



An Roinn Sláinte  
Department of Health

# Strategic Advisory Forum for the Patient Advocacy Service

Annual Report  
2019

Prepared by the  
Department of Health  
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## Report for the year-end December 2019

The Strategic Advisory Forum (SAF) established in February 2019 is a non-statutory forum appointed by the Minister for Health to provide strategic advice through the National Patient Safety Office (NPSO) to the Minister for Health on the establishment, development, evolution, performance and monitoring of the Patient Advocacy Service and submit an annual report to the Minister for Health.

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## 1

## Glossary

### Patient Safety Incident

Section 8 of the Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017, defines a “patient safety incident” as follows:

“Patient safety incident”, in relation to the provision of a health service to a patient by a health services provider, means

- a) an incident which has caused an unintended or unanticipated injury, or harm, to the patient and which occurred in the course of the provision of a health service to that patient,
- b) an incident:
  - (i) which has occurred in the course of the provision of a health service to the patient and did not result in actual injury or harm, and*
  - (ii) in respect of which the health services provider has reasonable grounds to believe placed the patient at risk of unintended or unanticipated injury or harm, or*
- c) the prevention, whether by timely intervention or by chance, of an unintended or unanticipated injury, or harm, to the patient in the course of the provision, to him or her, of a health service, and in respect of which the health services provider has reasonable grounds for believing that, in the absence of such prevention, could have resulted in such injury, or harm, to the patient.

## 2 Chairpersons Statement

I am pleased to introduce the inaugural Annual Report of the Strategic Advisory Forum for year ended 31st December 2019.

The Strategic Advisory Forum (SAF) was established in February 2019 by the Minister for Health to provide strategic advice through the National Patient Safety Office (NPSO) to the Minister for Health on the establishment, development, evolution, performance and monitoring of the Patient Advocacy Service (PAS) and report its findings.

The forum advised the NPSO and the Minister in 2019 on the development and establishment of the PAS. This service provides support and advocacy to those who wish to make a formal complaint under the HSE's "Your Service, Your Say" policy and those involved in the aftermath of a patient safety incident (see glossary). The service became operational in 2019 and commenced in the public hospital sector.

In the first report of the Strategic Advisory Forum, I am pleased to note the significant work that was carried out in 2019 to evolve the concept of a Patient Advocacy Service from a model to a reality within the space of one year. In 2019, the Forum, The Patient Advocacy Service and the Department of Health and many others worked hard to make this a reality.

The HSE were particularly supportive and provided advice, direction and networking all along the way. As a result, the Patient Advocacy Service was launched by Minister Simon Harris at the National Patient Safety Office Conference held in Dublin Castle on 31st October 2019.

I would like to thank the members of the Strategic Advisory Forum for their work, expertise and commitment. I acknowledge the support of the National Patient Safety Office in effecting the advice of the forum and networking with stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of advice on the development and direction of the Patient Advocacy Service.

**Dr Marian O'Sullivan, Chair**  
*Strategic Advisory Forum*

## 3

## National Patient Safety Office (NPSO), Department of Health

The National Patient Safety Office in the Department of Health leads a programme of patient safety measures focused on patient safety advocacy and policy, clinical effectiveness and patient safety surveillance.

A key priority in the Programme for Government in 2016 was the establishment of the Patient Advocacy Service. This arose from the recommendations of the Portlaoise HIQA investigation report (2015) and The Ombudsman's report, Learning to Get Better (2015). The NPSO led the design, commissioning and implementation of the model for the Patient Advocacy Service, commencing in 2017.

Following research and extensive consultation, the Patient Advocacy Service model was defined as an independent empowerment advocacy service for those who wish to make a formal complaint about their healthcare experience or have been involved in the aftermath of a patient safety incident. It is free of charge, easily accessible and works to empower and inform those who access it to reach a resolution to their complaint or incident.

As it marks a new development, in an area that to date has been lacking standardisation, a phased approach was recommended, and the service commenced in the acute settings, in recognition of the context in which the recommendations from the HIQA Portlaoise investigation report and the Ombudsman's report arose.

The model ensures that there is open and transparent accountability in the service's design, monitoring and delivery. To this end, the Department as commissioner of the service is advised and informed by the Strategic Advisory Forum (SAF), consisting of external stakeholders and public voice partners, to ensure the critical elements of a successful service are established and maintained.

Following an EU wide open procurement process in 2018, the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities was awarded the contract to provide the Patient Advocacy Service from 2018 to 2023.

### **National Patient Safety Office**

## 4 Introduction to the Strategic Advisory Forum

The Patient Advocacy Service (PAS) Strategic Advisory Forum (SAF / Forum) is an Advisory Forum appointed by the Minister for Health in 2019.

The purpose of the Forum is to provide strategic advice through the National Patient Safety Office (NPSO) to the Minister for Health on the establishment, development, evolution, performance and monitoring of the Patient Advocacy Service and report its findings. The Department of Health is the contracting body for the Patient Advocacy Service and oversees the governance of the Patient Advocacy Service by means of the contract put in place. The corporate governance responsibilities for the Patient Advocacy Service lie with the contracted service provider (the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities) and its Board of Directors. The Forum will advise on issues within its mandate. Annual reports of the Forum will be published on the Department of Health website.

### Terms of Reference

- **The Forum will provide strategic advice on the establishment, development, evolution, performance and monitoring of the PAS**
- **The Forum will support the NPSO in the development of patient safety complaints/advocacy standards, key performance indicators (KPIs) and codes of practice**
- **The Forum will receive reports on the performance and activity of the PAS through a set of agreed KPIs**
- **The Forum may request and receive reports from other relevant health service and advocacy organisations to inform the development of the Patient Advocacy Service**
- **The Forum will submit an annual report to the Minister for Health**
- **The Forum will advise on the external evaluation of the service to be undertaken within the first two years of the operation of the service**

The Forum comprises Irish healthcare stakeholders and citizens/patients appointed to the role by the Minister for Health (Table 1). Members are appointed to represent key strategic, regulatory and operational stakeholders. The Forum is attended and serviced by the NPSO. Tenure is for an initial period of two-and-a-half years, following which the future role of the PAS and the Forum will be reviewed.

## 5 Strategic Advisory Forum Members

**Table 1.** Strategic Advisory Forum Membership

<b>Dr Marian O’Sullivan, Chair</b>	Director General, Institute of Public Administration (Chairperson)
<b>Cynthia Clampett</b>	Retired CEO, Mayo/Roscommon Hospice (public voice representative)
<b>John Farrelly</b>	CEO, Mental Health Commission
<b>Angela Fitzgerald</b>	Assistant National Director, Acute Hospitals Division, HSE
<b>Dr Colm Henry</b>	Chief Clinical Officer, HSE
<b>Dr Cathal O’Keeffe</b>	Head of Clinical Risk, State Claims Agency
<b>Brian Place</b>	Member of Galway Patient Council (public voice representative)
<b>Phelim Quinn</b>	CEO, Health Information and Quality Authority

## 6 Strategic Advisory Forum - Activity and Progress in 2019

### Activity

The Strategic Advisory Forum met three times in 2019, in the Boardroom of the Department of Health, Miesian Plaza, Baggot Street, Dublin 2. The NPSO provides the secretariat and support for the Strategic Advisory Forum. The meetings were attended by NPSO personnel. HSE personnel and PAS personnel also attended for specific items on the agenda.

### Progress

#### *KPIs*

One of the first tasks of the SAF was to consider what would be the appropriate Key Performance Indicators against which the Patient Advocacy Service could report on its progress. KPIs for patient advocacy services are not standardised and vary depending on the jurisdiction and service offering. Many are difficult to capture, for example, the extent of patient satisfaction with the service.

The SAF provided recommendations to the PAS and a KPI document has been produced. The SAF has asked PAS to continuously review the relevance of the KPI measures as the service progresses and to continue to update the SAF on their development. In particular, they recommended the development of broader KPIs in the future to measure the impact of the service and the extent to which it is involved in knowledge sharing, learning, training and other activities.

#### *Code of Practice*

The SAF provided advice and recommendations to the PAS on the development of their Code of Practice. This was adopted by the PAS in 2019.

#### *Standards*

The SAF provided PAS with advice and recommendations on the PAS access and eligibility policy which was updated.

#### *Networking and engagement*

The forum provided an opportunity for key stakeholders and those who are in a position to deliver change to come together and agree ways forward that support the establishment and operationalisation of the PAS. The HSE committed to continue to train staff in communication skills and develop signposting and awareness of the PAS as this was raised as an issue central to the success of embedding the service. In addition, the HSE offered their support to provide training venues and trainees for the Patient Safety Complaints Advocacy training.

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## Patient Advocacy Service - Report for 2019



### Service Activity

On 31 October 2019, after a period of planning and organisation, the new, independent Patient Advocacy Service was established. Commissioned by the National Patient Safety Office in the Department of Health and provided by the National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities (NAS), the Patient Advocacy Service provides information and support to people who want to make a complaint about an experience they had in a HSE-funded public acute hospital.

The Patient Advocacy Service based in Dublin City Centre provides empowerment advocacy and information to people throughout Ireland. The core Service offering consists of a national phone line open from Monday to Friday, which people can call to speak to a trained advocate.

In its first two months of operation, from 31 October – 31 December 2019, the Service's Advocacy Officers provided advocacy support in 65 cases. Of these 65 cases, 140 separate complaint issues were identified.

### Challenges

As this was a new Service, there were several challenges to be overcome, including:

- Understanding how best to develop the Service to meet the needs of patients in Ireland, including the nature of the demand, the appropriate scope of the initial service offering, and strategy for further development of the Service beyond launch.
- Raising awareness and understanding of the objectives and support offered by the Service and promoting it to a wide range of stakeholders.
- Training and development of new staff members to understand their role as Advocacy Officers and provide the highest level of service.
- Building the capacity and effectiveness of the new Service by ensuring effective operational and corporate governance systems were put in place.

## Achievements

### *Stakeholder Engagement*

As part of the process to develop and establish the new Patient Advocacy Service, NAS engaged extensively with a range of stakeholders including Public Bodies, State Agencies, Service Providers, Representative Groups and Civil Society Organisations:

- The National Patient Safety Office established the Strategic Advisory Forum to provide advice and support to the Department of Health and the Patient Advocacy Service and meetings were attended by the PAS.
- In late 2019, following a request from the Secretary General in the Department of Health, the process of establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Patient Advocacy Service and the HSE was initiated.

### *Promoting the Service / Building Awareness*

- The Patient Advocacy Service carried out significant promotional activities in 2019 to raise awareness and understanding of its new Service. This included engagement with stakeholders, including Hospitals, Advocacy Groups and Independent Advocates, Support and Information groups, and Professional Bodies.
- An easily recognisable and engaging brand and logo were developed for the Patient Advocacy Service in 2019.
- An interactive website was developed which went live on the 31st October 2019. In 2019, there were 1,307 new users to the Patient Advocacy Service website with 4,926 separate page views.
- On 13 November 2019, Minister for Health, Simon Harris T.D., launched the new Patient Advocacy Service during the National Patient Safety Conference in Dublin Castle. The launch received substantial media coverage, including RTE News and RTE Radio One, the Irish Examiner and the Irish Independent.
- The Service received 83 enquiries related to its promotions, including requests for promotional materials, such as leaflets and posters, presentations from PAS staff, attendance at public events, and general information about the service.

### *Human Resources*

- A Service Manager was recruited in July 2019. A team of 6 Advocacy Officers and 2 Team Leads were recruited for the launch of the Patient Advocacy Service in October 2019.

### *Training and Development*

- Each Advocacy Officer and Team Lead was enrolled on the Open Training College's Certificate in Patient Safety Complaints Advocacy. Staff also undertook several training courses in 2019, including: Difficult Caller Training; HSE Effective Complaints Handling; HSE Risk and Incident Management Training.

### *Operational Highlights*

- The Patient Advocacy Service developed a Service Specific case management system which is secure, functional and provided easy identification of trends and social policy issues.
- A Voice Over I.P. System for the national telephone line was developed and launched on 31st October 2019. The fully cloud based service offered by the Patient Advocacy Service also meant that staff could work from a range of locations. This has ensured an agile response by the Patient Advocacy Service during the Covid 19 related restrictions in 2020.

### *Corporate Governance*

- Appropriate financial arrangements were set, including the opening of separate bank accounts, budgeting proposals, reporting structures and invoice mechanisms.
- The Patient Advocacy Service Project Working Group provide advice and guidance to the NAS leadership on the establishment and operationalisation phase of the Patient Advocacy Service.
- A suite of policies was developed which included an access and eligibility criteria, a code of practice, an enquiry policy, a conflict of interest policy, and several operational policies.

## Appendix 1

### Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this document:

<b>DOH</b>	Department of Health
<b>NPSO</b>	National Patient Safety Office
<b>SAF</b>	Strategic Advisory Forum
<b>PAS</b>	Patient Advocacy Service
<b>NAS</b>	National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities





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