

Meeting of Dialogue Forum with Voluntary Organisations

Monday 13 February, 14:00-16:00, Miesian Plaza

Note of Meeting

1. Introductory Update and introduction of new Forum members – Chair Peter Cassells

Welcoming everyone, the Chair introduced new Forum members and expressed optimism for the year ahead. He reflected on the hybrid and interdependent nature of the health and social care system and remarked that a shared understanding of the issues facing the State and voluntary sector is emerging. The importance of collaboration and flexibility was highlighted and the Chair encouraged Forum members to adapt and to support each other in meeting the needs of service users. While the Forum is not in a position to resolve all the issues which arise at the Forum, including for example resourcing and staffing challenges, the Forum can enable members to identify who they can engage with on these issues and provides a Forum where members can report back on whether challenges are being addressed.

2. Case study findings – presentation and engagement led by Prospectus

Presentation on the case studies

The Chair invited Prospectus to update Forum members on the initial findings of the case study process. Key points made included the following:

- Seven case study workshops comprised of participants from the HSE and the voluntary sector were held between October and December.
- Contextual considerations were highlighted including the funding challenges facing organisations, including around pay parity, and the fact that positive operational experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic were not universally experienced.
- The COVID-19 pandemic experience does however provide a foundation for future relationships, collaboration and decision making. The experience was characterised by a singular, shared purpose; two-way engagement and a culture of cooperation; and an environment of confidence and trust.
- A number of thematic areas were identified (listed below) and workshops examined what the current situation feels like in relation to these areas, what an ideal world scenario would look like and barriers to reaching this.
 - Communication and Processes of Engagement & Consultation
 - Tight-loose approach/Accountable Autonomy and Reporting Requirements
 - Dialogue Processes around Funding Allocation & Funding Processes
 - Streamlined decision-making
 - Enabling Innovation and Integrated Service Delivery
 - Working across Multiple Regions & Services
- Prospectus' overarching conclusions focused on trust; space for dialogue; room for manoeuvre; differing perspectives; understanding; common purpose; leadership; and timing and opportunity.
- Prospectus outlined a number of recommendations under development including:
 - The establishment of the Regional Health Areas allows for an opportunity to work differently through the implementation of new structures, processes, approaches and culture. It was recommended that the RHA Steering Group should immediately

prioritise voluntary sector engagement with the RHA design and implementation process.

- There is a need to clarify the definition of a “tight/loose approach” and “accountable autonomy” ahead of the implementation of RHA structures. These concepts are currently unclear and are inconsistently understood and applied.
- The need for the State and voluntary sector to develop a shared common vision was noted. The focused and collaborative response to COVID-19 by the State and voluntary sector was seen as a positive. It was highlighted that there is a need to establish mechanisms to involve voluntary organisations in shaping a collective vision for health and social care services.
- Participants in the case study process acknowledged an emphasis on maintaining budget discipline and meeting quantitative outputs over qualitative outcomes as defining characteristics of the relationship between the State and voluntary sector. It was recommended that voluntary organisations input into national service planning on an annual basis as a means to increasing collaboration between the State and voluntary organisations.

The Chair thanked Prospectus for the update provided, noting the extent of the issues covered in the presentation and the comprehensive detail found within. Breakout discussions followed shortly thereafter to gather Forum members’ views on the findings of the draft report and to identify priority areas for action over the coming period.

Following the breakout discussions, the Chair concluded by noting that the inputs received from the discussions will inform the Case Study Final Report and will form the basis of the Forum’s work programme for the coming year.

The Chair also highlighted that the launch of the partnership principles paper will take place on 3 April and noted that the discussions shared will provide a useful base to underpin the launch event. Noting the utility of the discussions, the Chair encouraged members to circulate the coming work programme, and the powerpoint slides from Prospectus to colleagues within their organisations.

3. Update on ongoing Forum Work

Partnership Principles

The DoH provided an overview to Forum members on the launch of the partnership principles. Due to competing demands within the health and social care system and following discussions with Forum members, the launch of the partnership principles is scheduled to take place on 3 April in Miesian Plaza. Members were encouraged to circulate the partnership principles paper in advance of the launch. Representation from across the State and voluntary sector at the launch event is welcomed.

The Chair welcomed the update provided and highlighted the importance of the launch of the partnership principles. The Chair advised Forum members to expect further updates from the DoH concerning plans for the launch, noting that a save-the-date invitation was due to follow ahead of the event.

SA Review

The HSE provided an update to Forum members on the review of the Service Arrangement. Due to a number of factors, including the pressure on health and social care services over the winter period, the review of the Service Arrangement has not progressed as quickly as foreseen. The context for

the work has also changed significantly with the adoption of the partnership principles; the completion of the case study process; the HSE's risk review and the appointment of a new HSE CEO.

The approach to the review of the Service Arrangement is therefore currently being revisited by HSE colleagues and it is anticipated that voluntary sector representatives will be included in this open, aligned process. The review of the Service Arrangement is intended to be aligned with the implementation of the RHAs and will be shaped by the finalisation of the partnership principles and the completion of the case study programme.

The Chair thanked the HSE for the update and highlighted the need to progress with the review of the Service Arrangement. The Chair reflected on the importance of the Service Arrangement review in facilitating the development of shared goals between the State and voluntary sector and emphasised the need to align the Service Arrangement process with the wider ongoing work programme of the Forum. Members of the Forum also welcomed the update and the fact the HSE are revisiting the approach to the SA review.

Regional Health Areas

The Chair invited the DoH to update Forum members on the progress made concerning the implementation of the Regional Health Areas. Senior HSE officials met recently with representatives from the voluntary sector to engage them on the proposed plan concerning the RHA implementation process. Further engagement with stakeholders from voluntary organisations are scheduled to take place over the coming weeks. Forum members were invited to attend future engagements, with the option to send alternates if necessary to input into the process.

The Chair thanked the DoH for the update provided and encouraged members to engage with the RHA implementation process over the coming months given its relationship to the other streams of work underway within the Forum and its impact on integration.

4. Close

The Chair concluded the meeting, thanking Prospectus for the significant work they have undertaken and for their cooperation with members on the case study process. The Chair thanked Forum members for their positive inputs to the discussions. The Chair reminded members to save the date of 3 April for the launch of the partnership principles and encouraged members to disseminate both the date of the launch and the partnership principles within their organisations. A full meeting of the Forum will take place online in March.