

Minutes of OPIOG Meeting 16 November 2021, 11.00 am

Held remotely via Microsoft Teams

Present

Tom James	Department of Health (Chair)
Angela Robinson	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
Prof. Ivan Perry	University College Cork
Kathryn O’Riordan	Department of Children, Equality, Integration, Disability and Youth
Prof. Donal O’Shea	HSE
Sarah O’Brien	HSE
Frank McGeough	Department of Social Protection
Dr. Pamela Byrne	FSAI
Ronan Kielt	Department of Education

Apologies

Jason Taylor	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Joana Caldeira Fernandes	<i>safefood</i>
Da Silva	

Department of Health officials

Tom James
Ursula O’Dwyer
Seamus O’Reilly
Caitríona Connolly
Fiona Gilligan (Item 3)

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies

See above.

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of the 17th June were agreed. There were no matters arising.

3. Healthy Weight Campaign

Fiona Gilligan of Health & Wellbeing gave an update on the progress of the adult Healthy Weight Campaign.

The target audience for the campaign is 25-34 years, as recommended by the OPIOG Healthcare Sub Group. Good progress has been made on the initial campaign development with the Communications Campaign group (HSE, *safefood*, Healthy Ireland), resulting in a creative brief which is now with the advertising agency.

Qualitative research with the target group who were all in the overweight but not obese category found really useful insights. The focus groups had a real appetite for change, but expressed feelings of a lack of control and apathy. They had no desire to weigh or measure themselves, so it's not felt that this is where the campaign can start. They also did not connect with the health benefits of losing weight – cancer/heart disease/high cholesterol.

Launch of the campaign was expected in late Q1 2022. A two-pronged brief has been put together for the agency; first an attitudes piece, to help increase capacity and empower them to take action; and secondly to talk about the specific behaviour changes needed.

The Chair added that it was intended to be a long-term campaign, subject to funding. KOR asked if parents were involved in the group and FG replied that there were some parents included. It was examined if there was any impact on fertility, but there did not appear to be. SOB added that they would be talking to people who were in the pre-conception phase about healthy behaviours. The START campaign was also going into its fifth year, and the evaluation of this would be completed.

There was also a discussion (not strictly confined to the campaign) about sustainability and the Department's coordination with other Departments on the health co-benefits of environmental measures. TJ stated that the climate change officer in the Department reported to him – he had attended COP26 and was very connected with the wider Government picture. AR also referenced the New Green Deal, the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the new AgriFood Strategy (FoodVision 2030) which had a major focus on environmental matters and provided for a high-level group co-chaired by DAFM and DoH.

4. Healthcare Sub Group

DOS updated the group on the Healthcare Sub Group (which had met earlier that morning).

In relation to the Model of Care, 44 dietitians are in the process of being recruited for an intervention which has been designed and is being tested in two areas. There was an Estimates bid in relation to Levels 3 and 4 of the adult Model of Care, but the bid was not named in the Letter of Determination. A request has now gone to the Department for funding from the Access to Care Fund. It is critical to get this funded.

The Making Every Contact Count module is at the gold stage of development, and it is being launched together with a Mental Health module in December.

Obesity Canada has nominated Ireland to adopt the Canadian model of clinical care and a first draft of this is expected by early December.

A Model of Care is in development for diabetes in pregnancy, and the Obesity Clinical Programme wants to work closely with them. There will be a meeting with Kilian McGrane to progress this.

The HSE has now received funding for 24 lactation consultants from the Department to allow recruitment to commence.

Another priority is getting to track the data from the age 2 and 5 measurements under the GP Contract. The Contract is also about to be extended to the age of 8.

5. Reformulation Roadmap and Implementation

The Chair referred to the letter forwarded by him to the OPIOG members the previous day in relation to the Roadmap and its implementation. This referred to decision to set up a Reformulation Task Force, situated within the FSAI, to drive implementation of the Roadmap. A similar letter would issue after the meeting to stakeholders who were involved in the workshops. While he did not underestimate the challenge, he felt that great work had been done with the Roadmap (which was currently with the printers) and that this was a very positive development.

PB said that she looked forward to working with everyone on implementing the Roadmap. A work plan for the Task Force has been mapped out that covers a number of objectives. She foresaw a significant amount of stakeholder engagement, and relations have been developed with stakeholders through the OPIOG and Sub-Groups. The FSAI would be leveraging their relationships with research funders to fill data gaps. It was expected that a number of people would be recruited to work full-time on the project. A Scientist (Task Force lead) position would be advertised in the coming days, and it would be appreciated if members could disseminate this information to their networks. The Chair added that the funds for the Task Force came from the Department of Health so it would be accountable – there would be an Oversight and Monitoring Group chaired by himself and including PB and IP (who has been asked to be the OPIOG representative) which would meet quarterly. It was hoped to have a launch as soon as possible and both Minister Donnelly and Minister Feighan are very interested. Unfortunately a major launch would not be possible due to the COVID situation. He thanked IP and the members of the Reformulation Sub Group for all their work on the Roadmap.

AR stated that the Roadmap and Task Force would impact significantly on the Agrifood sector. She asked whether there was a Memo for Government and whether their Minister would be aware of it. She pointed out that a lot of smaller food businesses would not be members of FDI. She added that the DAFM Food Vision 2030 Strategy published in July 2021 had a provision for a “stakeholder roadmap for food product reformulation”.

IP stated that he was very pleased that the Task Force was going ahead. It was always clear that implementation of the Roadmap was going to be the major challenge. The targets were actually very reasonable and there had been plenty of engagement with the food industry, but there had to be, of necessity, an element of healthy tension. The deadline for the targets had also been extended by a year to 2025. It was very much aligned with what was going on in the UK, Brexit notwithstanding. He thanked all the members of the Sub-Group for their work, particularly Ursula O’Dwyer, and would be writing to them after the meeting.

The Chair added that there may be difficult issues, but that they would be dealt with as they arose. There was a clear mandate for the Task Force to talk to everyone that they needed to.

He offered to delay the announcement until the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine had been informed, but AR confirmed that this was not necessary – that the Minister would be briefed. She asked that DoH link in with the Minister shortly before publication regarding providing a quote etc, and this was agreed.

6. Update from Healthy Eating Sub Group

UOD stated that the current focus was on translating the FSAI Scientific Committee's recommendations on over-65s into Healthy Eating Guidelines. The leaflet was with the designers and the Sub Group was meeting the following day. The next item would be guidelines on plant-based diets, and guidelines for healthy food parcels were also being worked on.

7. For mention:

Best-Re-MaP: UOD stated that the Slovenian Presidency was holding joint meetings on STOP (Science & Technology in childhood Obesity Policy) and the Best-ReMaP project over the following two days.

Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme: The Chair stated that the Programme was launched in Darndale in October in the 19 areas. There was €10m. provided for HSE programmes. Recruitment has commenced for Local Development Officers to be employed in the Local Authorities, also being funded by the Department of Health. In addition, once off funding of €4.75m has been provided under the Healthy Communities Enhancement Scheme. 19 Community Food and Nutrition Workers will also be recruited.

8. AOB/Next meeting

The Chair announced that the next meeting would be in about three months and he would be looking to hold meetings around every three months thereafter.