



Women's Health Taskforce

9th Meeting
19th February 2021

The Taskforce is working to **implement a set of agreed actions** to improve priority areas for women's health

The purpose of the ninth meeting was to:

- Hear from the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly
- Introduce new Women's Health Lead within the Department
- Engage with women's voices and experience from the Radical Listening exercise
- Update on work programme to date, including the Women's Health Fund
- Seek input from members on the strategic project for women's health; informing principles and defining features and enablers of success.

Minister Donnelly addressed the Taskforce...

Minister Donnelly:

- Welcomed the opportunity to speak with Taskforce members on this important body of work
- Highlighted that the impact of Covid-19 is a clear example of how health issues can and do impact differently across gender.
- Reiterated his commitment continued progress in women's health and the key role that the Women's Health Taskforce plays in identifying and addressing these needs.
- Encouraged Taskforce members to be ambitious in looking to what the future of women's health could be in Ireland.

Taskforce members were updated on the progress of the **Radical Listening** exercise...

A nationwide Radical Listening exercise is currently underway to enable women across the country to share their views and experiences of the health sector and health services.

“A cross-generational exploration of women’s understanding of health and experiences of healthcare from their own perspective, to understand the factors that shaped these experiences and to identify women’s needs from healthcare in the future.”

This was carried out in three stages, beginning in mid-2020 and finishing in the coming weeks:

Stage 1: Social & Media Listening

Stage 2: Hearing Women’s Stories & Experiences

Stage 3: National Workshops

Once complete, a full debrief on findings will be held for Taskforce members and colleagues.

Ahead of finalisation, Taskforce members reflected on some of the voices heard...

"No, it wasn't discussed. Nothing at all was discussed in those days. It wasn't ever something we thought of. Women just had to get on and put up." (Roscommon, 50s)

*"Women understand women, men do not"
(Waterford, 35 – 45)*

"I really thought women have been treated like second-class citizens. I mean they out sourced the testing. The test wasn't the right type of test ... no one seemed to care it wasn't right." (Cork, 56 – 65)

'They make you feel like a bloody ejit. And I'd had enough of that in schools. I know I didn't go to college I didn't study medicine, but I know something is wrong"' (Athlone, 45-55)

What's the motto of the HSE, to care and to trust and learn and all this. I mean I haven't seen any trust or learning or caring. I've seen hardnosed people looking down on me and pressuring me even more."

Our Co-char Peggy Maguire outlined a **strategic approach** to women's health...

The Women's Health Taskforce's mandate runs until September 2021.

A plan beyond this point is required for women's health policy, building on the work of the Women's Health Taskforce. A workteam has been established to carry out this work.

Approach:

The document will be focused on answering some key questions and shaping our future approach to women's health, including:

- How is women's **health currently approached?**
- What is needed from a **structural perspective** to transform our approach to women's health?
- How can the Dept. Health's work best **align with and support cross-governmental** policy work on gender, equality and the social determinants of health for women?
- What is the **existing evidence** and what are the **desired outcomes?**

Taskforce members were asked **what principles are particularly important** for an Irish women's health strategy?

Considering the above statement, Taskforce members gave the following contributions:

- A focus on sexual, reproductive and gynaecological health across lifecourse
- A life course approach to health
- Health equity between women
- Women centred
- A focus on prevention
- Align with & build on existing strategies across health including Sláintecare
- Participation of women
- Informed by sex-disaggregated data
- Human-rights based approach
- Continue with radical listening/focus group approach

...which have been combined into the following four elements:

- **Health equity**
- **Women centred and informed by women's voices**
- **Informed by evidence and existing activity**
- **A life-course approach**

In groups, members then discussed what the **key features of a successful approach** would look like...

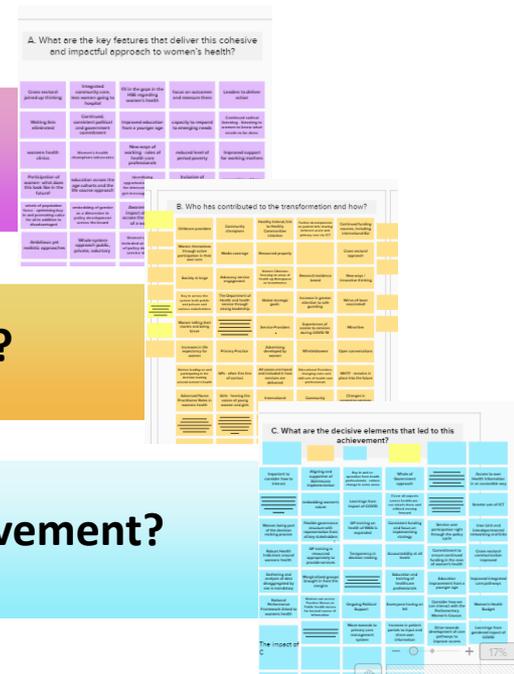
Looking forward to 2031. Women are consistently supported to achieve their best mental and physical health over their lifetime, with women's health needs consistently considered and addressed.

Considering the above statement, Taskforce members contemplated the following questions:

What are the key features that deliver this cohesive and impactful approach to women's health?

Who has contributed to the transformation and how?

What are the decisive elements that led to this achievement?



In groups, members then discussed what the **key features of a successful approach** would look like...

What are the key features that deliver this cohesive and impactful approach to women's health?

- Whole-of-government & system approach
- Access to care
- Participation of women
- Demonstrated commitment & investment
- Care & education matched to life course
- New ways of working

Who has contributed to the transformation?

Women's voices & input placed at the centre
Healthcare providers playing a key role
Driven through both national & international structures
Advances in Technology
Increased awareness and attention

What are the decisive elements that led to this achievement?

- Looking at how health system can work most effectively- interaction and roles
- Aligned across Government and across Department
- Role of Health Information, eHealth and ICT / Role of Data and Indicators
- Highlight funding for women's Health
- Education and training for health professionals and public
- Primary care role recognised and expanded
- Women's voices included
- Political influence
- Learning from COVID

Next steps in our Work Programme

- **Proposals for Action:** Over the coming weeks it is hoped that funding for a number of proposals will be finalised
- A series of **Radical Listening** workshops will be held by the National Women's Council of Ireland in the summer with a focus on marginalised groups. This will be followed by a full debrief of findings.
- Activity is ongoing within our **Department of Health focused workstreams.**
- **Finalise our work programme** for Q1/Q2 2021 with further development of Q3/4
- The next meeting will take place in **April 2021.**

Keep in Touch

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