

Better Financial support creating

BETTER VALUE FOR OUR SERVICES

THE HSE's new Single National Financial and Procurement System is intended to assist the Health Service to deliver 'valued, responsive and efficient services' as it adapts to the Irish Health System's changing financial support needs.

The new system is one of the longer term parts of the project to implement the overall Finance Operating Model, the success of which is reliant on the collaborative effort of our people, according to HSE Chief Financial Officer Stephen Mulvany.

"I'd like our people to feel proud of the work they do, and to be happy to talk positively about the Health Service as they are a huge part of changing it for the better," he said.

"My job is to create the conditions that allow the wider Finance Community deliver valued, responsive and expert decision support services. We're making real progress on the new Financial System which has been talked about for 10 years so that's very positive," said Stephen.

The new Finance Operating Model (FOM) for Health in Ireland was approved with the support of the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) to support far-reaching and fundamental change in financial management practices across the Health and Social Care system.

"I'm not too fond of the "reform" word at this stage. Through excessive use, it seems to paint an overly negative image of the work our staff have done in recent years in many cases without access to fit-for-purpose

systems, standard processes or proper development opportunities," he said.

"The Finance Operating Model in simple terms is about how we can develop our people, standardise our processes and support both with improved technology i.e. working towards a Single National Financial and Procurement System (IFMS) with interim improvements along the way.

"The Director General has identified this as one of the most important non-clinical priorities for the HSE and he chairs the overall governance group which is overseeing its implementation and includes the Secretary General of DOH and the Assistant Secretary General in DPER."

And Stephen acknowledged that it is easy to talk about "developing our people" but that actions speak louder than words on that front.

"In terms of actions, we have invested in a new senior role of Corporate Development Specialist. Michelle Brennan, previously one of our Regional Financial Accountants, who started in that role over a year ago and with a small team is leading on a number of areas including Learning and Development, Communications and Change Management.

We conducted our first Learning and Development survey amongst our National Finance Division Staff in recent months and are working through what our staff told us. As an initial response to the survey, a set of Learning and Development initiatives is being designed with the aim of offering everyone in the National Finance Division an opportunity to undertake training in the near future.

Processes and technology are the other two vital elements of the Finance Operating Model through which the Finance Community seeks to improve on how it does business.

"A very big problem our staff encounter at present is having to spend an inordinate amount of time just to ensure that our financial information "is not wrong" and can be consolidated from the over 200 local systems that we rely on to produce it each month," said Stephen.

"We also struggle to provide information on a timely basis each month. Despite our very significant efforts the data is





ABOUT THE CFO STEPHEN MULVANY

BEGINNING his career as a temporary clerical officer in the former Eastern Health Board, Stephen Mulvany has worked his way up to current Chief Financial Officer and Interim Deputy Director General. He grew up on the north side of Dublin and went to the Christian Brothers in Marino for both primary and secondary school. He left school in 1987 and after a three-month stint as a temporary clerical officer in the former Eastern Health Board; he joined the Finance Department of Dublin County Council in 1987.

"That is where I met my wife Cora. We have been married for 20 years, live in Skerries in North County Dublin and have a girl and 3 boys aged between 14 and 19," explained Stephen.

"I arrived in Dublin County Council just in time for a six-year moratorium during which there were no promotional opportunities. Between 1993 and 1998, I was lucky enough to be promoted into each of the grades from grade III to grade VI with roles in water charges, roads and finishing as payroll manager in Fingal County Council, one of the bodies that succeeded Dublin County Council."

"During this period with the county council I took rather a long time studying at night for my accountancy exams and after about six years, I finally completed the ACCA exams and became qualified in 1997."

He was also heavily involved in the local IMPACT trade union branch, part of this time serving in a number of positions including branch chairperson.

In 1998 he joined the Eastern Health Board as Industrial Relations Officer (VII) and since then he has held a number of roles including Senior Project Manager (EHB to ERHA Transition – 1999-2000), Management Accountant and then Director of Finance for the Northern Area Health Board (2000-2005), Assistant National Director of Finance HSE Dublin North East (DNE -2006-2007), Hospital Network Manager (2007-2009) and then Regional DO for Dublin North East (DNE) (2009-2013).

"In 2013 I was privileged to become the first national director for mental health services and in 2014 I became the HSE CFO. I am also currently the interim Deputy Director General," said Stephen.



often not as comparable as we would like, is available later than we would wish and the efforts to produce it mean we don't have enough time to analyse and interpret it particularly at the regional and national levels. All of this makes it more difficult to provide the support our services need in order to make timely decisions and take necessary actions which is a core purpose of the information.

"We are close to finalising an initial standard National Chart of Accounts which we will deploy as part of our Stabilisation project. This project is currently under way in the Mid-Western Area with the aim of replacing the legacy financial and procurement systems of the former Mid-Western Health Area board with SAP Financials along with an initial set of standard procurement and financial processes.

We expect to have completed the project in the Mid-West before the end of the year and within the next 18 months or so to have extended this single instance of SAP Financials to the other four former health board areas in the South and West that have a variety of older systems that are becoming more and more difficult to maintain."

In parallel with the stabilisation project, the Finance Division have also received the necessary approvals to move ahead with two other key technology projects.

"Firstly, we are upgrading what is called CRS or the HSE's National Corporate Reporting Solution. CRS was put in place over 10 years ago as a "short term" means of extracting data from the financial systems of the 10 former health boards in order to allow for regional and national reporting. We expect to have deployed a new CRS and discontinued the various national and regional reporting solutions by the middle of 2017," said Stephen. "Secondly, we are going to tender later this year to determine what the software platform will be for the single national financial system that will provide for the needs of both the statutory system and the larger voluntaries for the next 20 years or so."

The Finance team or Finance Community

within our Health and Social Care Services is made up of:

- The Finance staff in our CHOs, Hospital Groups, Hospitals, Ambulance Service, PCRS and larger funded voluntary organisations who report to the leaders of those organisations (CHO, Chief Officers, HG CEOs etc.)
- The Corporate Finance staff who are part of the National Finance Division and report to Stephen as HSE CFO.
- The Finance staff within Health Business Services who report to the leadership within HBS.

Stephen explained that the HSE CFO is not "in charge" of this wider Finance Community.

"I directly serve the staff of the National Finance Division as their leader. My role in relation to the wider finance community is to serve them as "head of profession". In both roles, I want to work with my colleagues to create the conditions that make it feasible for us to improve the standard of what we all can do as finance professionals. I see all the staff in the Finance Community as finance professionals," he explained.

In explaining further the role of the CFO and the Finance Community, he said, "Different people within the Finance Community will no doubt have their own way of expressing what our fundamental role or purpose is. I'm hoping there would be a consensus that we all want to support the Health Service to attract the maximum appropriate investment by helping our services to deliver real value and good controls in respect of the resources that the public have already entrusted to us."

CONTACT DETAILS

Visit www.hse.ie/eng/about/Who/finance/financereform/ for more information on the Finance Service Improvement Project.

HSE Senior Finance Team: Maureen Cronin, ACFO Acute Hospital Finance; Paddy McDonald, ACFO Operations Excellence; Mairead Dolan, ACFO Finance Specialists; Stephen Mulvany, CFO and Deputy DG; Raymonde O'Sullivan, ACFO Cost Accounting & Funding; Mike Corbett, ACFO Planning & Performance.