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5th April 2022

Deputy Pauline Tully,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
E-mail: pauline.tully@oireachtas.ie

Dear Deputy Tully,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the following parliamentary question, which was submitted to this department for response.

PQ: 14174/22

To ask the Minister for Health his plans to introduce an assistive technology passport; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

HSE Response

Assistive technologies are increasingly being used by people with disabilities to enable them to have more choice and control and live 'ordinary lives in ordinary places'.

One of the responses to the present global pandemic has been further increased initiatives and increasing use of technology to assist and support clinicians, frontline workers, service providers, service users and indeed the population as a whole.

At the beginning of 2022, once off funding of €2 million was allocated for Digital and Assistive Technology Projects.

Following an evaluation of 79 submissions, 11 projects were awarded funding. Projects were assessed on the extent to which they were person-centred, as well as how they demonstrated a willingness to work collaboratively across different service providers and to really engage with DAT through a clear process of co-design. These projects are being led out by the National Clinical Programme for People with Disabilities, under the HSE's Cooperative Real Engagement for Assistive Technology Enhancement (CREATE) initiative. These projects are piloting the use of Digital and Assistive Technologies to enhance the delivery of person centred Disability Services and Supports.

The *CREATE* initiative seeks to ensure that service users and providers work together to identify what will make a real difference to individual users of digital and assistive technology (DAT). Digital and assistive technologies are defined as "any product or service designed to enable independence for disabled and older people", and the WHO maintains a list of essential Priority Assistive products.

CREATE projects will support people with sensory, cognitive, physical, and intellectual disabilities, across all age ranges, across different settings and across the country. It will target unmet needs, supporting people to



contribute to their communities through work, leisure, and social participation. CREATE Workshops will take place throughout 2022 around Ireland to disseminate the learnings across the sector.

One of these projects, involving several organisations, is the development, piloting and evaluation of a Digital and Assistive Technology Passport. The timeframe for this project is 18 months. The funding allocation for this project is €250,000.

The AT Passport is a person-centred digital record (envisaged as an accessible app linked to a cloud-based AT portal). It places the assistive technology user at the heart of the process, with accommodations and resources following the user through life stages, to ensure the provision of AT in a practical, streamlined and efficient manner.

The AT Passport is a record of what AT an individual needs to live their best lives at home, in education, at work and in their communities. It engages the user in all stages of their AT journey, while offering the State value for money by reducing the overhead of administration and undue duplication of services which increase the costs of AT service provision.

Enable Ireland is the administrative lead and the Disability Federation of Ireland is the evaluation lead for the AT passport project. Implementation partners are St. John of God Services, Headway Ireland and Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland. These four service provider organisations support over 24,000 service users with multiple disabilities nationally.

The main objectives of the project are:

- To provide 50 people with assessment and access to the AT that they need to fully participate in life
- To raise capacity of staff and AT users across all pilot sites in AT assessment and service
- To collaborate with AT users and staff in the co-design of the AT Passport.
- To cascade learning throughout participating organisations.
- To develop an AT Passport that is robust, and agile enough to exploit continuous digital advancements (e.g.: Artificial Intelligence).
- To develop practical means to reduce waiting lists, duplication of services and lengthy delays during life transition periods
- To cascade learning throughout the AT community in Ireland (via CHAT).

Developmental evaluation:

Developmental evaluation grounded in systems thinking will be used to collect and analyse real-time data to guide informed and ongoing decision making as part of the co-design, development and implementation process. This will support continuous learning and engagement across stakeholders including drawing on first-hand experience of AT users, learning across the wider community (e.g. funders, other grant holders and CHAT) external expertise (e.g. Microsoft) and policy (e.g. SDGs, UN CRPD, NDIS, New Directions, CES etc). Accountability and rigour is balanced with flexibility and reflection-in-action to support the emergence of tangible and implementable outcomes.

Evaluation activities and data collection including learning forums will be conducted at regular 2 monthly intervals and be used to guide the project forward.

The project provides both short and long term impacts:

In the short term, the project will:

- empower 50 AT users to access AT they need and give them a voice as part of the development of the passport. This will support them in their daily lives, attend work or college, or access services and supports, and live independently in line with goals articulated with their individual service provider partner.

Longer term impacts include:



- self-identification for AT provision, timely and tailored services and supports.
- Building the AT knowledge and capacity among the AT users, service providers and other key stakeholders will strengthen the relevance and reach of supports, directly impacting on user experience.
- Through the multi access model the funders can access live data which will speed up the approval process impacting on user experience.

All create projects attended the first workshop on March the 10th 2022. Work has commenced on the assistive technology passport project and is ongoing.

Yours Sincerely,

Bernard O'Regan

**Mr Bernard O'Regan,
Head of Operations - Disability Services,
Community Operations**

