



HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE  
**Health and Wellbeing**  
**Annual Report 2021**



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# Contents

List of Tables.....	4
List of Figures.....	4
Abbreviations.....	5
Foreword.....	6

## SECTION 1: HSE HEALTH AND WELLBEING ..... 7

Overview of Health and Wellbeing.....	8
Healthy Ireland in the HSE.....	13
Staff Health and Wellbeing.....	14
Sláintecare Healthy Communities.....	15

## SECTION 2: HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAMMES ..... 17

Tobacco Free Ireland Programme.....	19
Mental Health and Wellbeing and Alcohol Programmes.....	21
Healthy Eating and Active Living Programme.....	25
Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme.....	29

## SECTION 3: PROGRAMME SUPPORTS ..... 33

Men's Health.....	35
Education and Training.....	37
Making Every Contact Count.....	39
Living Well: A Programme for Adults with Long-Term Health Conditions.....	40
Stakeholder Engagement and Communications.....	41
Section 39 National Partner Activity.....	43

## REFERENCES ..... 44

# List of Tables

Table 1: Location and attendance at Stop Smoking Advisor Training Programmes.....	19
Table 2: HSE staff attendance at NCSCT online modules.....	20
Table 3: Media coverage during the START campaign, 2021.....	25
Table 4: New and updated Smart Start programmes delivered in 2021.....	36

# List of Figures

Figure 1: Key goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework.....	8
Figure 2: Organisational structure of HSE Health and Wellbeing Division..	10
Figure 3: HSE investment for 2021 and 2022.....	15
Figure 4: Steps to Health Challenge participants 2021, by Hospital Group and CHO.....	26
Figure 5: Responses of exit survey participants in Steps to Health Challenge.....	27
Figure 6: SPHE Junior Cycle resource 2021 lesson units.....	37

# Abbreviations

AND	Assistant National Director
BCO	breath carbon monoxide
CHO	Community Health Organisation
CTOR	click-to-open rate
DOH	Department of Health
FASD	foetal alcohol spectrum disorders
gbMSM	gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men
GP	general practitioner
HG	Hospital Group
HI	Healthy Ireland
HP&I	Health Promotion and Improvement
HSE	Health Service Executive
H&W	Health and Wellbeing
IMSA	Irish Men's Sheds Association
IT	information technology
MECC	Making Every Contact Count

NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NCDS	National Condom Distribution Service
NCSCCT	National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NSHS	National Sexual Health Strategy
NPPP	National Policy Priority Programme
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
SHCPP	Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme
SPHE	Social, Personal and Health Education
STI	sexually transmitted infection
TFIP	Tobacco Free Ireland Programme
UL	University of Limerick
VOD	video on demand
WTE	whole time equivalent

## Foreword

The 2021 annual report provides an ideal opportunity for me to acknowledge the difficulties that the health and wellbeing community have faced during the pandemic along with the chance to recognise the incredible and significant work that the various health staff have undertaken to assist with the recovery. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated what can be achieved when we pull together to overcome the challenge at hand. This annual report is only a snapshot of the work covered during the period, which has obviously been impacted by the pandemic and the cyberattack in May 2021.



Our mandate is to improve the health and wellbeing of the population and reduce health inequalities. Working with this in mind, we in health and wellbeing are focused on reforming and changing how health and social care services are planned and delivered in order to keep people healthy and well and reduce the likelihood of disease and premature mortality, especially for individuals and communities at risk.

We have several HSE services with responsibility to protect health, promote and improve health, intervene early, and prevent disease onset, as set out in the National Service Plan 2021 (HSE, 2021a).

We are guided by the vision of the Healthy Ireland Framework (DOH, 2013a), where health and wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society. In 2021, we worked with a wide range of nationally funded and non-funded partners to embed prevention and promotion in their work targeting priority groups and a broad range of stakeholders.

During 2021, we worked closely with our key stakeholders in the Community Healthcare Organisations, Hospital Groups and voluntary organisations (Section

39) across the HSE to develop and empower their Healthy Ireland plans. Working with our Health Promotion and Improvement colleagues in the community care areas is fundamental to the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing agenda, in particular the National Policy Priority Programmes.

The importance of prevention and early intervention is recognised by the World Health Organization, the European Union, and Sláintecare. The commitment in the HSE Corporate Plan 2021–2024 (HSE, 2021b) is to significantly enhance the focus on prevention and early intervention to improve children's health and wellbeing and to reduce the risk factors for chronic disease, with a clear emphasis on tackling harmful alcohol use and rising obesity rates. We understand this as a core principle of building a sustainable health service.

Throughout 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of this reform priority. A rapidly expanding evidence base shows that smoking increases the risk of COVID-19 infection (hand-to-mouth action) and that obesity is linked to COVID-19 disease severity, while the evidence also shows rising levels of alcohol consumption during the pandemic.

During 2022, we plan to reset and strengthen the collaborative working of 2021 across a variety of settings in all communities, hospitals, local authorities, with local statutory and voluntary partners, places of education, and workplaces to implement Healthy Ireland. Our priority over the next 12 months is to drive change and implement prevention programmes, with a particular focus on areas of deprivation. Through the implementation of the Sláintecare Healthy Communities, in partnership with local authorities, we aim to give people living in these communities the chance to live healthier lives as we move through this pandemic and beyond.

**Helen Deely**

*Interim Assistant National Director, Health and Wellbeing*

# SECTION 1

# HSE Health and Wellbeing



# SECTION 1

## HSE Health and Wellbeing

### Overview of Health and Wellbeing

HSE Health and Wellbeing (H&W) aims to provide services that keep people healthy and well and reduce the likelihood of chronic disease and premature mortality, with a focus on individuals and communities at greatest risk.

Healthy Ireland is the overarching Government policy that presents a roadmap for achieving improved health and wellbeing for all in society. The Health and Wellbeing function of the Health Service Executive (HSE) has responsibility for the strategic implementation and oversight of Healthy Ireland within the health services.

The key goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework are outlined in Figure 1.

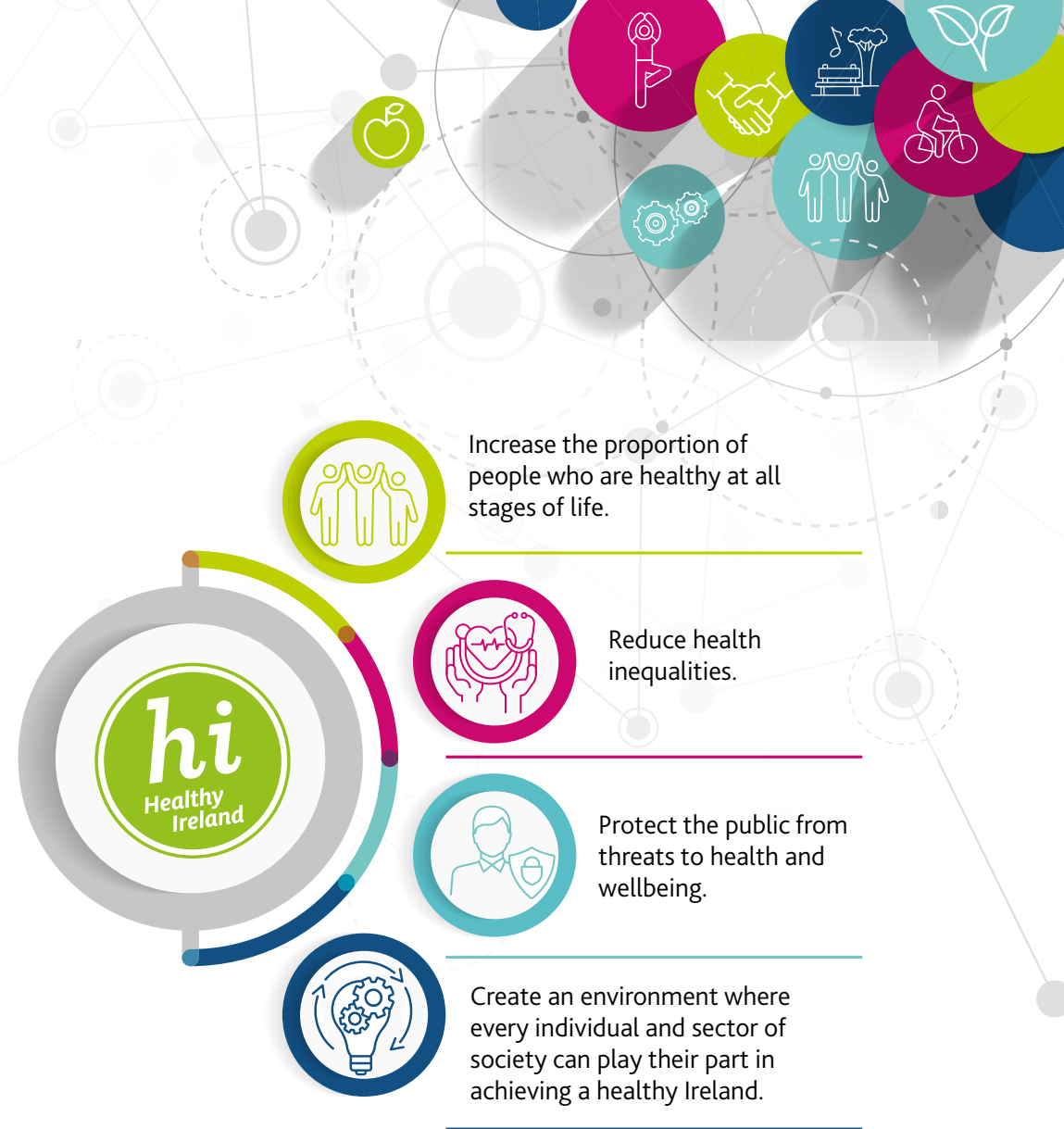


Figure 1: Key goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework



The National Policy Priority Programmes (NPPPs) include Tobacco Free Ireland; Healthy Eating and Active Living; Sexual Health & Crisis Pregnancy Programme; and Alcohol and Mental Health. They have three supporting teams: Training and Programme Design; Stakeholder Engagement and Communications; and the Business Team.

The NPPPs were established in 2016 to provide expertise, strategic advice, and direction to deliver these Healthy Ireland goals and address lifestyle determinants of health through identifying evidence-based best-practice policies. They provide leadership and expertise for the implementation of Government policies. They have a broad remit in respect of specific policy areas, including strategic planning to embed core health and wellbeing deliverables into community and acute services; service/programme design and specification; communications; research; and quality assurance. Each programme has developed multiannual implementation plans, guided by relevant Government policies and strategies. The implementation of these is supported by a cross-divisional Implementation Group and Stakeholder Network.

The work of Health and Wellbeing is focused on prevention and early intervention to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the population. Health and Wellbeing works closely with community and acute planning teams and operational functions to support and embed health and wellbeing in the health service (see Figure 2).



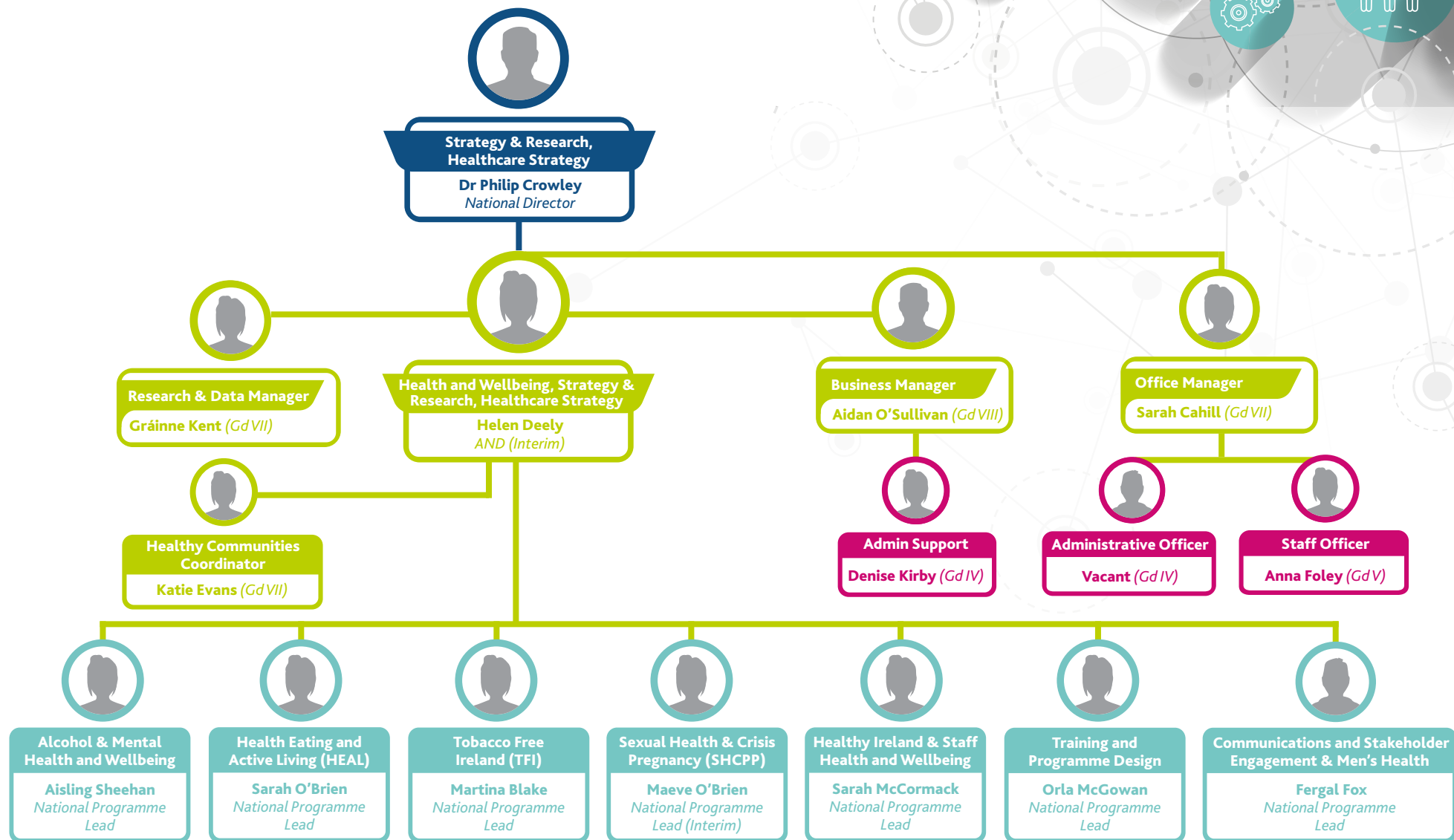


Figure 2: Organisational structure of HSE Health and Wellbeing Division

# Key achievements in 2021

**09**



number of Healthy Ireland plans in CHOs

**07**

number of Healthy Ireland plans in Hospital Groups

**11,926**



number of MyOptions calls received

*The My Options freephone helpline provides factual information and judgement free counselling to those experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.*

Piloted a free online STI testing service integrated with public STI clinics.



**13,749**

STI test kits were ordered

**19**



number of Sláintecare Healthy Communities areas

**44**



number of services who submitted applications for the Tobacco Free Campus Quality Improvement Bursary in 2021

Provided  
**439,450**  
condoms and  
**259,603**



lubricant sachets via the National Condom Distribution Service.

**07/10/22**



date of annual obesity education event, which included the launch of the Talking about Weight resource and MECC weight module

**09**



number of publications launched in 2021, such as:

- Healthy Ireland Progress Report 2015–2020
- National Condom Distribution Service (NCDS) report for 2020
- Healthy Weight for Children: HSE Action Plan 2012–2023
- Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity
- Talking about Weight resource and the MECC weight module
- HSE Social Prescribing Framework
- The scoping study report to inform a general population survey on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours on sexual health in Ireland.

**12,841**



people availed of Stress Control courses.

**409,121**

number of visits to Quit.ie



**8,789**



number of participants in Steps to Health – 148 MILLION STEPS

**31**



number of HSE-funded social prescribing sites across the country

**1,500**



number of staff who tuned in to hear Christmas Concert performances from HSE staff choirs and guests

**81**



number of staff trained as intensive stop smoking advisors in 2021

143,000



number of organic visitors to Ask About Alcohol

14,000



number of completions of Drinks Calculator

1,600



number of people registered for the Engaging Men webinar series

## Other Highlights 2021



- Train-the-trainer courses for MECC, SPHE, and Healthy Ireland Smart Start 0-3
- A progressive series of 30-minute video sessions developed for Pilates, Yoga, Strength and Conditioning, and Chair Yoga for Beginners
- Two-day training course developed with NCCA and Junior Cycle for Teachers

05



number of units of a resource to support the Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course published online.

1,178



number of staff completed the six MECC e-learning modules

1,362



number of people who availed of 133 Living Well programmes delivered online across 7 CHOs

### Sexualwellbeing.ie:

A 37.6% increase in visits in 2021.



Up from 692K in 2020 to 950K in 2021.

A total of **14** webinars took place during 2021 that focused on men's health, staff health, healthy eating, alcohol and cancer, and obesity.

15,985



number of people registered to 14 webinars

02



the number of new MECC modules developed TOTAL 6

30,000



number of orders processed and distributed through Healthpromotion.ie



# Staff Health and Wellbeing

The strategic priority in the Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan is reflected as a priority in the HSE National Service Plan with a focus on improving the health of staff. Throughout 2021, a strong relationship was established with HSE Internal Communications with a focus on reaching the maximum amount of staff with our health and wellbeing information. We worked with various programmes to communicate and engage with as many staff as possible to identify and focus on their own health and wellbeing needs. This was done through leading and engaging with various programmes of work. Healthy Ireland has funded a staff health and wellbeing incentive in all CHOs and Hospital Groups.

## Activities and developments

**Funding:** National HSE Health and Wellbeing gave funding to CHOs and HGs for Staff Health on an ongoing basis.

**Healthy Workplace Framework:** The Healthy Workplace Framework (DOH, 2019) and implementation plan for the *HSE Psychosocial Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic* (HSE, 2020) were developed and continue to be led by HSE Human Resources.

**Webinars:** Staff Health and Wellbeing **webinars** attracted a high attendance during 2021.

**Launch of strength and conditioning videos:** A progressive series of 30-minute **video sessions** to promote strength and conditioning was launched in 2021.

**HSE Annual Staff Concert:** A **Christmas concert** was held on Tuesday, 21 December 2021 to support the wellbeing of staff in the face of another challenging year during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 1,500 staff tuned in to hear concert performances from HSE staff choirs and others from across the country.



**Exercise programmes:** A series of **exercise videos** were created to help HSE staff get active: Pilates, Yoga, Strength and Conditioning, and Chair Yoga for Beginners.



**Quit nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) for staff:** Funding of **free NRT for HSE staff** was included in staff health and wellbeing initiatives in CHOs and Hospital Groups to incentivise successful quitting.

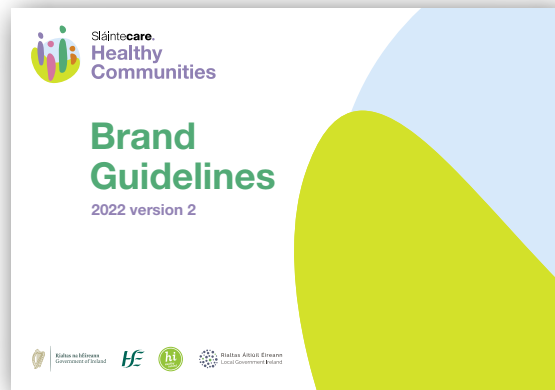
# Sláintecare Healthy Communities

## Addressing Healthy Inequalities, Lifestyle Behaviours and the Social Determinants of Health

In 2021, a major cross-sectoral community-based health and wellbeing initiative was launched, called **Sláintecare Healthy Communities**. HSE H&W plays a vital role in this work at national and local level. Sláintecare Healthy Communities was developed to target specific health and wellbeing needs where they are needed the most and will be delivered in partnership with local authorities and community agencies. This will be achieved through programmes such as Social Prescribing, Smoking Cessation, Healthy Food Made Easy, and Parenting.

Nineteen areas were included in the programme on the basis of need and in consultation with the local authority sector. A core group of programmes is being delivered to support the health and wellbeing of people living within the communities in each of the 19 areas. The **investment** includes staff working at community level to engage, support, and coordinate activities in an effective manner. Dedicated health and wellbeing staff have therefore been recruited by the HSE and local partner organisations.

An investment of €6m to the HSE was approved for 2021 with a further 4m approved in 2022 (see Figure 3). This represents a very significant investment in



local HSE community prevention services based on a cross-sectoral, community-based model of health and wellbeing improvement, tackling health inequalities. It is the largest investment in health promotion and prevention in Ireland for 20 years and a key deliverable for HSE H&W. This initiative was made possible by the resources mobilised since the publication of the Healthy Ireland Framework in 2013 and the dedication and expertise of all staff, and our internal and external partners have worked to embed prevention into services and policies.

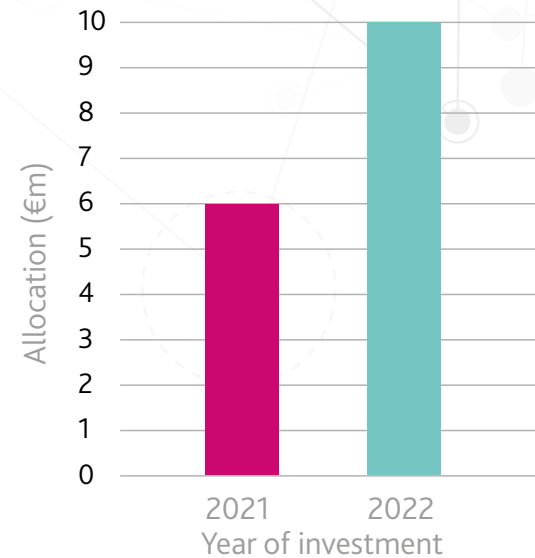


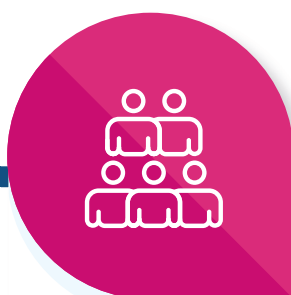
Figure 3: HSE investment for 2021 and 2022

The recruitment of Local Development Officers in local authorities has been significantly advanced to support addressing the wider social determinants of health. Local authorities were allocated seed funding for activities and an Enhancement Fund for investment into the built environment in each community.

## High-level actions delivered from 2021



Using Pobal indices, 19 areas were identified for health service investment in 2021/22.



An oversight Health and Wellbeing Steering Group and local Sláintecare Healthy Communities implementation groups were established and are currently operational.



Sláintecare Healthy Communities was launched by Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly TD and Minister of State Frank Feighan TD on 20 October 2021.

<https://bit.ly/3jjXb5V>



The recruitment of HSE staff was undertaken and contracts are in place with community partners to deliver services.



Brand guidelines, promotional materials, and guidance for each local launch were developed, providing a consistent communication approach across the country.



## SECTION 2

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# Health and Wellbeing Programmes



## SECTION 2

# Health and Wellbeing Programmes

HSE H&W services take a whole-of-population approach to supporting people to stay healthy and well throughout their lives. They work collaboratively and cross-sectorally at national and local level to implement the Healthy Ireland actions and deliver improved population health outcomes for all.

The following priority programmes are included in this section:



# Tobacco Free Ireland Programme

## Priorities of national programme

The Tobacco Free Ireland Programme (TFIP) has a remit to mobilise the health services to improve health and wellbeing and play its part in the achievement of a reduction in smoking prevalence to less than 5% of the population by 2025. The programme works to ensure implementation of the HSE actions contained within the Government Tobacco Free Ireland Strategy (DOH, 2013b).

## QUIT campaign

The HSE's **QUIT campaign** (Quit.ie) is one of Europe's most effective social marketing campaigns, prompting 500,000 quit attempts each year in Ireland since 2014. The Last Stop marketing campaign entered the second year of its cycle in January 2021.

QUIT campaign activity for 2021 included:



## Training and intensive stop smoking support

Six intensive Stop Smoking Advisor Training Programmes, certified by the National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCCT), were delivered in Athlone, Dublin and Naas. In total, 81 staff trained as intensive stop smoking advisors in 2021 (see Table 1 and Table 2). Many of these are now newly employed as part of the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Initiative.



**Table 1: Location and attendance at Stop Smoking Advisor Training Programmes**

Location	Attendance
Dublin	12
Dublin	15
Naas	10
Dublin	13
Athlone	13
Naas	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>

**Table 2: HSE staff attendance at NCSCT online modules**

NCSCT online modules	2021	Total (national)
Practitioner Assessment	151	538
Specialty Module Mental Health	193	193
Specialty Module in Pregnancy	170	170
Very Brief Advice on Smoking	13	94
Very Brief Advice on Secondhand Smoke	69	69
<b>Total</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>1064</b>

Intensive cessation support was provided to 8,593 clients/patients by a stop smoking advisor (86% of the National Service Plan target) up to the end of December 2021.

### We Can Quit Programme

**We Can Quit** is a community-based 12-week stop smoking programme for women living in areas of deprivation. In 2021, some 27 We Can Quit courses were delivered with 186 participants registered. COVID-19 restrictions impeded the delivery of this programme during 2021.

### Maternity services

**Smoke Free Start**, initially funded through the Sláintecare Integration Fund, is a joint initiative between the TFIP and the National Women and Infants Health Programme. These dedicated services have been established at Cork University Hospital and the National Maternity Hospital. The project aims to develop capacity and capability in maternity settings to better diagnose and

treat smoking in pregnancy through the introduction of routine breath carbon monoxide (BCO) testing at antenatal appointments and subsequent referral of pregnant women who smoke to dedicated midwifery-led stop smoking services. There has been a delay in establishing routine BCO testing due to the infection control risk posed by COVID-19.

### Tobacco Free Campus Quality Improvement Bursary

Forty-four services submitted completed applications for the Tobacco Free Campus Quality Improvement Bursary in 2021 using an online survey. The funding allocated must be spent on initiatives that contribute to the continued improvement of the **Tobacco Free Campus policy**.

### Youth education and initiation prevention

TFIP has worked with the Health and Wellbeing Education Programme to develop new tobacco content for the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum. New activities on tobacco have been published as part of the Healthy Choices 1 lesson unit. Work commenced on Healthy Choices 2 in 2021 and these lessons will be piloted with secondary schools in 2022.



### QuitManager patient management system

QuitManager is a comprehensive electronic stop-smoking referral and tracking system that allows direct entry by referrers and a comprehensive patient record of all cessation service support provided. The referral module went live in April 2021. This facility was presented and promoted to over 2,000 general practitioners (GPs) at an Irish College of General Practitioners webinar. A one-hour workshop e-learning module for QuitManager training was scoped and progressed throughout 2021, which will be hosted on the online portal **HSeLand**.

# Mental Health and Wellbeing and Alcohol Programmes

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

### Priorities of national programme

The overall aim of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme is to promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the population and among priority groups.

### Social Prescribing

Social Prescribing is being mainstreamed and embedded within the HSE at Community Healthcare Networks as part of the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Programme across 19 sites. An additional 12 sites were also mainstreamed within the HSE as part of the 2022 Estimates Process; therefore, there are currently 31 HSE-funded social prescribing sites across the country. In 2021, essential skills training for social prescribing link workers was delivered to link workers across the country with the aim of enhancing participant knowledge, confidence, and skills in order to work in that role. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Programme also contracted the Bromley by Bow Centre in London to deliver three additional modules of training to social prescribing link workers focused on trauma-informed approaches, social prescribing within primary care, and co-production.



Work is currently underway nationally to develop resources for healthcare professionals describing what social prescribing is and how it works. In addition, discussions are ongoing with the HSE's Office of the Chief Information Officer in relation to progressing the national procurement of a software solution to support monitoring, evaluation, and ease of referrals to social prescribing. HSE H&W also funded the development of the All-Ireland Social Prescribing Network website ([allirelandsocialprescribing.ie](http://allirelandsocialprescribing.ie)), which includes a map of the existing services across the island of Ireland. The **HSE Social Prescribing Framework** was launched online on 15 July 2021 (HSE, 2021d).

### Stress Control

Stress Control is an evidence-based stress prevention and management programme that aims to help people who want to learn effective ways to prevent stress or manage stress becoming a problem. It works for people with severe, moderate, and mild symptoms of stress. It is a free six-session online class, each lasting for 90 minutes. In 2021, some 12,841 people availed of these courses.



The development of a HSE stress management programme is also in progress, the content of which is being developed by HSE H&W and HSE Psychology and will be available in late 2022.

## Minding Your Wellbeing

The **Minding Your Wellbeing Programme** has been redesigned for local delivery, while the training of trainers for HP&I colleagues to deliver the programme online at local level is in progress. A *Minding Your Wellbeing* support booklet was developed and launched in October 2021 (HSE, 2021e).



## Youth mental health

Training courses to support young people impacted by COVID-19 were delivered in partnership with Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health. Fifty-four participants who work with young people took part in the training.



## Making Every Contact Count (MECC)

A Mental Health and Wellbeing module is in the final stages of development for the MECC programme. This will ensure that support, advice, and signposting related to mental health and wellbeing are included in contacts and interactions that our service users have with HSE staff at CHO level and in hospitals.



## Arts and Creativity and Health

**Creativity and health and wellbeing:** A memorandum of understanding between HSE H&W, the Arts Council, Creative Ireland, and Healthy Ireland has been signed at director level for a period of two years. This partnership, called RENEW, will promote the role of creative programming in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff, service users, and wider communities. A number of projects will be funded under this partnership in 2022 focused on Travellers, HSE staff, and service users.

## Migrant mental health and wellbeing

In partnership with the HSE National Social Inclusion Office, an e-learning module on mental health and wellbeing is in development to augment the HSE LanD Intercultural Awareness training programme.



## ALCOHOL

### Priorities of national programme

The Alcohol Programme aims to achieve a healthier and safer Ireland by working to reduce individual and population alcohol use and health inequalities, and protecting children, families and communities from alcohol-related harm. Almost one and a half million adults in Ireland drink in a harmful manner, with 40% engaging in heavy episodic drinking (i.e. binge drinking) at least once a month (HRB, 2021a). Alcohol is a major cause of illness and disease, hospitalisations, self-harm, and violence in Ireland.

### Ask About Alcohol

Ask About Alcohol is the HSE's information campaign on alcohol and alcohol harm. The askaboutalcohol.ie brand and website support the recently enacted Public Health (Alcohol) Act (2018). One of the measures yet to be enacted is the inclusion of the HSE website details must be included on the labels of all alcohol products sold in the State (over €4bn spend annually) and on all alcohol advertising (over €30m spend annually), at no cost to the State.

We work with multiple stakeholders from early childhood to older persons in building knowledge and responses to reducing the impact of alcohol-related harm on various populations. These stakeholders are vital to our partnership-building work, in particular **Alcohol Action Ireland** and **Alcohol Forum Ireland**, who are engaged in numerous projects and activities that support the work of the Alcohol Programme.



### Review of Ask About Alcohol website and campaign

An external evaluation of the campaign was conducted by Core Research in 2021 and found that conflicting attitudes prevail towards alcohol, with the perceived impact of risk from drinking alcohol remaining low. The alcohol content on the HSE website is performing steadily, with 143,000 organic visitors in 2021 and an 83% increase in new users. The most popular content was the self-help tools. The Self-Assessment Tool was the most-viewed webpage of all the alcohol content, with 28,000 completions in 2021, while there were 14,000 completions of the Drinks Calculator. In 2021, there were 2,220 contacts to the helpline where alcohol was discussed.

#### ALCOHOL CONTENT ON HSE WEBSITE IN 2021

- ▲ 143,000 organic visitors, an 83% increase in new users
- 👤 Self-Assessment Tool most-viewed webpage, with 28,000 completions
- 📅 14,000 completions of Drinks Calculator

## Integrated alcohol services

Two new integrated alcohol services are being established in CHO 3 and CHO 4. The Integrated Alcohol Services Working Group has met three times in 2021. An evidence review has been commissioned to review effective interventions and is being led by Prof Catherine Comiskey at Trinity College Dublin. For **integrated alcohol services**, a community-based team will deliver counselling and psychoeducational interventions to adults with problematic alcohol use, provide family support, and develop integrated alcohol treatment pathways.

## Alcohol research post in Beaumont Hospital

An alcohol research post was established in Beaumont Hospital in July 2021, which is co-funded by the Institute of Public Health. Data on alcohol-related admissions and chronic diseases will be collated and analysed and the work will inform data collection in other hospitals. This initiative is the first of its kind in the country. These data will assist other Hospital Groups in assessing the cost of alcohol-related admissions, which have a mean length of stay of 10 bed-days compared with an average of 6 days for non-alcohol-related illnesses (HRB, 2021b).

## Scoping the development of a digital intervention

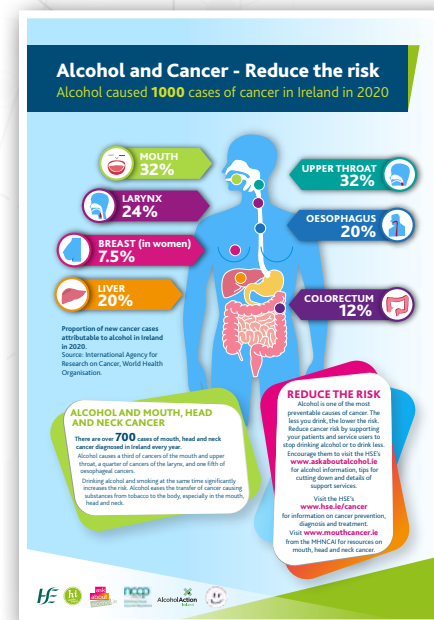
An evidence review was conducted and a workshop held with key stakeholders in July 2021 to explore the development of an alcohol digital intervention for harmful drinkers and their families. Further stakeholder engagement is underway.

## Prevention of foetal alcohol spectrum disorders

The Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Prevention Expert Advisory Group met twice during 2021, in July and November. A subgroup developed a survey with health, social care, and education professionals on knowledge and awareness of FASD; it met 12 times in 2021. Another subgroup focused on the development of a HSE position paper on alcohol and pregnancy and it met six times. The survey and position paper will be launched in 2022.

## Alcohol webinars

In association with Mouth, Head, Neck Cancer Awareness Ireland, a webinar called Alcohol and Cancer – Reduce the Risk was held on 15 September 2021. An infographic showing how alcohol caused 1,000 cancer cases in Ireland in 2020 was developed. In addition, a webinar on alcohol and its impact on the brain and the immune system was held on 18 November 2021. This highlighted the emerging evidence that there is now safe level of alcohol use for brain health, and how alcohol weakens our immune systems.





# Healthy Eating and Active Living Programme

## Priorities of national programme

The remit of the Healthy Eating and Active Living Programme is to mobilise the health service to improve health and wellbeing by increasing the levels of physical activity, healthy diet, and healthier weight across service users, staff, and the population as a whole. There is a particular focus on families and children. The programme works to ensure two national policies are implemented across the health services, namely the Obesity Policy and Action Plan (DOH, 2016a) and the National Physical Activity Plan (DOH, 2016b).

## Let's go easy on the treats: START campaign

The **START campaign**, delivered in partnership with **safe food**, seeks to help families take that first step towards a healthier lifestyle for their children and then to continue ongoing steps.



In 2021, the campaign focused on reducing the consumption of treat foods. There were 58 separate pieces of media coverage with a total reach of 4.8 million people (see Table 3). During the campaign phases, there were 14,278 visits to the online **START hub: [www.makeastart.ie](http://www.makeastart.ie)**

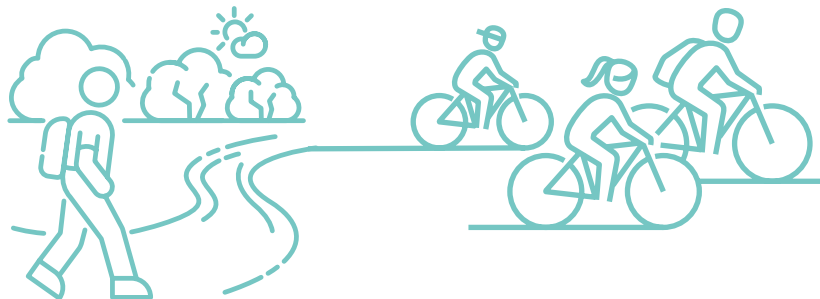


Table 3: Media coverage during the START campaign, 2021

Coverage	Number	Total reach	Impressions
Media pieces	58	4,800,000	–
START website visits	14,278	–	–
Instagram	–	–	20,000
Facebook	–	–	60,000
Twitter	–	–	100,000

The **annual Ipsos/MRBI health survey** with parents conducted in November 2021 highlighted both an increased frequency of fruit, vegetable, and salad consumption as well as increased frequency of unhealthy food consumption (Ipsos/MRBI, 2021). In addition, there was a reduction in the percentage of parents who had considered behaviour change in relation to eating healthier, increasing physical activity, and reducing treats in the past month. This highlights the need to refocus parents' attention on healthy behaviours for their children.



## 2021 Steps to Health Challenge

Since 2017, the annual Steps to Health Challenge encourages HSE employees to increase their levels of physical activity both during and beyond the challenge, making it a continuous habit. From 13 September to 17 October 2021, some 8,789 participants took part in the challenge, supported by 1,142 volunteer team coordinators (see Figure 4).

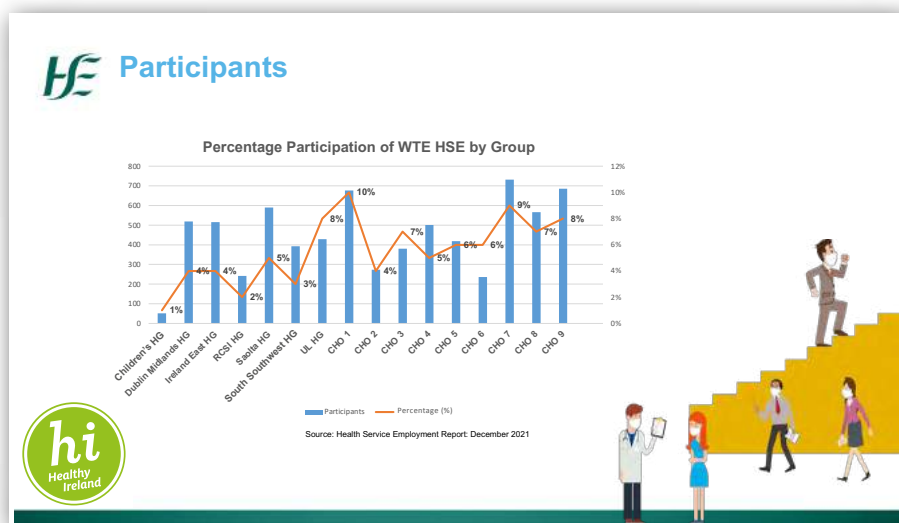
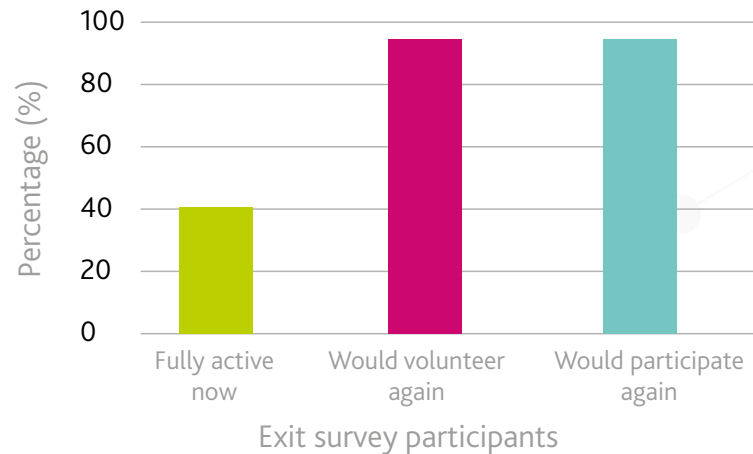


Figure 4: Steps to Health Challenge participants 2021, by Hospital Groups and CHO

An evaluation was also conducted, which found:

- A 39% increase in step count between Week 1 and Week 5, with a total of 148 million steps reported.
- Of those who took part in the exit survey (see Figure 5):
  - 39% who were inactive were now meeting national guidelines for physical activity having taken part in the challenge.
  - 93% of coordinators reported that they would volunteer again.
  - 94% of participants would take part again.





**Figure 5: Responses of exit survey participants in Steps to Health Challenge**

### Healthy Eating at Work

The HSE **nutrition standards** for the provision of food and beverages to staff and visitors in healthcare settings were formally launched at a **Healthy Eating at Work Webinar** on 8 September 2021 (HSE, 2019). A series of nutrition training modules have been developed and are available on the online portal HSeLanD to support staff to implement the standards.

HSE H&W has also partnered with the Irish Heart Foundation to provide support and guidance for health service websites to achieve recognition for their work in improving the quality and healthiness of their food provision through the Happy Heart Healthy Eating Awards.

### World Obesity Day 2021

The HSE marked World Obesity Day 2021 by formally launching the **Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity** (HSE, 2021f). There is a focus on childhood obesity prevention through the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Initiative. This involves securing resources to establish specialist community-based weight management services for children and young people in two CHO areas as well as the provision of access to evidence-based weight management services for adults in primary care through the Enhanced Community Care Chronic Disease Management Programme.

### Irish Physical Activity Research Collaboration Conference (I-PARC)

The second annual **Irish Physical Activity Research Collaboration Conference** took place on 11–14 January 2021. Its theme in 2021 was Collaborative Action for Physical Activity Promotion: Opportunities Presented by COVID-19.

### HSE Healthy Weight for Children Action Plan 2021–2023

At least one in five children and young people across all ages in Ireland are living with overweight and obesity. The **HSE Healthy Weight for Children Action Plan 2021–2023** (HSE, 2021g) was formally launched on 14 September 2021.

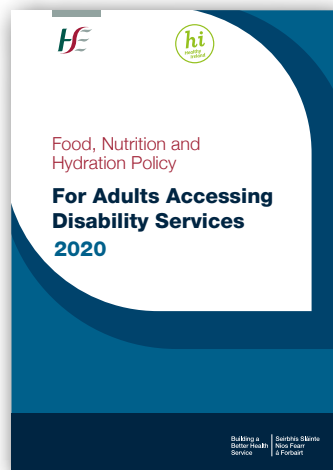
At least one in five children and young people across all ages in Ireland are living with overweight and obesity.

## Food, Nutrition and Hydration Policy for Adults Accessing Disability Services

The **Food, Nutrition and Hydration Policy for Adults Accessing Disability Services 2020** (HSE, 2021h) was launched at a webinar in March 2021.

## Malnutrition Risk Screening Tool training

The Malnutrition Risk Screening training is national training developed to support the implementation of *National Clinical Guideline No. 22* (DOH, 2020) on nutrition screening and use of nutrition supports for adult in the acute care setting as well as the *Food, Nutrition and Hydration Policy for Adults Patients in Acute Hospitals* (HSE, 2018). It is available under Clinical Skills on the online portal **HSeLand**.



# Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme

## Priorities of national programme

The Sexual Health and Crisis Pregnancy Programme (SHCPP) has responsibility within the HSE for implementing the **National Sexual Health Strategy (NSHS) 2015–2020** (DOH, 2015) and for the provision of unplanned pregnancy counselling services nationally. The NSHS is the national framework for sexual health and wellbeing.

The SHCPP comprises six functions: Clinical Services; Education and Training; Communications and Information; Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services; Research; and Finance and Administration. The work is coordinated by a programme lead and overseen by the strategy implementation group, comprising HSE stakeholders, community and patient stakeholders, and representative groups.

In 2021, the programme team worked with the Department of Health to review work delivered over the course of the 2015–2020 strategy and to support it with prioritising areas for inclusion in the forthcoming NSHS.

## Key actions in 2021

### Clinical Services function

The Clinical Services function has responsibility for the clinical actions of the NSHS, which includes the development of clinical practice guidance, information, and resources to support sexual health services in Ireland. In 2021, the Clinical Services function:

- Piloted a free online sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing service integrated with public STI clinics. The pilot was initiated in early January 2021 and ran to the end of May in Dublin, Cork, and Kerry. During the pilot period, 13,749 STI test kits were ordered. Eight per cent (n=734) had a reactive result requiring further care, while 57% of users had never previously engaged with sexual health services.






### STI PILOT TESTING SERVICE (Jan–May 2021)

- 💧 13,749 STI test kits ordered
- ♥️ 8% had reactive result requiring further care
- 🧑 57% of users had no prior engagement with services

- Continued to work with public STI services to provide the national HIV Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) Programme. At the end of 2021, there were 14 public and nine private approved PrEP service providers in Ireland. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the HSE cyberattack in 2021, some 2,686 new individuals were registered for PrEP and 3,279 individuals were dispensed PrEP at least once.

**PrEP PROGRAMME 2021**

-  **14** public and **9** private approved PrEP service providers in Ireland
-  **2,686** new individuals registered for PrEP
-  **3,279** individuals dispensed PrEP at least once

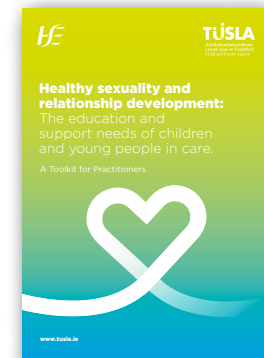
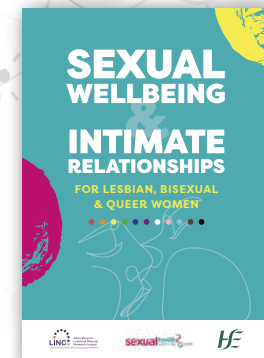
- Continued to establish and support the HIV Fast-Track Cities Initiative in Dublin, Cork, Galway, and Limerick. A HIV scoping study was commissioned in July 2021 to document the current service provision and service gaps in a systematic way in order to inform the development of implementation plans for the establishment of the Fast-Track Cities Initiative in each of the four cities. The study will be completed in 2022.



## Education and Training function

The Education and Training function continued to progress actions under its Sexual Health Promotion Training Strategy to enable parents, teachers, and youth workers to address the sexual health education and information needs of children and young people. There was continued support for professionals in promoting the sexual health of a diverse range of population groups, including the general population, older people, people with disabilities, migrants, and ethnic minorities. In 2021, the Education and Training function:

- Redeveloped the Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion to a six-day training programme.
- Developed a one-day training programme on sexuality, health and policy called Working Safely and Effectively in Sexuality and Wellbeing – Developing Policy and Guidelines.
- Engaged in a **partnership project** with LINC and the Sexual Health Centre to develop a **sexual health resource** for lesbian, bisexual, and women who have sex with women (lbWSW).
- Began developing the third booklet in the **Making the 'Big Talk' Many Small Talks** series for parents of 8–12-year-olds (SHCPP, 2020).
- Launched the online resource **Healthy Sexuality and Relationship Development**, catering for the education and support needs of children and young people, in partnership with Tusla.
- Engaged in a partnership project with the Sexual Health Centre and BeLonG To youth service to develop the **In the Know training manual**.



## Communications and Information function

The Communications and Information function provided communication support to the SHCPP functions and worked closely with the HSE Programmes and Campaigns team to design and implement targeted sexual health campaigns as well as to develop and disseminate information. In 2021, the Communications and Information function:

- Promoted the topic of sexual consent and sexual health messages on Tinder and video on demand (VOD) platforms (Spotify and Twitch) during Valentine's Day and Sexual Health Awareness and Guidance (SHAG) week.
- Published online articles in partnership with *College Times* to raise awareness of the **misconceptions around HIV** and presented a comprehensive guide to **sexual consent** aimed at third-level students.
- Published issue 12 (winter) of **Sexual Health News** in November 2021.
- Developed a **syphilis social media campaign** to raise awareness of the increase in syphilis among gbMSM and young people aged 18 years and over.
- Launched the Because campaign promoting condom use, which appeared across multiple channels. A short 10-second advert appeared on RTÉ Player and All 4 VOD, delivering a simple educational message that using a condom correctly reduces the risk of STIs.
- Launched the new **Fact or Fiction** video series on VOD (Twitch, Spotify).
- Published a new information guide entitled **What You Need to Know About Contraception** (SHCPP,



2021a). The guide is also available in eight other languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, and Urdu.

- Provided 439,450 condoms and 259,603 lubricant sachets (lube) via the National Condom Distribution Service (NCDS),
- Published the NCDS report for 2020 in July (SHCPP, 2021b).

## Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services function

The Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services function manages funding arrangements with over 30 statutory organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), financed to provide crisis pregnancy counselling, parenting support, community HIV testing, sexual health promotion training, and sexual health outreach.

In 2021, the Funding and Crisis Pregnancy Services function:

- Continued to provide funding to unplanned pregnancy counselling services.
- Managed and oversaw the MyOptions unplanned pregnancy helpline, which took 11,926 calls in 2021, including 2,275 directly to the nursing line.



### MyOptions Helpline 2021

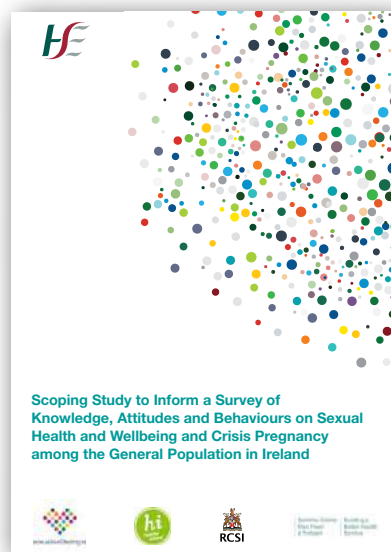
- 📞 11,926 total calls received
- 📞 2,275 calls directly to the nursing line

- Provided training opportunities to counselling staff in funded unplanned pregnancy services.
- Provided funding to a range of NGOs to deliver counselling, training, parenting support, and testing.

### Research function

The Research function commissions research and evaluation studies; monitors trends related to crisis pregnancy and sexual health; and disseminates and supports the implementation of research findings to inform policy and improve practice. In 2021, the Research function:

- Published the **scoping study report** in April to inform a general population survey on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours on sexual health in Ireland (Tierney and Kelleher, 2021).
- Continued to manage and oversee the Unplanned Pregnancy and Abortion Care Study commissioned by the SHCPP in 2019 to document women's experiences of abortion and unplanned pregnancy support services



since the implementation on the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018 on 1 January 2019.

- Developed and published the **annual report of activities** for 2020 for the National Condom Distribution Service (SHCPP, 2021b).
- Managed the performance measurement of HSE sexual health communications initiatives and campaigns in 2021.





## SECTION 3

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# Programme Supports



## SECTION 3 Programme Supports

The work of HSE H&W and its National Policy Priority Programmes is underpinned by a range of programme supports. They work collaboratively and cross-sectorally at national and local level to implement the Healthy Ireland actions and deliver improved population health outcomes for all. Key to this work is Section 39 Non-Acute/Community Agencies, which are being provided with funding under Section 39 of the Health Act 2004.

The following support programmes are included in this section:



# Men's Health

## Priorities of programmes

Through the **HSE Healthy Ireland Men's Action Plan** (HSE, 2016), a network of highly engaged stakeholders deliver on programmes targeting men's health and empowering other organisations to better engage with men to support their health and social care needs. HSE HP&I and partner organisations deliver Engage Men's Health Training to support this work. Men's Health Week is the key annual campaign through which various men's health issues are highlighted and men are encouraged to improve their help-seeking behaviours. The HSE fund and work with the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, the Men's Development Network, and the Irish Men's Sheds Association (IMSA), 2021 to develop a programme of training and information.

## Activities and developments

### Engaging Men webinars

The Engaging Men **webinar series** was delivered in April, June, September and November 2021. A total of 1,600 people registered to attend the webinars, with very positive feedback received. The final webinar focused on farmers' wellbeing and showcased the On Firm Ground initiative and presented the evaluation report on 'Farmers Have Hearts'. This is the cardiovascular programme initiated in farming industry settings such as marts and agri stores.



## Men's Health Week 2021

Men's Health Week was a great success in 2021 with many agencies activating in a variety of ways. Led by the Men's Health Forum in Ireland and supported by a large range of over 90 different partners the week focussed on 'Making the Connections' as a priority for men following the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of everyone. This included a focus on men looking at their own behaviours and engagement with health services and also engaging to strengthen their social connections and supports. HSE Health and Wellbeing hosted a Men's Health Week webinar on this theme with Special guest former Mayo footballer David Brady who had reached out to men by phone during the COVID-19 restrictions to support them through conversation and the shared interest of football.

## Sheds for Life Impact Report Launched

The Sheds for Life Impact Report, <https://bit.ly/313k52b> (McGrath et al., 2021) was launched during Men's Health Week 2021. It highlighted a broad range of positive outcomes across a series of policy areas for middle-aged and older men engaged through this initiative. The Men's Sheds movement in Ireland has been very significant to the engagement of men in their health and improving their social engagement at community level across the country. This has been further built on in the development of the 'Sheds for Life' Health Promotion programme which has been developed, delivered and evaluated with a wide range of partners led by the Irish men's Sheds Association with support from HSE Health and Wellbeing. This report signifies the importance of how a tailored community based men's health promotion programme, developed in collaboration with its intended participants, can have a profound impact in engaging and empowering what are often regards as a 'hard to reach' group (middle-aged and older men) in the care of their own health.

### Engage Men's Health Training: Men in the Middle

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, train-the-trainer courses had occurred for HP&I staff to deliver the Men in the Middle training. In 2021, refresher training was delivered and ongoing delivery training was initiated.

The Men's Development Network coordinate this training and for more information click here:

<https://engagetraining.ie/programmes/men-in-the-middle/>

### Engage Men's Health Training: On Feirm Ground

Train-the-trainer courses took place with a number of agricultural consultants online during June 2021 with follow-up face-to-face training in September 2021. This training of the broader group of agricultural consultants was rolled out with the support of HP&I in Q4 2021; further training and mentors will be sought from HP&I for 2022 with support given to new recruits.

The Men's Development Network coordinate this training and for more information see here:

<https://engagetraining.ie/programmes/on-feirm-ground/>



# Education and Training

## Priorities of programme

The Education Programme supports initiatives to improve health and wellbeing within the education sector, working in partnership with HSE H&W (national and regional), the Department of Education and its agencies, and the Department of Health.

## Activities and developments

### Healthy Ireland Smart Start

In 2021, the Education Programme worked with the National Childhood Network to commence delivery of the new 0–3 programme and updated 3–5 programme. Fourteen programmes for 0–3-year-olds were delivered to 246 participants, while 16 programmes for 3–5-year-olds were delivered to 292 participants (see Table 4).

**Table 4: New and updated Smart Start programmes delivered in 2021**

Programme	Programmes delivered (n)	Participants (n)
0–3-year-olds	14	246
3–5-year-olds	16	292

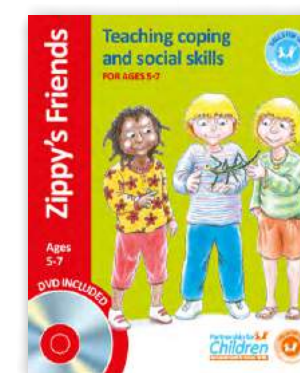
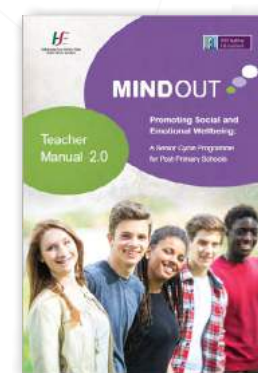
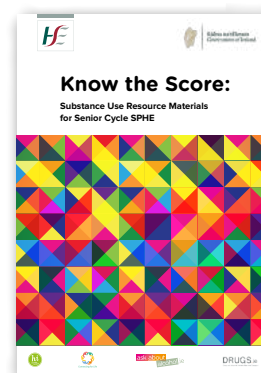
## Healthy Campus

In 2021, the Education Programme partnered with the Department of Health, Healthy Ireland, and the Department of Higher Education to finalise and launch the **Healthy Campus Charter and Framework** (DOH, 2021).



## Teacher training for emotional wellbeing programmes in primary schools

**Teacher training** did not run as planned due to COVID-19 during 2021. Training programmes for **Know the Score**, MindOut, and Zippy's Friends were redesigned during 2021 in order to be delivered online in 2022.



### NCCA Curriculum Development Group for Junior Cycle SPHE

During 2021, the Education Programme supported the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in its development of a new draft curriculum for Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) at Junior Cycle. The draft was finalised in spring 2022 and subsequently went for public consultation.

- **SPHE Junior Cycle resource:** In 2021, the first five units of a resource to support the Junior Cycle SPHE Short Course were published online in both **Irish** and English. The lesson units are **Understanding Ourselves**; **Being Healthy 1**; **Healthy Choices 1**; **Relationships and Sexuality Education 1**; and **Emotional Wellbeing 1** (see Figure 6). The **resource** is supported by the Department of Education and promoted to schools by the NCCA and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

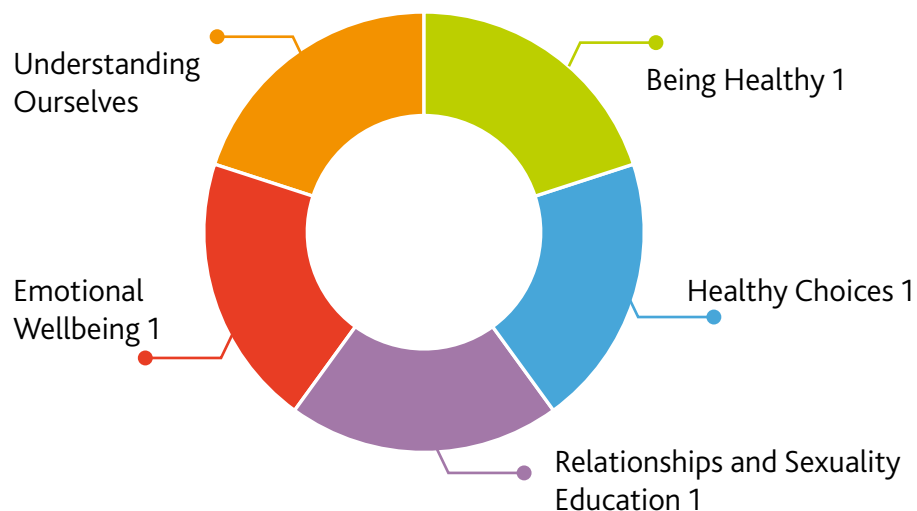


Figure 6: SPHE Junior Cycle resource 2021 lesson units



- **Skills for facilitating SPHE:** A new two-day training course was developed in partnership with the NCCA and Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) to support teachers to further develop their skills and enable them to effectively use the Junior Cycle SPHE resource. This training is awaiting Department of Education approval for substitution cover in order for it to be integrated into the HSE schools training calendar for the academic year 2022/23.

# Making Every Contact Count

## Priorities of programme

The Making Every Contact Count (MECC) programme aims to prevent chronic disease by making brief interventions a routine part of clinical care. Healthcare professionals have opportunities in their daily interactions with clients to give them the support they need to quit smoking, reduce their alcohol intake, increase their physical activity levels, and make improvements to their diet. To this end, the MECC programme includes six e-learning modules and an optional Enhancing Your Skills workshop.



## Activities and developments

### Implementation of MECC within the health service

In 2021, some 1,178 staff completed the six e-learning modules, while 174 staff completed the MECC workshop.

### Development of two new modules

In 2021, two new **MECC modules** were developed: (i) Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing, and (ii) Talking about Overweight and Obesity (HSE, 2021i).

### Development of online MECC workshops

Due to restrictions in face-to-face training and staff redeployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, the MECC face-to-face workshop was adapted into a two-hour online workshop.

## Implementation of MECC in maternity settings

The Enhancing Your Skills workshop was adapted for maternity settings with new resources, including a participant resource pack and videos. Three workshops were delivered in 2021, including virtual delivery.

## Making MECC Work research, NUI Galway

The Health Research Board Applied Partnership Award project aims to develop an implementation strategy for optimising MECC in the Irish health service. In 2021, the research programme carried out a national survey of 4,000 healthcare professionals and a qualitative interview study with 35 healthcare professionals and HSE staff who have a role in supporting MECC implementation. The next phase of the research will examine patient attitudes towards and experiences of MECC using qualitative interviews with patients. A consensus process with key stakeholders to develop a collaborative implementation blueprint to optimise and scale up MECC will be facilitated in 2022.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF MECC IN 2021



**1,178** staff completed the six e-learning modules



**174** staff completed MECC workshop

# Living Well: A Programme for Adults with Long-Term Health Conditions

## Priorities of programme

**Living Well** is an evidence-based self-management programme for adults with long-term health conditions. Over six weeks, participants develop practical skills and confidence to better manage their health in order to live well with their health condition. Workshops are facilitated by two trained leaders, one or both of whom are living with a long-term health condition (i.e. peers). Living Well focuses on developing and enhancing the self-management skills of those who complete the programme. In this way, it complements regular treatment and structured patient-education programmes.



## Activities and developments

### Programme delivery

In 2021, some 133 Living Well programmes were delivered online to 1,362 people across seven CHOs.

### Delivery methodology

Typically delivered face-to-face in a community setting, Living Well adapted successfully to online delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were supported to get online and an introductory session was added to familiarise all participants with the IT platform. With the easing of restrictions, it is hoped to have a blend of face-to-face and online programmes.

### Programme funding

Living Well was originally funded by Sláintecare in six CHOs (1, 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9). These CHOs have been successful in securing mainstream funding that will see Living Well continue. In 2021, using local funding, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare started to roll out Living Well. More recently, also using local funding, Midwest Community Healthcare commenced delivery of Living Well.

### Self-management support

There are many different types of **self-management support**. The HSE provides information on self-management support and its self-management support coordinators have produced a number of resources.



## Self-management Support



# Stakeholder Engagement and Communications

## Priorities of programme

The aim of Stakeholder Engagement and Communications is to coordinate and increase the reach and engagement of HSE H&W information and resources by working in conjunction with the division's various programmes and in collaboration with HSE Communications. Our role includes marketing, stakeholder engagement, internal communications, media, digital and social, and operational communications. We work across the PPPs, nine CHO areas, and many agencies and other public bodies.

## Activities and developments

Throughout 2021, there was exponential growth of engagement across social media platforms and a rapid transformation in the way we communicate to staff and the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. HSE H&W utilised the HSE communication channels regularly as part of our communication planning and supported the national programmes with their communication needs through our own key communication channels:

**Weekly update:** A weekly email update for Heads of Service for H&W and HP&I managers to give up-to-date information and reduce the email traffic from the national programmes to the local managers.

**HSE Health and Wellbeing e-zine (<https://hsehealthandwellbeingnews.com>):** Four issues of the e-zine were produced during 2021 and contained a range of stories about different health and wellbeing initiatives at local and national level. The e-zine has been designed for a growing online audience to give a bright, quick

and easy-to-use format for sharing our regular updates. It now has nearly 9,000 subscribers and is growing steadily. One of the most popular articles in 2021 was on the national launch of Sláintecare Healthy Communities.

**Healthpromotion.ie ([www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)):** This is a consumer health-promotion information site where members of the public, health professionals, educational institutes, voluntary bodies, and organisations can order or download current health-related resources under a wide range of topics. The initiative has been centrally managed through HSE H&W for the past 10 years and is availed of by 28 business units across the HSE to store and distribute their promotional materials. During 2021, over 30,000 orders were processed and distributed through the service. This was a significant reduction on 2020 figures (c. 48,000). Factors affecting the order system included the COVID-19 pandemic and the HSE cyberattack. In May 2021, plans to redevelop the front-end and back-end elements of the website began. The aim is to achieve a new and more user-friendly website that also offers greater functionality to all stakeholders. The first phase of the redevelopment was completed in March 2022. The redevelopment is now entering phase 2 of a three-phase approach, with the project due for completion in the second half of 2022.

**HSE Health and Wellbeing webinars:** Throughout 2021, webinars were a key way to get discussions and information shared across our broad network of stakeholders. Fourteen webinars featuring men's health, staff health, healthy eating, alcohol and cancer, and obesity, plus the Staff Christmas Concert took place. All are available on YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3usi4pV>



**@HsehealthW:** The HSE Health and Wellbeing Twitter channel went from strength to strength in 2021, with a growth of 3,197 followers. This channel is utilised nearly every day to keep up-to-date with our stakeholders and proved vital in highlighting initiatives like Stress Control online and webinar invitations. We interact with a wide variety of other channels and stakeholders via this channel.



**HSE Health and Wellbeing YouTube channel:** Our YouTube channel gave us nearly 90,000 views of a wide range of promotional videos. It proved vital to host our webinars as a watch-back option and also to stream live some webinars to give easier on-the-move access to people. Our subscribers increased by 1,500 during 2021, with the exercise videos proving very popular and many people subscribing on the back of that content.

**HSE Health and Wellbeing Website:** While the planned redevelopment of the HSE Health and Wellbeing Website <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/> did not happen following significant delays due to the cyber-attack, new content was developed and content updated for various programmes such as for the Exercise Videos and for the Sláintecare Healthy Communities launch.

## Large-scale campaigns

The following large-scale campaigns were supported:

- **askaboutalcohol.ie** – encourages low-risk alcohol.
- **Man2Man** – provides sexual health information for gbMSM.
- **MyOptions** – provides information and support for an unplanned pregnancy.
- **MyChild.ie** – provides information on pregnancy, baby, and toddler health.
- **QUIT** – supports people to quit smoking.
- **Sexual Wellbeing** – promotes good sexual health.
- **START** – partners with *safe food* to ensure a healthier lifestyle for children.

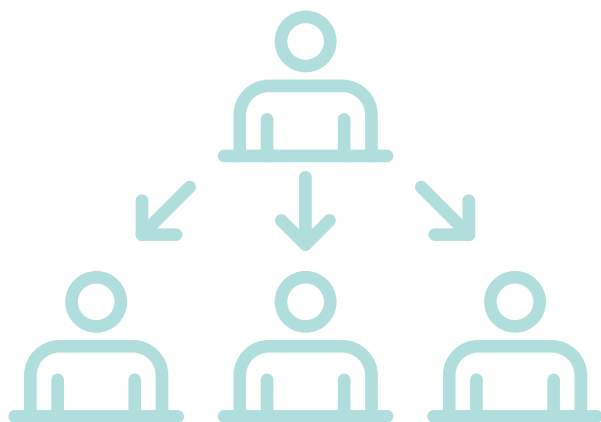


## Section 39 National Partner Activity

### Commissioning for Health and Wellbeing

Section 39 organisations are voluntary organisations that have service-legal agreements with the **HSE to provide health and social care within communities**. Through our funding of various Section 39 agencies, we commission health and wellbeing activities at a national level with a significant network of organisations.

We also work to inform the commissioning of health and wellbeing activities by giving expert policy advice and input to other funding streams, such as the Department of Health Healthy Ireland funding and local HP&I-funded activities through the CHO structures. This network of both commissioning and informing others to build health and wellbeing in an evidence-informed way will continue to be supported.



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