

Chapter 7

Commitment to Service Quality, Safety and Risk Management

The HSE, like all leading healthcare systems, places patient safety and quality of care at the heart of service provision and delivery. The delivery of high quality, evidence based, safe, effective and person centred care, is a key objective for the HSE.

International best practice points to the need for quality and patient safety functions to be robust at corporate level to enable staff to embed a culture of quality and safety within their services. The health service is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards of care for patients/clients and providing employees with a safe system of work to enable them to deliver a high quality service. The health service is also committed to promoting a culture of openness and accountability so that employees can report any concerns they may have in relation to their workplace.

In this context, the HSE has redesigned its national Quality and Patient Safety function to give it an enhanced role in relation to both quality improvement and quality assurance, within an environment where patients, service users and staff are involved, their opinions sought and their voice is heard.

Underpinning these new arrangements is the establishment of a Quality and Patient Safety Enablement Programme to give effect to these changes. Enablement in this context refers to an approach that provides the means, opportunity and authority for service users and providers to develop the skills and confidence necessary to improve the quality and safety of services. The overall goal of the HSE's Quality and Patient Safety Enablement Programme is to improve the quality of services with measurable benefits for patients and service users. The four key objectives which underpin the Programme are as follows:

- Objective 1:** Services must subscribe to a set of clear quality standards that are based on international best practice.
- Objective 2:** Services must be safe and there must be a robust level of both quality improvement and quality assurance.
- Objective 3:** Services must be relevant to the needs of the population.
- Objective 4:** Patients must be appropriately empowered to interact with the service delivery system.

To deliver on the key objectives required for the development of an effective and sustainable Quality, Patient Safety and Enablement Programme the HSE has reorganised its functions to support, facilitate and build a quality and safety agenda at corporate, divisional and service provider levels. The HSE has strengthened the processes it has in place in the areas of:

- ▶ Complaints management
- ▶ Appeals
- ▶ The approach to whistle blowing including protected disclosures
- ▶ Appointment of the HSE's Confidential Recipient to enable individuals (service users and staff) to raise concerns.

Further details on these policies and procedures are listed in section 8 (Policies, Procedures, Protocols and Guidelines).

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7.1 Risk Management

The HSE recognises the importance of risk management, including financial risk management, as an essential process for the delivery of quality and safe services. Risk management at an operational level is a line management function. Each Division is required to describe accountability arrangements for managing risk at all levels within the Directorate. These arrangements are part of the normal reporting mechanism to ensure that risk management is embedded into the business process. Each service/function is obliged to identify, assess and manage risk relevant to their area. The risk register is the principal tool to enable communication of this risk information. Where risks are identified that have significant potential to impact on the overall objectives of the HSE they are recorded on the Corporate Risk Register. The register is a mechanism to provide assurance (evidence) to the Directorate that risk is being identified, assessed and managed and that a range of control measures and action plans are in place to mitigate the risks identified. Regular reports on the status of the corporate risks are submitted to the Risk Committee. The full suite of HSE risk management policies, procedures and guidelines are published on www.hse.ie.

7.2 Code of Conduct for Health and Social Service Providers

This Code of Conduct, which sets out employees' and managers' responsibilities in relation to achieving an optimal safety culture, governance and performance of the organisation, was approved and endorsed by the Minister in March 2015. The HSE is progressing the implementation of the Code.

The primary objective of the Code is to ensure the safety of those that access our services and to ensure that the quality of these services is always improving. The Code is recognition of the fact that frontline staff face a high-risk environment involving a complex set of interactions between individuals, teams, organisations and technologies every day and that, to achieve this objective, they must be supported in doing so.