Health
Information
and Quality
Authority

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Robert Watt
Secretary General
Department of Health
Block 1 Miesian Plaza
50–58 Baggot Street Lower
Dublin 2

12 October 2021

Our Ref: PQ/EMcC/RW/20211012

Dear Robert,

RE: Position Paper on 'The need to reform Ireland's Health Information System to support the delivery of health and social care services'

As a consequence of COVID-19 and the recent cyberattack on the HSE, an opportunity has arisen to showcase the vital role that health information plays in delivering front line services and supporting the health and social care service in Ireland. We also know there is now a readiness for the Irish people to embrace technology in healthcare, as evidenced by the recent findings from the National Public Engagement on Health Information. HIQA is of the opinion that this is now an opportune time to build on the achievements made so far and reform our national health information system to benefit everyone.

Accordingly, HIQA have developed a position paper on 'The need to reform Ireland's Health Information System to support the delivery of health and social care services'. This report draws on HIQA's experience in developing recommendations, standards and guidance in health information since HIQA's inception, and more recently the development of a programme to assess compliance with health information standards. It is also aligned with our legal remit under the Health Act which is evaluating the quality of the information available on health and social care and making recommendations in relation to improving the quality and filling in gaps where information is needed but is not currently available.

The position paper identifies the key deficits that exist in the National Health Information System, and makes recommendations to enable us to work towards a more integrated system of care.

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Through the position paper, HIQA are calling for the urgent need for strong political commitment and support:

- To prioritise a National Health Information strategy covering the entirety of health and social care across both public and private settings
- To ensure there is strong Governance and Leadership in place. We believe, as set out in the eHealth strategy, a strategic entity (eHealth Ireland) should be established to provide strategic leadership and governance for health information outside of the HSE. This should be adequately resourced and have an appropriate workforce allocated
- To guarantee that a national health information system is underpinned by Legislation
- To deliver a health information system based on national health information standards, and for a secure health information infrastructure to underpin our health and social care services.

The launch of the position paper is due for publication on Monday 18 October 2021. Please find attached a copy for your convenience.

I am happy to meet with you should you wish to discuss the findings further. Please contact my PA, Eithne McCann at emccann@hiqa.ie should you have any further queries or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

PHELIM QUINN
Chief Executive

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