



**Health  
Information  
and Quality  
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis  
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

# Health Information Strategic Objectives

**2020–2022**

***Safer Better Care***

## About the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory authority established to promote safety and quality in the provision of health and social care services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public.

HIQA's mandate to date extends across a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector services. Reporting to the Minister for Health and engaging with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, HIQA has responsibility for the following:

- **Setting standards for health and social care services** — Developing person-centred standards and guidance, based on evidence and international best practice, for health and social care services in Ireland.
- **Regulating social care services** — The Chief Inspector within HIQA is responsible for registering and inspecting residential services for older people and people with a disability, and children's special care units.
- **Regulating health services** — Regulating medical exposure to ionising radiation.
- **Monitoring services** — Monitoring the safety and quality of health services and children's social services, and investigating as necessary serious concerns about the health and welfare of people who use these services.
- **Health technology assessment** — Evaluating the clinical and cost-effectiveness of health programmes, policies, medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic and surgical techniques, health promotion and protection activities, and providing advice to enable the best use of resources and the best outcomes for people who use our health service.
- **Health information** — Advising on the efficient and secure collection and sharing of health information, setting standards, evaluating information resources and publishing information on the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.
- **National Care Experience Programme** — Carrying out national service-user experience surveys across a range of health services, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE.

## Overview of the health information function of HIQA

Health and social care are information-intensive, generating huge volumes of data and information every day. It is important that such information is managed in the most effective way possible in order to ensure high-quality, safe health and social care.

Safe reliable healthcare depends on access to, and use of, information that is accurate, valid, reliable, timely, legible and complete. High-quality health information is a fundamental requirement for delivering health and social care and making healthcare planning decisions.

Health information is used to improve health and social care, to inform decision-making, monitor diseases, organise services, inform policy-making, conduct high-quality research and plan for future health and social care needs, both at national and local levels.

Although there are already a number of examples of good practice in Ireland, there are also major gaps, silos of information and duplication in the country's health information landscape. The *Sláintecare Report* published by the Houses of the Oireachtas has outlined a vision for the provision of integrated care in Ireland. However, challenges exist in realising this vision, including the timely setting of policy and legislation in the area of health information and the prioritisation of funding and the implementation of programmes to modernise the health and social care system.

The Health Information teams within HIQA are working to address these challenges by continuing to provide thought leadership in areas set out in national policy such as ePrescribing, summary care records, patient portals, models for sharing and using information, through the development of recommendations.

The health information teams within HIQA are working to address these challenges by:

- providing thought leadership in defining the health information landscape in Ireland by using best available evidence and engagement with stakeholders
- setting standards and guidance for health information
- reviewing against health information standards
- publishing information on the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.

## **Contents**

<b>Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>Our operating environment</b> .....	6
<b>Our mission statement and vision</b> .....	9
<b>Developing the strategic objectives</b> .....	11
<b>Our direction</b> .....	13
<b>Our strategic objectives 2020–2022</b> .....	14
<b>Risks challenges and opportunities</b> .....	17
<b>Implementation and monitoring</b> .....	18

## Introduction

This document outlines the direction for the health information function of HIQA for the years 2020–2022. It outlines our operating environment, mission statement and vision. It details the areas that we will work in along with the specific objectives that we will achieve in these areas over the coming years.

The strategy arises from the need to support the vision of integrated care outlined in the *Sláintecare* Report. Recent challenges in achieving this include slow progress in relation to setting policy and legislation to support the sharing and use of health and social care information. As an example, while legislation has existed since 2014 to underpin the introduction of individual health identifiers, there has been limited progress implementing this Act. Furthermore, programmes such as ePrescribing, summary care records, patient portals and electronic health records that are aimed at modernising the health and social care system have been identified as priorities, yet progress on these has been slow. Some of these programmes are in early implementation phases but, in some instances, the Health Service Executive (HSE) has not secured the funding required to progress the programmes.

The strategy is also driven by the need and desire to develop a consultation methodology to enable meaningful engagement with the wider public in order to inform national health information policy in Ireland and provide evidence to support the implementation of national eHealth initiatives. Internationally, public consultation in relation to health information has proved valuable. Countries such as England, Scotland, New Zealand and Canada have completed large scale public consultations, including surveys, focus groups and citizens' juries, to inform their national health information policy. These engagements focused on topics such as the sharing of health information, consent models, eHealth and technology, and access to health information through patient portals. A consultation methodology, developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, will harness the skills, expertise and insights available nationally and ensure that the findings of any public consultation will be used to maximum potential to improve health information in Ireland.

In recent years, we have driven improvements in the collection and use of health information in Ireland by reviewing national data collections against the *Information management standards for national health and social care data collections*. The review of national data collections was established in 2017. To date, several large national data collections, including Breastcheck, the Hospital In-Patient Enquiry (HIPE) scheme, the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) and Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system. This programme was commended by the World Health Organisation in their March 2019 Health Information Systems assessment of Ireland. There is scope to expand this review programme and also establish a second review programme focused on eHealth services such as the National Electronic Referral Programme; however, a strategic approach to this expansion is required.

The objectives set out in this strategy have been prepared following consultation with key stakeholders and our staff, and they reflect priorities for the health and social care system in Ireland. We selected the objectives based on our legal remit, our expertise and where our small teams could have the biggest impact on people's lives.

## Our operating environment

The Health Information function in HIQA has a key role in improving health information in Ireland. The Department of Health and the HSE, through eHealth Ireland also have key roles. The roles of each of these organisations are outlined below:

- The Department of Health is responsible for developing policy, drafting legislation and devising strategy in respect of health information in Ireland. The *eHealth Strategy for Ireland* was published in 2013. The department is currently working on a strategy and policy to underpin the use and sharing of health information across the health and social care system. Furthermore, the *Sláintecare Report* and the *Sláintecare Implementation Strategy* reflect the eHealth Strategy and sets out clearly what it wants to achieve in the area of eHealth for the next 10 years, particularly in relation to integrated care and improved information sharing and use in the community.
- Through eHealth Ireland, the HSE is responsible for the delivery of services and the implementation of eHealth strategy and health information policy. The HSE published the *Knowledge and Information Plan* in 2015. The main emphasis of the plan is the implementation an electronic health record for both the acute and the community health and social care sector. Progress has been slow, especially in obtaining the necessary resources. Therefore, the HSE is currently updating the Knowledge and Information Plan to reflect available resources.
- HIQA is responsible for advising on the efficient and secure collection and sharing of health information, setting standards, evaluating information resources and publishing information on the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.

A number of enablers must be in place in order for HIQA to achieve its health information function:

- Governance and leadership are required in order to ensure that appropriate structures are in place to steer and direct the health information and eHealth agenda in order to improve health and social care. HIQA has a key role in providing thought leadership in this area through the development of recommendations and advice to the Minister.
- The *National Development Plan 2018–2027* recognises the need for a new patient-centred health information policy for the digital age to ensure better patient care and an effective, modern health system. HIQA has a role in influencing policy and legislation; however, the development of policy and legislation is the responsibility of the Department of Health.
- The *eHealth Strategy for Ireland* and the *Sláintecare Implementation Strategy* detail clear plans to improve eHealth in Ireland, the Department of Health and the HSE are responsible for their implementation. HIQA's strategic objectives are aligned to these strategies.

- Resource capacity, capability and culture are essential elements for the delivery and improvement of health information and eHealth systems. The Department of Health and the HSE are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient trained resources available to achieve these goals. HIQA has a lead role to play in building capacity and capability to deliver and sustain the effective use of eHealth solutions. This includes the development of guidance and standards.
- The appropriate financial resources must be in place to fund the health information and eHealth agenda. This is the responsibility of both the Department of Health and the HSE.

### Legal remit

The responsibilities of HIQA's health information teams are outlined in the following sections of the Health Act 2007 (as amended):

- Section 8(1)(b): to set Standards in relation to quality and safety for services provided by the Health Services Executive (HSE).
- Section 8(1)(c): to monitor compliance with the standards referred to in paragraph (b) and to advise the Minister and the HSE accordingly.
- Section 8(1)(i): to evaluate available information respecting the services and the health and welfare of the population.
- Section 8(1)(j): to provide advice and make Recommendations to the Minister for Health and the HSE about deficiencies identified by HIQA in respect of the information referred to in paragraph (i).
- Section 8(1)(k): to set Standards as HIQA considers appropriate for the HSE and service providers respecting data and information in their possession in relation to services and the health and welfare of the population.
- Section 8(1)(l): to advise the Minister for Health and the HSE as to the level of compliance by the HSE and service providers with the Standards referred to in paragraph (k).
- Section 12: HIQA may request information and statistics from the HSE in order to determine compliance with Standards.
- Section 70: HIQA may appoint authorised persons for the purpose of carrying out the monitoring programme under Section 8(1)(c).
- Section 73: Enforcement powers including but not limited to, right of entry and inspection, right to remove documentation and powers of interview, are available to authorised persons in carrying out the monitoring programme under Section 8(1)(c).

HIQA's Corporate Plan outlines overarching strategic objectives for the health information teams. This is:

Over the next three years, we will

- continue to provide thought leadership in defining the health information system in Ireland by influencing policy and legislation. We will do this by engaging with informed and interested parties and developing recommendations in priority health information areas.
- support progress in the implementation of national priorities and forthcoming legislation by developing technical and information standards.
- promote improvements in the quality of health information to underpin the delivery of safe care and informed decision-making.

By December 2021, HIQA will have

- identified priority areas where recommendations are required to influence policy and legislation in the area of health information
- developed and tested quality-assured technical and information standards aligned to national priorities
- worked in collaboration to ensure the implementation of national eHealth initiatives
- demonstrated improvements in the quality and use of health information by reviewing and reporting on national data collections and developing supporting guidance for priority areas.

## **Our mission statement and vision**

Reflecting our legal remit and HIQA's Corporate Plan 2019–2021, the mission statement and vision for HIQA's Health Information function are as follows.

### **Mission statement**

What we do:

We work collaboratively, using best available evidence, to develop recommendations to support decision making for the Irish eHealth and health information landscape. We drive improvements in the quality of data and information by developing national standards and guidance and assessing compliance with these national standards.

Why we do it:

HIQA works independently to gather the best available evidence to inform policy, legislation and service provision in the area of health information. The ultimate aim is to have quality data and information to support individual care, planning and management of services, policy making and research.

How do we do it:

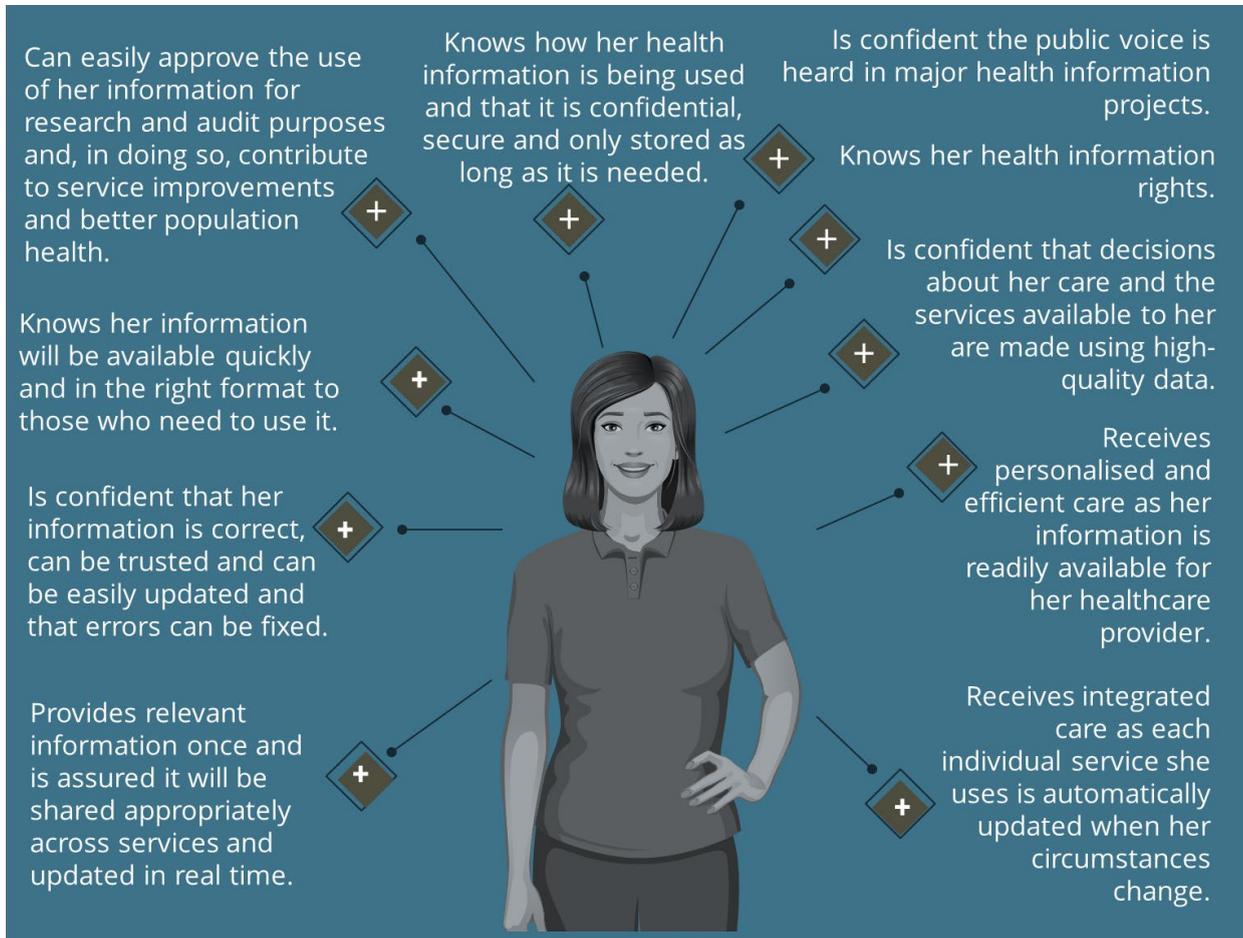
Working collaboratively with key stakeholders, we gather national and international evidence on best practice. We consult with experts, stakeholders, service providers and service users. We report on the implementation of our national standards and guidance and support organisations to improve health information.

### **Vision**

To build and consolidate our position as a centre of excellence to support and facilitate decision making for national eHealth and health information programmes and to drive the collection, use and sharing of high-quality data across health and social care to ensure more efficient services, more effective care and better outcomes.

***Better data, Better decisions, Better care***

The health information teams within HIQA are supporting and, in collaboration with others, working towards a future environment where people who live in Ireland, like Claire:



## Developing the strategic objectives

The strategic objectives for the health information function of HIQA have been developed using a four step process: horizon scanning, consultation, strategic analyses and approval. Who should be involved, the objectives of each step and how they can be achieved is outlined in the below table.

Step 1 Horizon scanning	
Who	Writing group (dedicated group of key internal individuals with the responsibility of writing the strategy).
What	Evidence based discussions of: What is happening globally, in Europe and nationally? Are there existing strategies for any overarching agencies or conglomerates? Why is the strategy needed? Who are the relevant stakeholders to engage with?
How	Face-to-face meeting to present and discuss findings from desk research and individual knowledge from working in the area; undertake stakeholder mapping; and prepare for consultation stage.

Step 2 Consultation	
Who	Writing group, internal team (individuals whose work will be steered by the strategy) and relevant internal and external stakeholders.
What	Scoping of needs, priorities and ideas. Writing of mission statement and vision to reflect findings. Gathering evidence and ideas to inform goal setting in strategic analyses step.
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with internal team to collect their early stage input.</li> <li>• Consult with external and internal stakeholders on their needs, priorities and ideas using one-to-one meetings, advisory groups, focus groups or surveys.</li> <li>• Meet with internal team to present findings from consultations and brainstorm mission statement, vision and possible goals.</li> <li>• Writing group to draft mission statement and vision that reflect findings from Horizon scanning and Consultation steps.</li> <li>• Writing group draft preliminary goals for evaluation in strategic analysis step.</li> </ul>

### Step 3 Strategic analyses

Who	Writing group
What	Analyses of available resources, costs, capacity. Evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, potential for impact and possible obstacles for individual goals. Identification of a prioritised list of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) goals.
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out a risks–benefit analysis</li> <li>• Carry out a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis</li> <li>• Meet to present findings from analyses and prioritise goals based on findings from consultation and strategic analyses, asking questions such as:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What can be achieved given the resources?</li> <li>○ Where is effort best spent to have the biggest impact?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Draft SMART goals for inclusion in strategy.</li> </ul>

### Step 4 Approval

Who	Writing group, internal team, relevant internal and external stakeholders, executive management team and board.
What	Draft strategy Undertake consultation Incorporate changes and finalise strategy Circulate for approval
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing group to draft strategy.</li> <li>• Present strategy to internal team for comment.</li> <li>• Circulate strategy to relevant internal and external stakeholders for comment.</li> <li>• Incorporate changes and finalise strategy.</li> <li>• Circulate strategy to Executive Management Team and Board for approval.</li> </ul>

## **Our direction**

Informed by our horizon scanning, engagement with key stakeholders and what we have learned from our work in the years since HIQA's last health information strategy (Health Information Directorate Strategy 2016–2017), there are three high-level areas for us to work in to support the nation eHealth agenda, as set out in Sláintecare:

- **Influencing policy and direction**
- **Developing national standards and guidance**
- **Reviewing against national standards.**

## Our strategic objectives 2020–2022

Over the next three years, we will:

- Support the objectives of Sláintecare and other national health information policies through the development of recommendations for eHealth solutions, for example, ePrescribing, summary care records and electronic health records.
- Ensure the public voice informs policy in major eHealth programmes as set out in Sláintecare and other national health information policies
- Develop recommendations in relation to best practice for the governance, collection and use of health and social care key performance indicator data.
- Inform a common information model for health information in Ireland to support the sharing of data across eHealth systems.
- Measure and report on the impact of our work to in order to evaluate our work against our objectives and demonstrate effectiveness.

*Influencing policy and direction*

- Engage with front line staff by developing digital and eLearning solutions with a particular focus on aspects of information governance, including the collection, use and sharing of health information.
- Work to share our knowledge in health information with others through developing resources and building awareness of the work that we do.
- Maintain a catalogue of National Data Collections to facilitate overview of the available sources of national health information in Ireland.

*Developing Standards and Guidance*

- Ensure the structured review programme for National Data Collections is effective in improving the quality of national health information in Ireland.
- Introduce a national eHealth services review programme to drive quality in the provision of eHealth services in Ireland.

*Reviewing against Standards*

*Better data, Better decisions, Better care*

By 2022, we will have:

- Continued to support and influence the national health information strategy and national health information policy.
- Established a methodology to understand the public's voice to inform health information policy as set out in Sláintecare and other national health information policies
- Made recommendations on a model for collection, use and sharing of health information in Ireland, including the public views and perspectives to inform policy and legislation.
- Made recommendations on the implementation of electronic patient summaries.
- Made recommendations on an information model for health information in Ireland and identified the common concepts that data collections and eHealth systems need to support in order to facilitate the collection and sharing of data.
- Made recommendations on the introduction of the national patient portals in Ireland, taking into account the public's views and perspectives to inform policy and implementation
- Made recommendations on the structure and governance of terminologies and classifications in Ireland.
- Commenced the development of recommendations on the collecting and use of key performance data within the health and social care system.
- Reported on the impact of our work on an annual basis.
- Engaged with external bodies, committees and key individuals to promote the national eHealth agenda.

*Influencing policy and direction*

- Developed guidance based on international best practice for information governance, including aspects of consent for health information.
- Developed open educational resources and hosted seminars to share our knowledge, in particular relating to terminologies and classifications and data quality.

*Developing Standards and Guidance*

- Ensured the structured review programme for National Data Collections in Ireland is effective in improving the quality of national health information in Ireland and expanded the programme to review further national data collections with a shared governance model within the HSE and other organisations. This will initially involve a review of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) in the HSE followed by a review of NIMS within the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
- Introduced a national eHealth services review programme to drive quality in the provision of eHealth services in Ireland and completed two national reviews, the first being of the National Electronic Referral Programme.
- Evaluated the impact of reviewing national data collections, including publishing an overview of the overall findings of the review programme to date and evaluating associated improvements in information management practices.
- Undertaken a review of the collection of key performance data within the HSE and reviewed the data collected by one organisation.
- Updated the Catalogue of National Data Collections to include published data dictionaries.

*Reviewing against Standards*

## Risks challenges and opportunities

### Collaborations

HIQA does not operate in isolation. We recognise that although our functions differ to those of our key stakeholders, our respective missions are often aligned as we work to improve the quality and safety of health and social care services in Ireland. By working in collaboration, we can harness the skills, expertise and insights of our partner organisations. By listening to the voices of others, including staff working in our health and social care services and the public, we can gather important information that can help shape our collective efforts.

In the coming three years, we hope to further develop existing partnerships and create new collaborations, both nationally and internationally. We also plan to foster partnerships with academic and research institutions to assist in the analysis and interpretation of data, to underpin our methodologies, to evaluate our effectiveness and impact, and to support and develop our staff. Cognisant of the importance of the *Sláintecare Report*, we will work with the Sláintecare Programme Office to provide support across all of our functions and competencies to effect the required change in our health and social care system. We will work with the Department of Health to ensure that the legislation guiding our programmes of regulation remains relevant to new service models, and we will engage with the Department, the HSE, Tusla, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and eHealth Ireland to improve the quality and use of health and social care information.

### Capacity and capability

The health information teams are small and have a wide remit. As a result, the capacity and capability of the health information teams to deliver our functions must be carefully scoped, planned and prioritised to ensure activities are adequately resourced and outputs are of the highest quality. We will pursue potential opportunities, including external research funding, hosting student placements and placements from international equivalent organisations and facilitating students pursuing PhDs within the health information teams in order to expand our capacity.

### Adapting and responding to the needs of the environment

Health information and eHealth are dynamic areas and the health information teams within HIQA need the ability to respond effectively to a changing health and social care environment. As new policies are developed by the Government, legislation enacted by the Oireachtas, and projects prioritised within the eHealth environment, we must be alert to the resulting impact on the delivery of our functions and our prioritisation of projects. In doing so, we will apply our experience and knowledge and consult with others working in this area to ensure that the work we undertake reflects the needs of the health information and eHealth environment in Ireland. People using services are at the heart of our work, and we will continue to support and challenge the health and social care sector to provide high-quality, safe and person-centred care.

## **Implementation and monitoring**

The implementation of this corporate plan will be monitored and reviewed by HIQA's Executive Management Team and Board. The strategic objective set out in this plan, together with emerging priorities from the health and social care sector, will inform the business plans for the Health Information function for the coming years. The delivery of these business plans will ensure that our strategic objectives are delivered by the end of 2022.

Published by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).

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