivered by HP&I. Training courses act as a mechanism for the achievement of NPPP goals in primary and post-primary schools and are supported by the Department of Education by the provision of substitution cover for attendees (see Table 2, Table 3 and Figure 5).

#### Mental Health and Wellbeing and Alcohol:

- Zippy’s Friends – social and emotional learning programme for 5–7-year-olds
- MindOut – social and emotional wellbeing programme for 15–17-year-olds
- Know the Score – substance use education for post-primary Senior Cycle students.

#### Healthy Eating and Active Living:

- Healthy Eating Policy development – primary and post-primary schools
- Physical Activity – primary schools.

#### Cross-cutting:

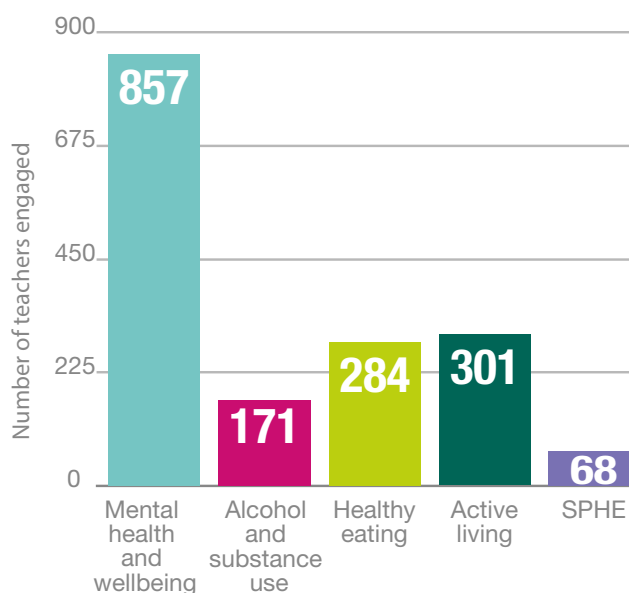
- Supporting TFI, HEAL, and Mental Health and Wellbeing and Alcohol Programmes
- Skills for Facilitating SPHE – supporting teachers to develop the skills to implement the SPHE curriculum effectively.

**Table 2: Education Programme training courses for primary schools delivered, 2023**

Training	Courses (n)	Participants (n)
Zippy’s Friends (in-person)	17	348
Zippy’s Friends (online)	12	203
Physical Activity	17	301
Healthy Eating Policy	11	195
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>1047</b>

**Table 3: Education Programme training courses for post-primary schools delivered, 2023**

Training	Courses (n)	Participants (n)
MindOut (in-person)	15	233
MindOut (online)	8	73
Know the Score (in-person)	7	99
Know the Score (online)	9	72
Healthy Eating Policy	6	89
Skills for Facilitating SPHE	7	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>634</b>

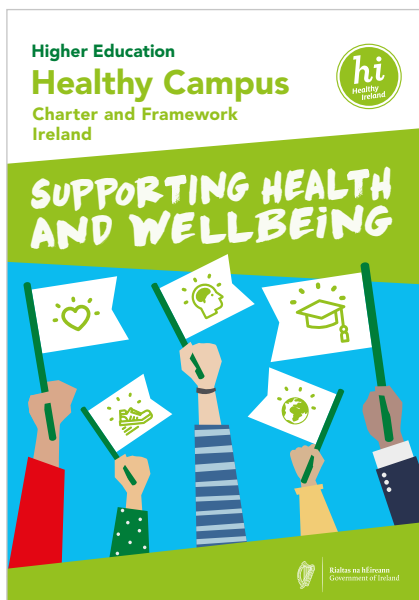


**Figure 5: Number of teachers engaged in the Education Programme, by area/topic, 2023**



## Higher education

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) promote health and wellbeing through the implementation of the Healthy Campus Charter and Framework (HEIs/DoH/HSE 2021). This process is supported by the Higher Education Authority and Healthy Ireland. The Education Programme represents the HSE Health and Wellbeing on the National Healthy Campus Steering Committee to link the HEIs with the work of the NPPPs, where appropriate.



## Other partnerships

Through grant aid agreements, the Education Programme supports organisations promoting health and wellbeing with young people. These include:

- **Young Social Innovators (YSI)** is a non-profit organisation that empowers young people to come up with innovative solutions to social challenges. Through this programme, young people develop advocacy skills to enable them to promote health in their communities now and throughout their lives.
- The **National Youth Council Ireland** works with youth workers and volunteers to build a culture of health promotion in its services. Its Health Quality Mark promotes and acknowledges high standards of health promotion practices in youth work settings; organisations are enabled to do this work through the delivery of special certificates in youth health and youth mental health promotion.

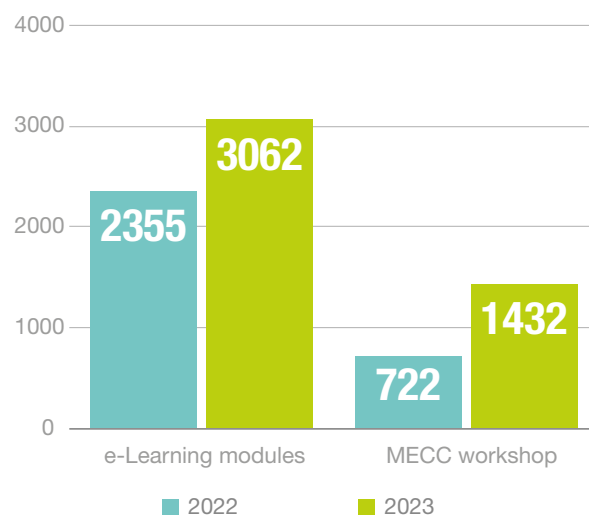




# Making Every Contact Count

## Priorities of programme

To encourage and support more people to make healthier choices, the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) programme works with local healthcare professionals to ensure they have the capability to deliver brief interventions and advice to all patients regarding healthy behaviours. This applies for smoking, alcohol use, physical activity, mental wellbeing, and diet and nutrition. Over 4,400 frontline healthcare staff completed the MECC e-learning and in-person workshops in 2023.



**Figure 6: MECC training within the health service, 2022–2023**

## Activities and developments

### Implementation of MECC within the health service

In 2023, some 3,062 staff completed the e-learning modules, while 1,423 staff completed the MECC workshop (see Table 4), which were a considerable increase on 2022 (see Figure 6).

**Table 4: MECC training within the health service, 2023**

Training	Staff participants (n)
e-Learning modules	3062
MECC workshop	1432
<b>Total</b>	<b>4485</b>

### MECC resources available on HSeLanD

MECC e-learning is available on **HSeLanD** and includes eight modules that address health behaviour change. These include:

- Introduction to Behaviour Change
- Tobacco Free
- Alcohol and Drug Use
- Healthy Food for Life
- Get Ireland Active
- Skills into Practice
- Talking about Overweight and Obesity
- Promoting Mental Health.

Following completion of the MECC e-learning, a workshop called Enhancing Your Brief Intervention Skills is available nationally and coordinated by local MECC health promotion leads.



### Implementing MECC in maternity settings

Seven MECC Enhancing Your Skills workshops were delivered in 2023 for staff in the maternity setting using resources adapted for that setting.

### MECC Trainer Mentoring Process

The MECC programme team developed a MECC Trainer Mentoring Process to support the continued development and progression of MECC training nationally. A further training-for-trainer event is planned for 2024 to maintain the pool of trainers nationally to deliver the Enhancing Your Skills workshop.

### Implementation resources

The five MECC infographics launched in 2022 and the revised MECC Implementation Guide – co-produced by the MECC team and MECC mobilisers to provide guidance to staff having a lead role in supporting MECC implementation in CHOs and hospitals – continued to be utilised in 2023 to support MECC implementation (HSE 2022c).

### MECC Digital

The MECC Digital pilot concluded in September 2023. The pilot was implemented in 32 healthcare sites spread across six CHOs and four Hospital Groups. A final report called **The Evaluation of the MECC Digital Pilot** is available on HSeLanD, whose findings will be used to incorporate MECC into the Integrated Community Case Management System (ICCMS) in the future.

## MECC Digital

### MECC Implementation Plan 2024–2027

A MECC Implementation Plan has been developed and incorporated into the **Training and Programme Design Implementation Plan 2024–2027** (HSE 2024). The key recommendations in the Making MECC Work research at University of Galway (recipient of a Health Research Board Applied Partnership Award) have directly influenced the strategic priorities for the MECC programme. In 2023, the research findings and the evidence-based recommendations presented in the Making MECC Work policy brief (Byrne *et al.* 2022) were disseminated to key stakeholders.



Staff of the Midland Regional Hospital Tullamore who attended MECC training on 15 November 2023: Loreto Howard, Mary O'Meara Whelan, Geraldine Kelly, Sheila Stephens, Annette McKelvey, Claire McCann and Eileen Shinnors.

# Men's Health

## Priorities of programme

Through the *Healthy Ireland Men's Action Plan 2017–2021* (HSE 2016), a network of highly engaged stakeholders deliver on programmes targeting men's health and on empowering other organisations to better engage with men to support their health and social care needs. HSE H&W and partner organisations deliver Engage Men's Health Training to support this work. Men's Health Week is the key annual campaign through which various men's health issues are highlighted and men are encouraged to improve their help-seeking behaviours. The HSE funds and works with the Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI), the Men's Development Network (MDN), the National Centre for Men's Health in the South East Technological University (SETU) and the Irish Men's Sheds Association (IMSA) to develop a programme of research, training and information. HSE H&W is currently drafting a second Healthy Ireland Men Action Plan in conjunction with stakeholders and partners.

## Activities and developments

### Engaging Men webinars



The Men's Health webinar series continued in April, June, September and November 2023 in collaboration with the Men's Development Network, MHFI, and the Men's Health Research Centre. Special guests included Dr Mark Rowe – medical doctor, author and health and wellbeing champion – and David Gillick – record-breaking 400-metre athlete, author, celebrity *MasterChef Ireland* winner

and mental health advocate. Over 2,000 people registered to attend the webinars, with very positive feedback received.

### Men's Health Week

In 2023, Men's Health Week ran from 12 to 18 June. It was coordinated by MHFI, with the theme, the Picture of Health, developed through the Men's Health Week All-Ireland Planning Group. The week was



promoted through traditional and social media. A new men's health booklet called *Action Man* was published and distributed throughout Men's Health Week (Murray and Fowler 2023). This proved very popular and will be reprinted for 2024. Other notable successes included support during the week from high profile 'ambassadors' such as Eoin Kernan – star of the RTÉ *Unspoken* documentary about men and eating disorders – and Irish middleweight boxing champion Spike O'Sullivan.

Regionally, Men's Health Week was activated through a number of local agencies and a growing number of HP&I staff reaching out to their staff and local communities.

### Engage Men's Health Training: Connecting with Men

Engage – Connecting with Men is a one-day workshop offered to a broad range of practitioners. The programme was developed to address the deficit in gender-sensitive service provision for men and to assist practitioners in building relationships and meeting the health and wellbeing needs of males of all ages. Following the train-the-trainer course in 2022, some 27 training courses were completed during 2023, with an average attendance of 14 participants per course. Due to demand, plans commenced in 2023 to roll out further training for trainers in 2024.





## Sheds for Life

Operated by IMSA, Sheds for Life is a community-based health promotion programme aimed at supporting the social wellbeing of **Men's Sheds** members.



The purpose of the 10-week programme is to engage men to successfully facilitate more open and meaningful discussions around their physical and mental wellbeing, while encouraging them to maintain healthier lifestyle choices and increase their awareness in areas such as physical activity, healthy eating, and mental wellbeing.

The development of Sheds for Life commenced in 2016 and the programme is supported by the HSE, Sláintecare integrated funding, and a host of national healthcare organisations. Following an evaluation in 2021, the Sheds for Life programme continued to be rolled out across the country in 2023.

Programme delivery included engagement across three counties – Donegal, Sligo and Cork – and involved 30 participating sheds and 340 participating men. The programme components include health screenings; diabetes workshops; mind your mental health talks; cancer prevention workshops; a healthy food and nutrition component; exercise

for shedders; a digital training component; bereavement and loss talks; oral health; and dental awareness workshops.

Other national highlights included:

- **Grow It Yourself and CIÉ growing initiative:** Tullyallen Men's Shed, Co. Louth was the overall winner in 2023 of this initiative.
- **New research with IMSA National 'How Are You 2023?':** Led by Dr Carol Power of University College Cork, a questionnaire was distributed to all Men's Sheds in 2023. The results of the survey were launched in *Men's Sheds and the Sustainable Development Goals*.
- **Digital literacy in older men:** Following IMSA consultation to increase digital literacy in older men, further consultation and pilot projects in association with Age Action/ Movember led to a course being developed, titled Older Men's Experience with Digital Technology in Rural Ireland. This will be rolled out in 2024 to Men's Sheds.
- **Men's Health Week:** The inaugural An Slí as a national Shed activity on Inis Oírr with Men's Sheds in Co. Galway/Co. Mayo was launched in association with Mayo County Council. The national campaign throughout the week included an Open Mornings campaign in Men's Sheds.



Connecting with Men training in Longford.



## On Feirm Ground 2

Building on the established partnership between the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), the Department of Health, Men’s Development Network, and the HSE in the area of men’s health and farmers’ health, a further programme was developed and initiated in 2023 to enable agricultural professionals to have health and wellbeing conversations with farmers. The partners formally agreed to fund On Feirm Ground 2 for the next three years. Ministers of State Martin Heydon TD and Hildegard Naughton TD formally announced the new programme on Tuesday, 19 September 2023 at the National Ploughing Championships in Ratheniska, Co. Laois. The aim of On Feirm Ground 2 is to assist vets and other agricultural professionals to effectively engage with farmers on health and wellbeing issues and to signpost them to relevant support services. Three staff were recruited by the Men’s Development Network in 2023 to deliver the programme.

As part of our ongoing partnership with DAFM, we supported the successful hosting of a farmer mental health conference on International Men’s Day, titled Cultivating Mental Wellbeing in Rural Ireland. This event was supported by Minister Heydon and engaged farmers and agencies working with farmers, both online and in person.



## Cairde

CAIRDE (Construction Alliance to Reduce



Suicide) is an initiative by MHFI modelled on the MATES in Construction scheme in Australia. CAIRDE seeks to create and embed a whole organisational mental fitness culture within the construction sector, which can actively promote and support men’s mental health and resilience, and reduce the risk of suicide. The initiative is funded by the National Office for Suicide Prevention and the work is supported by two PhD students and the Irish Research Council.

Work in 2023 included:

- Engaging key partners across all areas of the construction sector
- Forming a stakeholder group
- Developing the CAIRDE brand
- Securing research and evaluation support at PhD and postdoctorate level
- Refining the research and consultation methodology and foci
- Obtaining ethical approval
- Consulting with stakeholders on potential challenges and barriers
- Securing buy-in from a diverse range of construction sites
- Developing and administering a survey with 1,700 male construction workers and 650 apprentices
- Analysing the data from the research
- Undertaking two systematic reviews
- Conducting qualitative interviews with male construction workers who have had suicidal ideation
- Hosting focus groups and co-designing workshops with a broad range of site personnel
- Creating bespoke content and resources for training sessions with workers and managers.

This work will continue in 2024.





# Self-Management Support

## Priorities of programme

Self-management support (SMS) aims to increase a person's knowledge, confidence and skills when looking after their health. Self-management is what a person with a long-term health condition does every day. This may include:

- Recognising and dealing with symptoms (known as monitoring your condition)
- Taking medication(s)
- Managing other treatments
- Attending various appointments
- Making lifestyle changes
- Coping with the emotional effects of the condition.

Supporting people to self-manage is an essential aspect of Enhanced Community Care and the Integrated Care Programme for the Prevention and Management of Chronic Disease. It is key to delivering person-centred care, in which people are empowered to actively participate in the management of their condition(s). Equipping our service-users with knowledge, skills and confidence to self-manage is critical to achieving a more sustainable healthcare system.

The role of the self-management support coordinator is to support the awareness and development of services, which increase the ability and confidence of people with long-term health conditions to manage their health and to live well.



## Self-management Support

## Activities and developments

The breadth of SMS work carried out by SMS coordinators in 2023 included:

- Awareness-raising of the importance of self-management and SMS with health and social care professionals (HSCPs), patients, and voluntary organisations.
- Ongoing development, maintenance and promotion of a dedicated SMS webpage for HSCPs that details the resources, directories and education programmes available to them, which in turn enables them to support their patients to self-manage.
- Ongoing development, maintenance and promotion of a dedicated SMS webpage for people living with chronic conditions, which includes clinically approved resources, programmes and services that support self-management.
- Production and promotion of resources that support people with chronic conditions to self-manage and reduce their risk of developing complications or comorbidities.
- Embedding SMS within integrated care pathways for Chronic Disease and Older Persons (CDM) as part of the Enhanced Community Care Programme.
- Cross-sectoral collaboration with condition-specific voluntary organisations (e.g. COPD Support Ireland, Asthma Society of Ireland, Croí, Irish Heart Foundation, Diabetes Ireland). This included development, support and promotion of condition-specific peer support groups as well as assistance with development and promotion of their resources that support people to self-manage.



- Engagement with National Clinical Programmes (e.g. Respiratory, Heart, Diabetes).



All SMS webpages and resources are available on the **HSE SMS webpage** or can be scanned using a QR code.

are facilitated by two trained leaders, one or both of whom are living with a long-term health condition (i.e. peers). Living Well focuses on developing and enhancing the self-management skills of those who complete the programme. In this way, it complements regular treatment and structured patient-education programmes.



## Activities and developments

### Programme delivery

- In 2023, some 126 Living Well Programmes were delivered in-person or online to 1,444 people across seven CHOs. These figures reflect a significant increase in programme delivery and participation on those of 2022 (see Figure 7).
- 29 new programme leaders were trained.

## LIVING WELL

The **HSE Living Well Programme** is an evidence-based self-management programme for adults with long-term health conditions, delivered in-person or online. Over six weeks, participants develop practical skills and confidence to better manage their health to live well with their health condition. Workshops



Your toolkit for better health

### Programme promotion

- There was ongoing development, maintenance and promotion of a dedicated webpage for the Living Well Programme. More information is available on the **HSE Living Well webpage** or can be scanned using a QR code.

**What is covered each week?**

- Week 1**
  - Using your mind to manage symptoms
  - Fatigue and getting a good night's sleep
  - Introduction to action plans
- Week 2**
  - Dealing with difficult emotions
  - Physical activity, exercise, preventing falls
- Week 3**
  - Decision making
  - Pain management
  - Healthy eating
- Week 4**
  - Better breathing
  - Reading food labels
  - Communication skills
- Week 5**
  - Medication management
  - Positive thinking, dealing with low mood and feelings of depression
- Week 6**
  - Making informed treatment decisions
  - Planning for the future

**What people have said about the programme**

"It made me aware of my habits and gave me the tools to make positive changes"

"I have never done a course like this before. It was so truly enjoyable and I learned so much about myself and living with my illness"

"I met wonderful people with other illnesses and this made me feel 'not alone' which helped me emotionally"

For more information on the Living Well Programme, please contact:

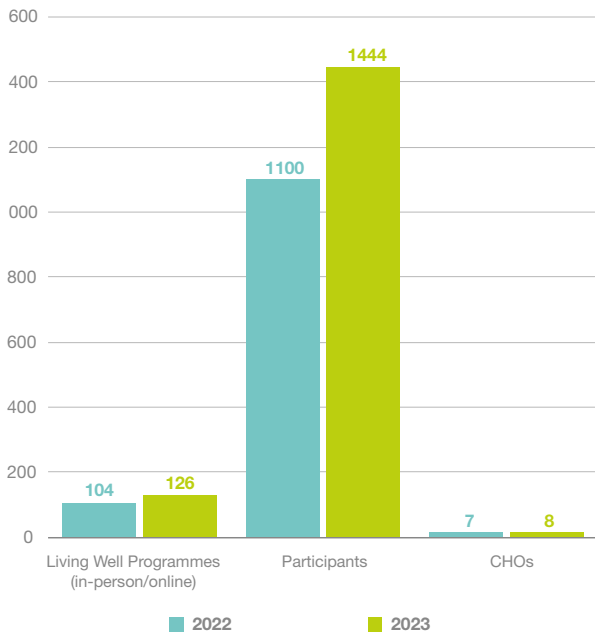
www.hse.ie/LivingWell  
HSELive: Freephone 1800 700 700

**Living Well**  
A Programme for Adults with Long-term Health Conditions

www.hse.ie/LivingWell

Logos: SMRC, Slaintecare, HSE, Living Well, Self-management Support.





**Figure 7: Living Well Programme activity, 2022–2023**

### HSE Talking Health and Wellbeing Podcast on the Living Well Programme

A HSE Talking Health and Wellbeing Podcast on the Living Well Programme was broadcast on 22 March 2023, hosted by Eamon Keogh. In the **podcast**, Tommy shared his experience of participating in the Living



Well Programme, his personal challenges and how the programme offered practical help and support. Liz Cox, a Living Well leader, talked about the structure of the programme and what people can expect. Mary Gowing, a HSE self-management support coordinator, discussed the history of the Living Well Programme and its origins, and explained what is a long-term health condition.

### Healthlink

The SMS coordinators progressed the addition of the Living Well Programme onto the Healthlink platform during 2023 to enable General Practice to refer to the programme.



A Living Well online workshop.



Patients attending a Living Well in-person workshop.



# Stakeholder Engagement and Communications

## Priorities of programme

The aim of the Stakeholder Engagement and Communications (SE&C) team is to coordinate and increase the reach and engagement of HSE H&W information and resources by working in conjunction with HSE H&W programmes and in collaboration with HSE Communications. Our role includes marketing, stakeholder engagement, internal communications, media, digital and social, and operational communications. We work with the priority programmes, linking with the Health Regions and with many agencies and other public bodies.

## Activities and developments

### Internal communication

As part of our work to showcase and engage the activity of our various policy areas, during 2023 we delivered a weekly health and wellbeing email update to all CHO heads of Health and Wellbeing, H&W managers, and key H&W contact points in the Hospital Groups. We also worked closely with HSE Internal Communications regarding their weekly broadcast emails to utilise this channel as appropriate for our work and integrated H&W content through the *Health Matters* internal staff magazine. We continued to support the Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Practitioner Network made up of regional staff working in the area to share information and build a network of good practice for this area of work.

### HSE Talking Health and Wellbeing podcast

A new H&W podcast called HSE Talking Health and Wellbeing was launched in February 2023 with an initial plan to produce 10 episodes. Hosted by HSE staff, the podcast provides a new platform to discuss and display the different aspects of HSE H&W activities as well as community partner activities. Listeners can

benefit from insights from healthcare experts and service user experiences throughout the series. The podcast was promoted to health service staff and stakeholders with the support of HSE Internal and Digital Communications.

The focus for 2023 was on establishing this new channel through our internal and external stakeholder networks. A Listener Survey was carried out in July 2023, which gave the impetus to building on this work and promoting it further to the public. By year-end, we had 37 episodes online, with successful public and stakeholder engagement – 36,000 downloads on our podcast channels and 16,700 views on YouTube.



There were many ways to access the podcasts, including **PodBean** and the **HSE Health and Wellbeing YouTube channel**.

### HSE Health and Wellbeing e-zine



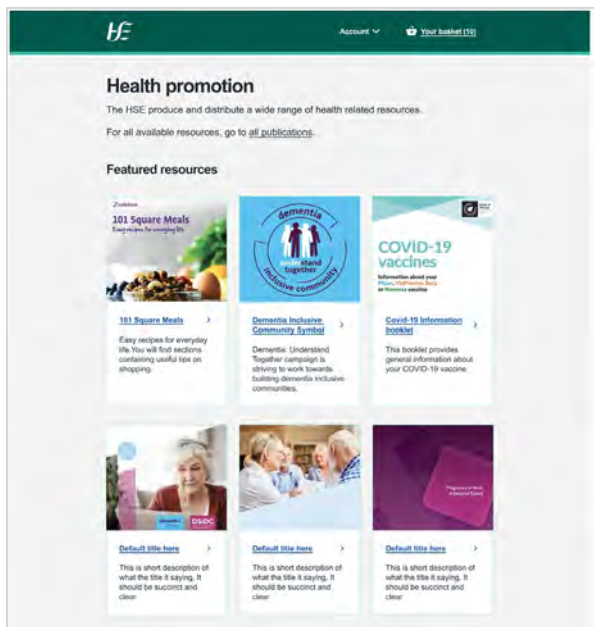
Five issues of the e-zine were produced during 2023 and contained a range of stories about different health and wellbeing initiatives at



local and national level. The e-zine has been designed for a growing online audience to give a bright, quick and easy-to-use format for sharing a range of H&W updates. There are over 12,000 subscribers and it is growing steadily.

### HSE Health Promotion website

The **Health Promotion website** ([www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)) is a central hub for health-related resources and information. It provides educational materials, campaign information, and various resources across a wide range of topics, aimed at supporting individuals, communities, and healthcare professionals to make informed choices and enhance their overall health and wellbeing. During 2023, the website underwent extensive redevelopment to improve user experience, functionality, security, and content. The redevelopment is due for completion at the end of 2024.



### HSE web content review of Health and Wellbeing

The SE&C team is leading a content review project of all associated health and wellbeing content on the HSE website. Working in conjunction with HSE Digital, the team is

engaging with each of the different areas within health and wellbeing. The aim of the project is to ensure that all related content is up-to-date, easily accessible, and understandable to improve user experience. The project is due for completion at the end of 2024.

### Media training

HSE Media Training ran a series of training sessions for regional H&W staff to assist them in preparing for interviews with local and national media. Some 26 HP&I staff successfully completed the HSE Media Training programme. The objective of this course is to encourage, empower, and enable staff to deliver clear and effective media interviews; the course included media interview preparation techniques.

### HSE H&W webinars and events

Four webinars and four recorded in-person events were planned and produced with the support of the SE&C team in 2023, with over 3,000 registrations. These webinars and events showcased experienced staff in various policy areas as well as from our partner organisations promoting health and wellbeing by focusing on priority topics and themes. The organisation and development of the National Health Promotion Conference was also supported jointly by the University of Galway and the Department of Health. Many of these events are available to watch on the **HSE Health and Wellbeing YouTube channel**:

- **Men and Mental Health**
- **Whole Systems Approach to Obesity**
- **Men's Health Week**
- **Healthy Ireland Conference**
- **International Men's Day**
- **Tobacco Free Ireland Endgame**
- **Vaping and E-cigarettes**
- **National Health Promotion Conference**





### X @HsehealthW

The HSE H&W X (formerly Twitter) channel gained more followers in 2023. This channel is used almost daily to keep our stakeholders up-to-date and has been vital in communicating with our followers about new podcast episode releases, initiatives such as Men's Health Week, and upcoming events. We interact with a wide variety of other channels and stakeholders via this channel.

### HSE H&W YouTube channel

Our YouTube channel had over 147,200 views in 2023 of a wide range of promotional and informative videos. We published a series of exercise videos for people with chronic conditions and videos on parental communication with children on topics such as relationships and sexuality from the SHCPP. Subscribers increased by 1,500 during 2023. The new podcast series and the Yoga, Pilates and the Strength and Conditioning for Beginners exercise videos as well as the Minding Your Wellbeing videos proved most popular.

### Video content development

The SE&C team supported our priority programmes during 2023 to develop video content for patients and staff as part of our messaging as well as promotional short videos for use on social media and webinars.

### Development of Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Plan

Work was carried out in 2023 to progress the development of the Health and Wellbeing SE&C Plan. An extensive internal and external stakeholder engagement process was undertaken as part of the plan development, and we extend thanks to all our contributors and colleagues. The plan will be published in 2024 and provides a comprehensive overview of the collaborative approach undertaken and the communication activities delivered across HSE H&W. The plan also calls out the key communication actions that will require focus over the coming years across our range of programmes and priorities.



At the 2023 Health Promotion Conference at the University of Galway (L to R): Prof. Mark Gamsu (Leeds Beckett University); Rebecca McLaughlin (IMSA H&W manager); Dr Verna McKenna (Health Promotion Research Centre – HPRC, University of Galway); Gígja Gunnarsdóttir (Directorate of Health, Iceland); Vinnie O'Shea (National Coordinator, Healthy Ireland Local Government); Chief Medical Officer Prof. Breda Smyth; Minister of State Hildegard Naughton TD; and Dr Martin Power (HPRC, University of Galway).



## Section 39 National Partner Activity

### Commissioning for Health and Wellbeing

Section 39 organisations are voluntary organisations that have service-level agreements with the HSE to provide **health and social care within communities**.

Through our funding of various Section 39 agencies, we commission health and wellbeing activities at a national level with a significant network of organisations. Our policy programmes work to inform the commissioning of health and wellbeing activities by giving expert policy advice and input to other funding streams, such as the Department of Health Healthy Ireland funding and local HP&I-funded activities through the CHO structures. This network of both commissioning and informing others to build health and wellbeing in an evidence-informed way continued to be supported in 2023.

The range of national and locally funded organisations include:

- Local sports partnerships
- Local partnership organisations
- Family resource centres
- Condition-specific voluntary organisations
- Age-related organisations (e.g. young people, older people, etc).
- Gender-specific organisations.

### Grant funding

HSE H&W currently fund 51 Section 39 agencies across all of our programmes, with a total of €6,199,290 in grant funding being paid out in 2023 (see Table 5). A robust governance process is in place with all agencies to ensure that funding is spent as outlined in their grant aid agreement and in accordance with HSE National Financial Regulations. This process includes:

- A detailed review and assessment of grant aid applications by the National Health and Wellbeing Grant Evaluation Committee prior to agreeing funding. Agencies must provide evidence of a valid tax clearance certificate, current bank balance, and an income and expenditure report for funding sought.
- A grant aid agreement drafted and signed by the HSE and agency prior to payment.
- Review meetings between the HSE H&W lead and agency throughout the year to assess performance and discuss any issues arising.
- Annual financial statements, supporting documentation and chairperson's statements submitted by each agency on an annual basis, which are reviewed by our Finance Business partner.





**Table 5: Section 39 agencies funded by the HSE**

Active Disability Ireland (CARA)	Age & Opportunity	Age Friendly Ireland	AkiDwA
Alcohol Action Ireland	Alcohol Forum Ireland	Association of Lactation Consultants in Ireland (ALCI)	Bessborough Centre
Bray Women's Health Centre	Carlow Sports Partnership	Community Creations	Croí
Cuidiú	Diabetes Ireland	Donegal Women's Centre	Dublin Well Woman Centre
Foróige Exit Youth Café	Foróige REAL U	Foróige THI	Friends of Breastfeeding
GAA	Gay Health Network	GOSHH	HIV Ireland
Irish Coalition for People Living with Obesity	Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)	Irish Heart foundation	Irish Men's Sheds Association
La Leche League of Ireland	Limerick Social Service Council	Men's Development Network	Men's Health Forum in Ireland
National Institute for Prevention and Cardiovascular Health	National Nutrition Surveillance Centre	National Parents Council Primary	National Women's Council of Ireland
National Youth Council of Ireland	NYCI	OneFamily (Cherish)	Outhouse
Parkrun	Sexual Health Centre	Sexual Health West	South East Technological University
SouthWest Counselling Centre	Special Olympics Ireland	The No Name Club	Treoir
Waterford Healing Arts Trust	West Cork Counselling & Support Services	Young Social Innovators	Youth Health Service



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alcohol.ie



## Setting boundaries with young people around alcohol

Having rules can help your child to:

- Avoid feeling under too much pressure from friends
- Avoid situations they cannot handle, or later regret
- Feel safer
- Feel loved

Clear, fair rules let your child know where they stand and show you care enough to protect them.

Visit [AskAboutAlcohol.ie](https://www.askaboutalcohol.ie) for more



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## An alcohol-free pregnancy

- No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy.
- Plan ahead and try to avoid triggers which remind you of drinking.
- Plan and prepare for alcohol-free activities
- Check the labels on alcohol-free or low-alcohol drinks as they can contain alcohol.



Know more at [AskAboutAlcohol.ie](https://www.askaboutalcohol.ie)

#TheRightToKnow





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