

Health and Social Care Regulatory Forum

Background and Terms of Reference

1 Introduction

Irish health and social care has undergone a succession of reforms over recent years, with significant changes in organisational structures in the delivery system and an increasing emphasis in the role of the Department of Health and Children on developing policy. The third dimension of the health and social care system, aimed at supporting this transformation programme, is the regulatory framework.

Regulation of areas such as professional practice, medicines and healthcare products, quality and key risk areas such as radiation safety has evolved incrementally over many years. Each statutory body's role and function has developed separately and historically they have tended to operate in relative isolation. However, increasingly there is a need for regulatory bodies to act in concert whether in response to service concerns or wider issues such as European Union policy. This has led to a proposal for a greater degree of collaboration and coordination that is facilitated through a multi-agency regulatory forum.

2 Role of the Health and Social Care Regulatory Forum

The role of the Health and Social Care Regulatory Forum is to provide a mechanism for sharing thoughts and experiences on matters of common interest. It will allow the development of more coherent operational approaches to the interfaces between bodies' respective remits in the interests of safety and quality. The forum will also facilitate interaction with shared stakeholders, for example the Department of Health and Children, on matters that concern all regulatory bodies. Similarly, the Commission for Patient Safety and Quality Assurance is expected to bring forward proposals for improved coordination between regulatory bodies; the forum will be in a position to provide a template for developing a cohesive response to the Commission's proposals.

3 Terms of Reference

The Health and Social Care Regulatory Forum is made up of regulatory organisations with a remit in health and personal social services which are listed below. Each organisation has its distinct statutory function set out in legislation. The overall role of the forum is to provide an opportunity for discussion and coordination on areas of shared interest with a view to enhancing the collective impact of the regulatory bodies on the quality and safety of health and personal social services in Ireland.

The terms of reference of the forum are to:

1. To enhance the overall practise by sharing knowledge and experience of health and personal social services regulation in Ireland for the benefit of public health.
2. Explore opportunities to harmonise certain business processes, share best practice and facilitate coordination where appropriate.
3. Act as a steering group for specific work projects agreed by the forum.
4. Provide advice on legislation to address anomalies or gaps as required.

4 Membership

The membership of the Regulatory Forum includes:

An Bord Altranais
Dental Council of Ireland
Food Safety Authority of Ireland
Health and Safety Authority
Health and Social Care Professionals Council
Health Information and Quality Authority
Irish Medicines Board
Medical Council of Ireland
Mental Health Commission
Opticians Board
Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland
Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council
Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland
Veterinary Council of Ireland

The respective organisations will be represented by the Chief Executive Officers, or equivalent. Senior Executive deputies designated by their Chief Executive are acceptable. The forum will be chaired on an annual rotational basis by member organisations and will meet on a bi-monthly basis. The Chair will provide the secretariat for that term of office.

The terms of reference will be reviewed within the first six months from establishment and annually thereafter.

21 July 2009