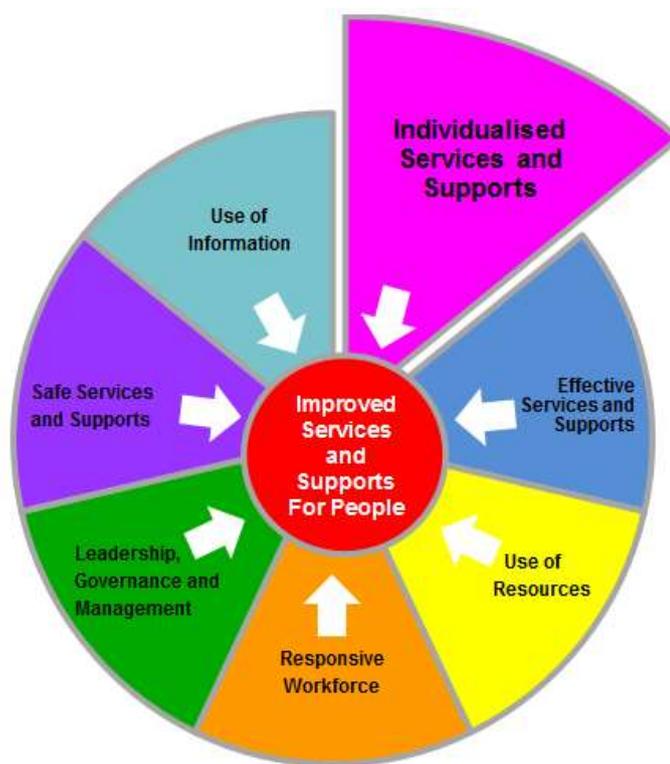




Interim Standards New Directions

Review of **E**valuation, **A**ction and **S**ervice Improvement (EASI) Process Report



Theme I: Individualised Services and Supports

(Reviewed during October and November 2018)

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Introduction

In the absence of clarity regarding when Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) are likely to become active in the development and monitoring of Standards for Day Services, the National New Directions Implementation Group (NDIG) agreed to commence the implementation of the Interim Standards for New Directions by focusing on self-evaluation and continuous quality improvement. This approach which is branded EASI (Evaluation, Action and Service Improvement) was agreed by HIQA. The process was developed within a subgroup of the NDIG.

EASI was developed following from the piloting of the Interim Standards with 18 day service locations in 2017. The feedback received from the pilot phase provided invaluable information regarding the approach to be adopted in the implementation of the Interim Standards. Significant changes were taken on board following the feedback received from the pilot sites and EASI was completed in March 2018 and introduced to all CHOs in April and May 2018. In recognition of service pressures, it was agreed that once complete, the first phase of implementation would focus on just one of the Themes in the Interim Standards. The decision was to introduce Theme 1 which relates to individualised services and supports.

The EASI approach adopted is very much in line with the New Directions core principle of Person Centeredness. Within this self-evaluation process, three groups of stakeholders evaluate and rate the service in regard to the Standards contained in the Standard Themes.

The process of self-evaluation includes the identification of service gaps/deficits which are then the focus of the continuous quality improvement Action Plan. The Action Plan is a live document which is constantly being updated as actions are complete and a major re-evaluation is carried out annually to track progress. The EASI tool produces reports for local and national information. At local level, these reports identify issues that service location management can escalate to senior management for resolution.

The national reports will provide the National NDIG with information regarding challenges in relation to specific Standards which may require intervention at national level in terms of the development of guidance, submissions to the National Estimates process etc.

When EASI was introduced to all CHOs during April and May 2018, all service locations were requested to have services evaluated and action plans completed within a five month period.

Responsibility for the management of this process locally rests with the CHO NDIG. A Lead person from each CHO was requested to lead out on the EASI process for the CHO.

Through liaison with CHOs, it became apparent that areas had commenced work on the EASI process but in the majority of cases, it was clarified that Action Plans would not be complete within the period assigned. Notwithstanding the time drift involved, the National Interim Standards Group (NISG) agreed to convene meetings with all CHOs during October and November 2018 to check on the experience to date.

This report contains the information captured at review meetings in each CHO and will further inform the process for the roll out of the remaining Interim Standard's Themes both locally and nationally.

Whilst many challenges were identified in all areas in regard to the implementation of EASI, there was evidence of a resounding positive approach and buy in regarding the process by the vast majority of service providers. Notwithstanding very busy work commitments, it was apparent that in the main, service provider organisations welcomed the process as it made New Directions a real and active policy.

EASI Review Days – Meetings with CHOs

The Interim Standards Lead for each CHO was requested to organise the review meetings for their CHOs. In advance of the meetings being arranged, all service provider organisations were requested to provide an update on the steps of the process that had been completed in each service location.

The process of review operated by members of the NISG was as follows:-

- | | |
|------------------|--|
| 10:30am -11:30am | Meeting between National Interim Standards Group members and the CHO Interim Standards Lead together with the Chair and Deputy Chair of CHO New Directions Implementation Groups (Appendix 1). |
| 11:30am – 1:00pm | Discussion Groups with leads for Interim Standard’s in all provider agencies in the CHO (Appendix 2). |
| 1:30pm – 2:30pm | Feedback from discussion groups. |
| 2:30pm | Wrap up discussion with CHO Interim Standards Lead and Chair and Deputy Chair New Directions Implementation group. |

These review meetings commenced on October 3rd and were all completed by November 28th 2018.

Learning from Meetings held with CHO Chair and Deputy Chair of New Directions Implementation Groups and CHO Lead for Interim Standards

In four of the nine CHOs, the Interim Standards Lead person is a nominee from a non-statutory organisation. It was apparent at the meetings convened that where this person had an agreed structure for communicating with the Chair of the New Directions Implementation Group, they felt supported in their role and had a stronger mandate to liaise with colleague non statutory providers and HSE day services provision in respect of their remit. Where this structure was not in place, the Interim Standards Lead person was challenged in getting full involvement from all service provider organisations.

Also in four of the nine CHO areas, the Interim Standards Lead person is also the Chair or Deputy Chair of the New Directions CHO Implementation Group. This duplication of role had both a negative and positive impact depending on the CHO involved. In some instances, the dual role proved very positive in the context of the implementation of EASI as the Chair /Deputy Chair had the process at the forefront of the agenda for local group meetings. In other areas it was evident that having a dual role was putting pressure on the individual and not all parts of the EASI process were being facilitated as per the guidance provided.

Subgroups had been developed in each CHO to oversee the implementation of the process. However, it was apparent that the structure and management of these subgroups varied from area to area. It was also apparent during the discussion sessions with all organisations that where there was a good working structure in place, organisations were more motivated and supported to embrace the process.

There were some issues identified regarding how this work is being structured and progressed in each CHO and where necessary there will be engagement with CHO NDIGs to discuss and support some solutions in this regard.

Feedback in relation to Overall Process

Because of the fact that the majority of service provider organisations were only at the stage of identifying actions for continuous quality improvement, there were no issues escalated in regard to resource requirements but some feedback had been received in regard to the overall process:

- All CHOs reported that the issue of sufficient time to complete the process had been escalated to them.
- Some minor technical issues relating to the operation of the excel tool were also escalated as being an issue for a small number of service providers
- The repetitious nature of the tool in terms of knowledge and awareness and monitoring and evaluation was highlighted in all areas. This also provided to be a major challenge whilst communicating with the service user stakeholder group.
- Service Providers had highlighted the need for staff training in regard to New Directions and the process.
- The role of Train the Trainer in the context of EASI was not fully understood by all providers.
- Service providers had highlighted the need for the development of communication aids to facilitate the engagement of service users that were nonverbal or had significant Intellectual Disability and communication deficits.

Discussion Groups with Interim Standards Lead Personnel for each Service Provider Organisation in each CHO Area

The discussion groups convened at the review sessions provided very rich information in regard to the implementation of the EASI process. The NDIG will utilise aspects of the feedback that are within the control of the group to make adjustments to the roll out of the remaining Interim Standards Themes. There are significant challenges that are not within the remit of the NDIG and these challenges will be escalated to HSE National Disability Strategy and Planning.

Some funding has been allocated to all CHOs to support the implementation of New Directions in 2018 and discussions will be held with teams in all areas to develop a planned approach to the utilisation of this funding. The implementation of the Interim Standards will form part of the agenda in regard to those plans.

There was some feedback that was common to all CHO's and other issues isolated to one CHO or a number of CHOs. In general the major issues identified are outlined below under the following areas:-

- Staff Resources/Time /Skill Mix /Training
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Communication
- Documentation
- Gathering the evidence/rating the evidence and reaching consensus
- Populating the Tool
- Shared Learning
- Continuous Quality Improvement Approach

Common Issues identified in Feedback

- **Staff Resources/Time /Skill Mix /Training:** - All CHOs commented on the time involved in carrying out the EASI process. This generally related to the preparatory work required to gather evidence and the work required to engage with the stakeholder groups – particularly the service user groups. Inadequate staffing ratios were highlighted and the inability of services to close in order to train staff, gather evidence, prepare material for the process and organise and conduct stakeholder meetings.
Some CHOs raised the training needs of staff and service users, not only in the context of EASI but regarding New Directions, Change Management etc. The appropriateness of staff skills mix of was also identified as a challenge in some areas. This mainly related to locations where staff had long service in the old model of day service provision and all of the associated change required in implementing New Directions.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** - all CHOs reported challenges in developing the stakeholder structure to underpin the EASI process. In particular, the service user group proved particularly challenging although the other stakeholder groups were also cited by some CHOs.

The major issues in regard to communicating with the **Service User Stakeholder Groups** were as follows:-

- Too much detail in the information provided – service users unable to absorb all of the information. It would be better to focus only on the standards and not the features.
- Service Users were not interested.
- Need for communication aids to support meaningful engagement with stakeholders. Easy Read document provided is not sufficient.
- Time involved in developing material and conducting focus groups with service users.
- Not happy about conducting focus groups as “group think” becomes an issue. Communicating on a 1:1 basis with service users is very time consuming and not realistic.

- No multidisciplinary staff to support the service locations with their engagement with service users.
- Staff expressed concern about facilitating service users in some instances. The view was expressed that when staff consult with service users, they are told what they want to hear. Independent advocacy would be a better approach to determine service user views.

Issues relating to the engagement with the **Staff Stakeholder Group** were as follows:-

- Time to train and conduct staff meetings to address the process. The provision of service has to come first.
- Some staff that are long serving have difficulty implementing the change involved in the New Directions policy.

Issues relating to the **Management Stakeholder Group** were as follows:-

- It was unclear to many service providers as to who should be included in this stakeholder group. Some organisations were only including service location management and not the wider management structure.
- In some provider organisations, New Directions is not a senior management priority and therefore this cohort was not always included in the stakeholder group.
- The view was expressed by many organisations that CEO's needed to have greater ownership of the process.
- Boards of Management were involved in the minority of cases.

It also became clear from discussions that when families were included to support their son/daughter/sibling, additional communication had to be developed to take account of family needs and this proved time consuming.

- **Communication:-** aside from the communication challenges encountered in engaging with stakeholders regarding the EASI process, it became evident from discussions in the majority of CHOs that communications in general is a huge challenge for the day service sector. There were references to Easy Read materials being used mainly by staff for their own information. The challenge of communicating with service users was one of the main issues highlighted in regard to the EASI process. However, there was a sense that for the majority of service providers, imparting any new information to service users was challenging.

- **Documentation: -** It was evident from the discussions that the learning applied to documentation after the pilot site experience worked well i.e. documentation was assembled for all the standards in the theme and rated in a like manner. Many regional /national organisations outlined the approach used to gather the required documents. In the case of these organisations, head office populated the documentation section of the tool and locations then added in any policies and procedures that were developed locally.

It was apparent that many organisations do not have policies and procedures relevant to service users available in accessible formats for their service user groups.

- **Gathering the evidence/rating the evidence and reaching consensus: -** despite the guidance issued regarding the actual process leading to reaching a rating, many services struggled with the individual steps of the process at Stage 2. In particular, the areas of knowledge and awareness and monitoring and evaluation seemed particularly challenging. CHO groups referenced the need for some examples to clarify these steps of the process. Reaching consensus was also discussed and in that regard examples of how services approached this issue were shared. The development of questionnaires and the operation of survey monkey in this context were cited by many areas. The issue of reaching consensus with the service user stakeholder group appeared to be particularly challenging with “group think” operating. Some areas also requested that an additional rating between strong and fair would be inserted.

- **Populating the Tool:** - all of the limitations of using a Microsoft Excel document were highlighted by the majority of CHOs. Comments relating to the tool were also linked to comments made about the repetitive nature of the text in the tool i.e. having all of the features included. In general, there was more feedback received regarding the process of self-evaluation and it was evident that in most cases, the tool was viewed as the method by which to log all of the work that had been done. For organisations that were at Step 3 of the process which addresses the Action Plans, some concerns were expressed regarding the fact that should a number of actions relate to a feature and all but one are complete, the tool will not register that the actions are complete until all are complete.

- **Shared Learning:** - there were some really good examples of shared learning discussed during the CHO review meetings. In many areas, providers had informally liaised to share approaches to the EASI work and a reservoir of support tools and materials was generated. In some cases providers shared these materials.

- **Continuous Quality Improvement Approach:-** It was evident that service providers that also had residential services and thereby had to comply with HIQA Residential Standards and regulations considered that they were better prepared to progress the New Directions Interim Standards as they already had developed the required documentation and reporting systems to comply with HIQA. However, some providers were finding it difficult to work within the approach of service improvement versus compliance. Service providers that had other accredited quality systems e.g. CARF, EFQM etc. also considered that their state of readiness to progress the Interim Standards was greater.

Positive Impact of Implementing EASI

Whilst the majority of issues outlined above refer to challenges linked to implementation, the discussion groups were also asked to identify the positive impact of the introduction of EASI in all CHO areas. The results from this discussion were most positive and are summarised below.

All CHOs referred to the heightened focus on the policy New Directions that is now evident as a result of launching this process. There were references to staff now seeing a value to the service they provide which they had not previously experienced. People commented that it was most helpful to have a framework within which they could examine what they are doing, identifying the good practice and also addressing issues that need attention. The structure for stakeholder involvement whilst identified as challenging was also positively confirmed. Previous action plans in organisations had focused on what staff and management identified as priority. This was the first experience about consulting with service users. A strong view was expressed by some areas that this process had made New Directions “come alive”.

Conclusion

It is clear from all CHOs that whilst the challenges of implementing the EASI process are significant, the process is viewed as being extremely positive in the context of the implementation of New Directions and the improvement of day services to the cohort of in excess of 20,000 adults with disabilities that are supported via day service provision. Following from the introduction of EASI for Theme 1, the NISG are of the view that when the learning from this process is applied to the next roll out phase, with all themes targeted for self-evaluation by end of March 2020, the experience will have impacted most positively on the standard of day service support provided to adults with disabilities.

Next Steps

The next steps are outlined below:

- NISG to revise the EASI Tool and guidance in line with the learning from the review meetings held in the nine CHO's.
- The tools and materials developed by providers in the nine CHOs to support the EASI process to be collated , quality assured and agreement sought to share that learning with all provider organisations.
- Decision to be made regarding the next theme/s to implement. The review meetings did not strongly recommend what to advance as next phase.
- Support to be sought from HR regarding Learning and Development support that could be provided to establish a formal system for Shared Learning to CHO subgroups throughout the country.
- The experience of this implementation process and outcomes to date to be shared with the National Quality Improvement Team for Disability Services , National Disability Strategy and Planning and Chief Officers and their teams in the nine CHOs .
- Progress the development of the e Learning module for New Directions in order to bring greater clarity to the delivery system on the policy content and approach.