8th April 2022

Mr David Cullinane
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re: PQ Ref 16535/22

''To ask the Minister for Health the number of operating systems, software programmes or databases used by the HSE where the company providing the service cannot provide technical changes, support or upgrades; the nature of the systems; the areas of healthcare they operate in; and if he will make a statement on the matter.''

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

The HSEs estate consists of more than 2,700 Applications supplied by circa 500 vendors across the country.

The applications landscape is complex and multi layered i.e. Networks, Storage, Operating Systems, Databases, Applications, Web Services. Each layer must operate in order for the business/health service which is supported to operate. The underlying technology stacks for each layer are changing at an ever-increasing pace, therefore keeping up with all the changes is not possible not just for the HSE technology teams but for our vendors and our services teams who have to test application changes. Priority is always given to services which directly impact patient care to ensure that they are as up to date as possible and secure.

As part of the Cyber-attack rebuild process the HSE, where possible upgraded technologies at the lower end of the technology stack, i.e., Networks, Storage and Operating Systems. The priority was to recover systems as soon as possible therefore applications were not upgraded as they take a considerable time and resource to test, validate and implement.

Within our technology stacks there are a small number of systems (circa 20) where the HSE directly provide support and maintenance for the solution as the vendor is not in business anymore. Application updates to these systems are normally not undertaken. These systems do get replaced over time in line with service requirements.

An example of this would be the Keogh Systems which support RIS historical lookup in a number of sites.

Regarding technical changes and upgrades, systems of a certain age will always reach end of life and those systems are constantly reviewed for retirement or replacement with a new system as part of the service planning cycle. It is also important to note that a vendor may advise a specific site about a specific upgrade or technical change that may not be possible due to various reasons. These may include linkages of their system to other local systems, or a Vendor may no longer be investing in that particular system in favour of a replacement system, or they may no longer be in the market for that application. These systems are still fully supported by the Vendor but normally do not receive application enhancements. Within the estate there are approx. 40 systems in this category.

An example of this would be:-

AON/NDS: Assessment of Need, National Day Services

Situation: Systems are end of life and no longer supported. They were recovered post cyber-attack and a risk assessment was carried out on both systems by PFH/Client solutions (completed in January 2022). The outcome of the risk assessment recommended a pathway to modernisation and stabilisation of both systems and an RSA to implement this recommendation is currently in the approval process, awaiting sanction. There is a longer term plan in place to replace both systems under the CDNTIMS (Children's Disability Network Team Information Management System) project in the next 2 years.

Hospital Pharmacy System, Clanwilliam

Situation: This product is end of life and can no longer be upgraded. However, there is vendor support available and contracts for same are with local sites.

The Hospital Medicines Management System (HMMS) project is underway and will replace this product.

If you feel that the question has not been fully answered or you require any further clarity, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Fran Thompson,
Interim Chief Information Officer, OoCIO, HSE.