



# The future of procurement in the HSE

Appointed to the role of National Director of Procurement within the HSE's national finance and procurement division in January 2025, Gareth Morton talks to Ciaran Brennan about his strategic priorities and how the HSE can use procurement to deliver best-in-class care for patients.

"It is an incredible honour to step into this position. It contributes to a health system which touches every community in Ireland," Morton states. "I bring leadership to this role with a commitment for collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement, along with a clear vision for how procurement can support a resilient, responsive, and value-driven health service."

The National Director states that procurement helps to deliver value for money in the healthcare system while

enabling better outcomes for patients. Although new to the role, Morton navigates challenges including the volatility of the global supply chain, inflation, and the pressure of ensuring regulatory compliance.

"We have got to align our procurement operations with the expanding healthcare service and the demand on the system," he adds. "My priority is to lead a procurement function that is proactive, collaborative, and deeply connected to patient care."





*"I want us to become a trusted, proactive, value-driven partner in the delivery of health services for the people of Ireland."*

**Gareth Morton, National Director of Procurement, HSE**

## Priorities

Morton has 30 years' experience in procurement and supply chain management in fast moving consumer goods within retail. He previously held senior commercial roles within Tesco. Morton believes that his experience has provided him with a "deep understanding of efficient, sustainable, and value-focussed procurement".

"This experience helps to reinforce the importance of strong engagement with our suppliers and our senior leadership to ensure that any decisions we make are practical, evidence-based and align with the broader organisational priorities of the HSE."

Morton stresses the importance of building "high-performing teams" to deliver results in dynamic and challenging environments. He says he is consistently focused on "embedding procurement as a strategic partner".

The National Director highlights that the procurement function contributes to the HSE's financial stability and enables it to achieve long-term service goals. Morton asserts he aims to "support healthcare through effective, efficient, and responsive procurement". This aim is underpinned by a set of strategic priorities set out in the HSE's corporate procurement plan.

He outlines the organisation's aim to ensure the healthcare sector gets the requisite goods and services "exactly when and where they are needed to keep everything running smoothly".

"We aim to achieve the best value for money by coordinating purchasing strategically, which helps save costs and allows reinvestment in patient services and patient care and we do not lose sight of that."

Morton states that the HSE also aims to provide SMEs with opportunities to participate in the procurement process, adding: "We ensure it is as much local as global and national as best we can."

## Sustainability

He says balancing the HSE's climate goals with its aim to deliver healthcare products is a topic of "major importance" to the HSE's procurement function as the organisation is the State's largest purchaser with a spend of €5.4 billion. He points out that the HSE's *Climate Action Strategy 2023-2050* identifies sustainable procurement as being "essential for the HSE's decarbonisation".

"In alignment with that climate strategy, I am going to lead our green procurement strategic framework," states Morton. "That framework will set out an improvement plan to address the main environmental and social impacts of HSE contracts and supplies, right through to our service providers with the aim to reduce our carbon footprint."

"Our procurement teams are focussed on embedding sustainability principles across contracts, ensuring the HSE leads by example in sustainable healthcare delivery."

Morton views innovation as vital in unlocking green procurement, pointing to the HSE's increasingly digitally-driven approach as an example of how innovation can increase efficiency and reduce the organisation's carbon footprint.

The National Director points to increased investment in higher-quality products with a smaller carbon footprint as another measure the organisation must consider. However, he





acknowledges that this may lead to increased costs, adding that this will be addressed through the implementation of the green procurement strategic framework.

## Value for money

Morton identifies effective procurement as a means to achieve maximum value from public money, facilitating the delivery of best-in-class patient care. He states: “Procurement in healthcare must balance fiscal responsibility with patient and clinician needs to ensure that our resources are used wisely and strategically to support better outcomes.”

“Value for money is achieved through transparent, competitive procurement practices. We secure high-quality goods and services which we aggregate at the best possible price.”

The HSE has six health regions, each with its own specific needs. Morton explains that the procurement function must collaborate closely with the regions to support those needs whilst also determining what is required at national level: “Cultivating strong supplier partnerships is vital to delivering value and meeting the diverse need effectively.

He continues: “Effective procurement in the HSE goes beyond cost saving, it is a strategic enabler for better care. That is what we always try to benchmark ourselves on. We are also transitioning to a more expansive digital healthcare environment.

“It is about aligning the needs of the front line and the expectations of the public to ensure that every euro we get is put back into the system. Digital is definitely the future. With that comes the excitement of innovation.”

## Innovation

Morton reiterates the importance of innovation to enhance efficiency throughout the discussion, at one point asserting: “I have joined the HSE in one of its most transformational periods.

“We have recently implemented a single national financial management and procurement system across the publicly funded HSE-run health and social care system. This system lays the foundation for more integrated, data-driven procurement and finance operations across the HSE, enhancing transparency and decision-making.”

He reveals that his function is adopting a digital approach to track equipment and deliver products throughout the system, adding that the function has “a huge network of hospitals to keep track of”. The National Director adds that procurement is exploring the use of AI in its activities and how this will be adapted, it is within digital innovation that we see more opportunities for the future.

Concluding, Morton states his overarching vision for the HSE’s procurement function: “I want us to become a trusted, proactive, value-driven partner in the delivery of health services for the people of Ireland.

“At the heart of this is a commitment to deliver value for public money, ensuring our procurement practices support safe, effective, compliant, and improved patient-centred care.”