



# Irish Language Strategy

2019-2023





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## FOREWORD BY THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE HSE

PAUL CONNORS

I am very pleased to introduce the HSE's first Irish Language Strategy 2019-2023 which has been developed to assist our organisation to be compliant with our Irish language responsibilities and to improve the experience of people using our services through Irish.

The HSE wishes to maintain, strengthen and promote the use of the Irish Language as we recognise that a significant cohort of our service users wish to be communicated with through the first language of the State. As practitioners we also understand that it may be in the best clinical interests of some of our patients to be communicated with through their first language. Therefore in order to meet our patient's needs and align ourselves with the HSE's Strategy of putting the patient at the centre of everything we do, we have developed an agreed Irish Language Strategy which will be implemented over the next 5 years.

The collaborative and consultative way it has been developed is very much in keeping with our principle of involving service users, staff and key stakeholders in the design and planning of services. It is a well-researched and informed plan that sets out what we need to do to ensure we provide quality Irish languages Services to those of our citizens wishing to be communicated with through Irish, and meet our responsibilities under the Languages Act.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work that has gone into preparing this strategy and the support we received from a wide range of individuals and bodies including my own colleagues working in the HSE. The HSE is firmly committed to this strategy and we look forward to working with all of you in its implementation over the coming years.

**February 2018**

# 1. The Health Service Executive

The Health Service Executive (HSE) is the statutory body with responsibility for the delivery of publicly funded health and social care services in hospitals and community settings such as primary care centres, clinics, in the home and in schools, across the country.

The HSE provides or arranges for the provision of the following services:

- Acute Hospital services
- Primary Care services
- Mental Health Services
- Social Care Services including services for Older People and people with Disabilities
- Health and Wellbeing services including Health Promotion

The organisation also provides key operational support services including estates, human resources, financial services, legal services, ICT and corporate governance.

The HSE is committed to developing more Irish language services and to improving the experience of those patients and service users who wish to be communicated with through Irish. The HSE's Irish Language Service (ILS) supports the organisation's Hospital Groups and Community Health Organisations in particular, as well as supporting our national and corporate services, to fulfill their obligations in accordance with the official language duties of public bodies.



## 2. The HSE Irish Language Service

As outlined in section 2.1; Article 8 of the Irish Constitution states that the Irish language is the first official language of the State. The public have rights to avail of certain services in Irish and public bodies have a duty to ensure that they can deliver on these services and meet their users' expectations. The Official Languages Act 2003 sets out the duties of public bodies regarding the provision of services in Irish. The HSE manages its obligations in relation to the Irish Language through the support of a number of full-time appointed Irish Language Officers who work directly with the various services across the organisation.

The Irish Language Service in the HSE was established both to support services across the organisation in understanding and achieving their Irish Language responsibilities, and to improve the experience of people using our health service who wish to be communicated with through Irish. Recognising our guiding principle of putting the patient first, the establishment of the Irish Language Service by the HSE is in direct response to the significant importance of accessing Irish language services in the lives of many of our service users. The development of the Irish Language Service is a priority for the HSE with further improvements planned over the length of the strategy.

In 2015 the HSE adopted new management structures including the creation of seven Hospital Groups and nine Community Healthcare Organisations. In view of these changes there was a requirement to realign governance arrangements for the Irish Language Service. A decision was taken to establish an Irish Language Service team within the HSE Communications Division, adopt a new Service Structure and new governance arrangements.

A National Irish Language Service Lead and four Irish Language Officers have been appointed to the revised Irish Language Service and assigned to the Communications Division. The new service will drive compliance with legislation and statutory requirements, support HSE services across the country, as well as striving to facilitate improvements in, and promotion of, the use of the Irish language in the health service. The team will strive to develop relationships across the HSE with key stakeholders to enhance awareness of patient needs and our compliance obligations. Proactive stakeholder management will promote the services' name as a trusted partner and increase our access and influence.

The Irish Language Service team will play the central role in awareness raising and compliance management, as well as serving as a support for the staff delivering services through the Irish Language.

## 3. Development of the HSE's Irish Language Strategy

### 3.1 Identifying Needs-Putting the patient at the centre of everything we do

The Government's 20-Year Strategy on the Irish Language 2010-2030 follows on the Government Statement on the Irish Language published in December 2006. That Statement affirmed the Government's support for the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht and set out 13 policy objectives. The development of the HSE's Irish Language Strategy 2019-2023 follows from these Government publications and the HSE's:

- Acknowledgement of Irish as the first Language of the State and our wish to maintain, strengthen and promote its use.
- Recognition that some of our service users wish to be communicated with through the first language of the State, as is their right.
- Understanding that it may be in the best clinical interests of some of our service users to be communicated with through Irish, and therefore in order to meet the HSE's Strategy of putting the patient at the centre of everything we do, we must put in place an agreed Irish Language Strategy and Plan in order to meet their needs.
- Recognition of its obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003

To support the development of this Strategy the HSE undertook a series of measures designed to provide further insight and understanding of the experience of people using our health service who wish to be communicated with through Irish.

A key objective was to identify the needs of Irish speaking service users in Gaeltacht regions, including the islands, and in other areas where there is a particular demand for health services delivered through Irish. Specially commissioned market research, information gathered from compliance reviews, as well as our regular interactions with colleagues and service users helped us to identify core requirements.

## 3.2 Ipsos MRBI Survey of Irish Language Speakers in Gaeltacht areas

The HSE recognises that Gaeltacht Communities, including the islands, have a very specific linguistic requirement and ensures that services pertaining to the Gaeltacht are delivered through the medium of Irish where possible. HSE services in the Gaeltacht support and strengthen the linguistic characteristics of the Gaeltacht, delivering care around the individual patient/service user. Up to now, Irish language services in the Gaeltacht regions and elsewhere have evolved opportunistically without an agreed strategy or plan. In order to develop services using a prioritised approach aligned to user needs, the Irish Language Service team conducted a survey of health service requirements through Irish in the Gaeltacht areas.

This 2018 research, (403 face-to-face interviews across Donegal, Galway and Kerry), which built on previous research, sought to provide a current picture of demand for Irish Language health services, from Irish language speakers, with a specific focus on:

- The extent to which Irish speakers are receiving health services through Irish
- The types of health services being received through Irish
- Importance of the availability of health services in Irish
- The specific health services that Irish speakers wish to receive through Irish

The research focused on the Gaeltacht regions in Galway, Donegal and Kerry. Key conclusions of the research were that:

- GP services through Irish are the most highly sought after Irish Language service although there is a sizeable demand for other services such as: Public Health Nurses, Home Help, School and Infant Services, and Community Nursing.
- There is still a significant demand for services delivered through Irish among Irish Language speakers
- The results suggest an unmet demand for electronic communications through Irish such as web based information, contact via the HSE Live Information Service, text and email.
- If Irish Language services were of an equal quality and level as those in English, approximately 75% of those surveyed would choose to receive these services in Irish

### 3.3 Compliance reviews completed in 81 HSE services during 2018

Our Irish Language Officers are continuously working to develop supportive relationships with HSE Services as part of their work, eliciting feedback from service users and staff while carrying out compliance reviews, (measuring a service's compliance against the requirements of the Official Languages Act 2003). The following are some examples of feedback taken from a range of services nationwide, including Hospitals, Primary Care Centres, Community Nursing Units, Early Intervention Services and The Ambulance Service, during the second half of 2018. These were used to inform the development of the Strategy:

- The need for development of new Irish Language training courses for staff, especially those providing services to the Gaeltacht and Irish speaking community. These classes to be tiered and/or focused with respect to the job function.
- Gaeltacht staff, and staff in centres adjacent to the Gaeltacht requested the provision of appropriate health material in Irish e.g. information on health promotion; kidney dialysis; diabetes; speech and language therapy; dementia, and psychology services.
- Staff in some Gaeltacht centres stressed the need to work with the Gaeltacht Planning Groups.
- A specific need was identified for health service delivery in Irish, particularly in Speech and Language Therapy rehabilitation following a Stroke, the treatment of Parkinson's disease and in Orthopaedic Services.
- A system for the early identification of Irish speaking patients, and their on-going identification as such, as they continue to use HSE services, either as an in or out-patient service user.
- A demand for translation services for some general communications and written responses to communications received in Irish.
- A database of Irish speaking staff will be established.
- The recruitment of staff for services in Gaeltacht regions, and other services with a demand for Irish speaking staff, should be guided by:
  - The need for competency in the Irish language as a requirement to carry out the role
  - The need for pre-recruitment language assessments where competency in the Irish language is a requirement of the role and support from the Irish Language Service, as necessary to carry out these assessments.

## 4. Strategy Rationale and Challenges

Conscious of both our statutory requirements and our desire to provide Irish Language services to those customers interacting with the HSE that require them, the Irish Language service has developed this Strategy document to serve the organisation over the next 5 years. The Strategy's purpose is to provide clearly defined and approved objectives for the delivery of Irish Language services in the HSE from 2019 onwards.

Ireland is undergoing fundamental demographic changes, national urbanisation, cultural changes, changes to our education system and access to information. These developments can pose both opportunities and threats to the delivery of the HSE's Irish Language Strategy; however our awareness of them gives us the space to address them.

We are also conscious that a number of challenges must be faced in order to successfully deliver on the Strategy's objectives. These include the following:

- The availability of proficient Irish language speakers across all health specialties
- Where a service is being delivered through Irish and the staff member delivering the service leaves the post after a period, there may be a difficulty in recruiting an Irish-speaking replacement. Additionally where the need for an Irish speaking service is established there may be a difficulty recruiting an Irish speaking staff to deliver the service.
- A limited proportion of our current overall staff nationwide have the confidence and/or language skills to deliver services in Irish.
- On-going service demands for structural change, financial constraints and staff capacity in the health services are all factors which can impact on the efforts of our services to achieve full compliance with the Official Languages Act and the regulations.

## 5. The HSE's Irish language Service – Vision



**Our Vision sets out what we want to achieve.**

“Improve the experience of people using our health service wishing to be communicated with through Irish, and promote better compliance with legislative and statutory requirements for the language.”

We will achieve our vision by focusing on the following five interdependent pillars:

1. Compliance with legislation and the Languages Act
2. Supporting HSE Services and Functions
3. Training, Recruitment and Development
4. Promotion and Communications
5. 3rd Level Incentives, Educational Supports and Career Guidance



## 6. Government and Regulation

Due regard has been given to the legislation, publications and authorities described in the following sections during the creation of this Strategy.

- The Constitution of Ireland, Article 8
- The Official Languages Act 2003
- Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga
- Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge 2010 - 2030 (20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030)
- Plean Gníomhaíochta 2018 – 2022 (The Action Plan 2019-2023)

### 6.1 The Constitution

Article 8 of the Constitution of Ireland states that:

*‘The Irish Language as the national language is the first official language’.*

Government policy pertaining to the Irish language flows from Article 8 including the Government’s 20-year strategy wherein its support for the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht is affirmed.



## 6.2 Official Languages Act 2003

The Act for the first time places the provision of services (in general) through Irish by the state on a statutory footing.

The aim of the Official Languages Act is to promote the use of Irish in public affairs and to ensure the use of Irish by public bodies when communicating with the public and/or providing services to the public. Public bodies communicate with the public in many ways including letters, emails, mail shots, information leaflets, reports, announcements and websites. In the case of each of these, public bodies have specific duties under the Official Languages Act.

Under Section 10 of the Act, public bodies have a duty to publish certain core documents simultaneously in Irish and English including:

- Any document setting out public policy proposals;
- Any annual report; Any audited accounts or financial statement;
- Any statement of strategy prepared under Section 5 of the Public Service Management Act 1997;
- Any document that has been appropriately prescribed as being of major public importance.

A public body's duties also include ensuring that:

- Headed Stationery must be in Irish and English or Irish only;
- Signage must be in Irish and English or Irish only;
- Recorded oral announcements must be in Irish and English or in Irish only;
- Communications received in Irish, in writing or by electronic mail, must be responded to in Irish;
- Information (mail shots) provided to the public in general or to a class of the public, through the post or electronically, must be in Irish and English or in Irish only.

### 6.3 Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga

The Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga was established under the Official Languages Act as an independent statutory office operating as an ombudsman's service and a compliance agency. An Coimisinéir Teanga provides advice to the public regarding their language rights under the Languages Act, advice to public bodies regarding their language duties under the Languages Act, and enquires into any valid complaint where public bodies are considered to have failed to fulfil their duties under the Act.

When a complaint is referred to the HSE by the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga the Irish Language Service liaises with the relevant service and the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga to bring the complaint to a resolution.

The statutory authority given by the Oireachtas to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga allows him to approach his work with certainty. It means that where it's necessary to ensure compliance with provisions of language legislation, he can make full use of that statutory authority. Notwithstanding this fact, their modus operandi in the first instance is to work in partnership and cooperation with stakeholders.

## 6.4 Government 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030

The official 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 was published in December 2010, following cross-party support in the Houses of the Oireachtas. The stated objective of Government policy is to increase on an incremental basis the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language.

The aim of Government policy with regard to the Irish language is to:

- increase the number of families throughout the country who use Irish as the daily language of communication;
- provide linguistic support for the Gaeltacht as an Irish-speaking community and to recognise the issues which arise in areas where Irish is the household and community language;
- ensure that in public discourse and in public services the use of Irish or English will be, as far as practical, a choice for the citizen to make and that over time more and more people throughout the State will choose to do their business in Irish; and
- ensure that Irish becomes more visible in our society, both as a spoken language by our citizens, and also in areas such as signage and literature.

The nine areas of action in the Government's 20-Year Strategy are as follows:

- Education
- The Gaeltacht
- Family Transmission of the Language - Early Intervention
- Administration
- Services and Community
- Media and Technology
- Dictionaries
- Legislation and Status
- Economic Life

Throughout the development of the HSE's Irish Language Strategy we have aligned our objectives and deliverables to the Government's 20-year Strategy. Our priority has been, and will continue to be facilitating linguistic support for Gaeltacht and Irish-speaking communities in our services.

Where practicable, we aim to provide our services users with a choice in how (what language) they receive the service, visible evidence of an 'Irish Friendly' environment, and health service employees with a high level of language awareness, sensitivity, and where possible competence in the Irish language.

## 6.5 Government Action Plan 2018-2022 for the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030

The Action Plan 2018-2022 is aligned with the overall objectives of the 20-year strategy. It identifies specific strategic priorities for the coming five years in regards to promoting the Irish language and achieving the specific goals of the strategy.

The Plan represents the culmination of this process of engagement, consultation and agreement. It sets out a suite of agreed actions to be implemented over the period 2018 to 2022 in support of the accelerated implementation of the Government's 20-Year Strategy.

Specific actions for the HSE outlined in the Government's 5-Year plan are as follows:

- The Irish language Services Team in the HSE will be enhanced and developed, and assistance will be given to primary care staff in the Gaeltacht to provide services through the medium of Irish. The following areas are included:
  - Gaoth Dobhair
  - Na Rosa and Cloich Chionnaola, Co. Donegal
  - Connemara and Oileáin Árann, Co. Galway
  - Corca Dhuibhne, Co. Kerry
- The HSE to continue to provide services through the medium of Irish in the following facilities:
  - Teach Altranais an Fháil Charraigh
  - Otharlann an Chlocháin Léith
  - Áras Mhic Dara in an Ceathrú Rua
  - Buail Cheoinín, Mental Health Centre
  - Áras Rónáin in Árainn
  - Ospidéal an Daingin
- The HSE will continue to support and facilitate the dissemination of language awareness information through relevant ante-natal maternity services which have Gaeltacht regions within their operational areas
- The HSE will continue to provide the bilingual free phone and email service available from HSELive and from the Medical Card Contact Centre
- In terms of providing incentives and supports to attract fluent Irish speakers to health care professions, the HSE will:
  - support a Medical Scholarship Scheme with assistance from Údarás na Gaeltachta
  - work in conjunction with the third level education sector to develop modules on care for Irish speaking patients e.g. medicine, nursing, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy.

The HSE has incorporated these Government priorities in the development of its Irish language Strategy 2019-2023.

## 6.6 Gaeltacht Language Plans

The Official Languages Act 2003, (6.2 above) requires that public bodies prepare a language scheme detailing the services which they will provide through Irish. The Language Schemes are due to be replaced by Language Standards and the HSE's Irish Language Service will have an important role to play in supporting the organisation to comply with the new requirements.

The Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has identified 26 Language Planning Areas and in accordance with the Gaeltacht Act 2012 the Communities are to develop Language Plans for their area. Gaeltacht Service Towns have also been identified and similarly must also develop Language Plans. The Language Plans will be developed in a partnership approach between the community and community organisations, in association with the voluntary sector, the public sector and the private sector.

The Gaeltacht Act 2012 provides the statutory framework for undertaking the language planning process on a coordinated basis. It is expected that the public, the voluntary sector, the public sector and the private sector will work together to support the Irish language in the various geographical areas recognised under the Act. The language will be supported as the community and family language of the Gaeltacht through the preparation and implementation of language plans at community level.

Údarás na Gaeltachta is responsible for supporting organisations with regard to the preparation and implementation of the language plans in the Gaeltacht Language Planning Areas. Foras na Gaeilge is responsible for supporting organisations in preparing and implementing Language Plans in those Gaeltacht Service Towns which are outside the Gaeltacht. The HSE's Irish Language Service team will provide the DOAHG with any assistance it requires in the development and implementation of Language Plans as they pertain to the HSE and the services we provide.

The 16 Gaeltacht Service towns are identified on the map below.



## 7. The 5 Pillars of the HSE's Irish Language Strategy

### 7.1 Pillar 1 - Compliance with Legislation and Regulation

The following objective is taken from the Government's 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030.

*Objective 2: The Official Languages Act will be fully implemented. The right of the public to use Irish in dealings with the State and with other bodies will be developed and the appropriate arrangements to deliver this will be put in place.*

The first pillar of the HSE Irish Language Strategy is to support the achievement of compliance with Irish Language legislation across services and functions in the HSE. The services and functions referred to throughout this document include national and corporate services as well as services within CHOs and Hospital Groups. The Official Languages Act 2003 sets out the duties of public bodies regarding the provision of services in Irish. The HSE considers this both an obligation and an opportunity.

Through our ongoing review process we will achieve a shift towards better compliance and in doing so improve our service offering to our Irish speaking service users.

This pillar will encompass:

- Compliance Reviews
- Information Packs and compliance recommendations personalised to the particular service. When a service is reviewed they are issued with a detailed information pack highlighting the supports available from our Irish Language team, dates for progress reviews, recommendations resulting from the review, obligations under the Act, a suppliers list for translation work, and how to organise competency testing for Gaeltacht based posts.
- Six-month Progress Reviews on services' improvements from initial review
- Bi-annual analysis summary report on the results of Compliance Reviews
- A centralised log of all reviews performed, recommendations given and service contacts established, by CHO and Hospital Group
- Building a comprehensive database of all services supplied by the HSE through Irish, by CHO and Hospital Group
- A robust complaints resolution and tracking log to manage complaints received from An Coimisinéir Teanga and other internal or external sources
- Annual review and recommendations report based on previous 12 months completed work

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
<b>Pillar 1 – Compliance</b>				
1. Perform annual compliance reviews on a subsection of HSE functions	200 Compliance reviews annually. 1000 to be completed over the life of this 5-year strategy.	Irish Language (IL) Service with support from relevant HSE functions	2019-2023	Access to HSE Services Hiring an additional ILO dedicated to the eastern region of the country
2. Compliance recommendations for all reviewed services and personalised information packs	200 sets of compliance recommendations delivered to all reviewed services annually. 1000 to be completed over the life of this 5-year strategy.	IL Service	2019-2023	Access to HSE Services Hiring an additional ILO dedicated to the eastern region of the country
3. Six-Month Progress Reviews to assess compliance	200 progress reviews annually. 1000 to be completed over the life of this 5-year strategy.	IL Service with support from relevant HSE functions	2019-2023	Access to HSE Services Hiring an additional ILO dedicated to serving the east of the country
4. Languages Act – HSE Compliance Status	Bi-annual status reports	IL Service	2019-2023	Access to HSE Services
5. Develop auditable log of all reviewed services by CHO and HG	Log Created and updated Reports as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By CHO/HG</li> <li>• Compliance levels by review category</li> <li>• Reviews completed by ILO/Month/etc.</li> </ul>	IL Service – Central Admin.	Q1 2019	PM support

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
6. Develop a database of services supplied through Irish in HSE by CHO and HG	Database developed and updated based on reviewed services	IL Service – Central Admin	Q2 2019	Overlap with Services Directory Project being developed by Digital
7. Develop a complaints tracking and resolution log	Log created and updated	IL Service – Central Admin	Q1 2019	
8. Develop annual review and recommendations report	Report developed and Issued	IL Service – Central Admin	Q1 2020- Q4 2023	



## 7.2 Pillar 2 - Supporting HSE Services and Functions

The HSE Corporate Plan states that we will listen to service users and our staff to learn about their experience of the care we provide and make improvements to our services. The Irish Language review process will enable patients and staff to provide real time feedback on the quality of Irish language services. We will use this feedback to make practical and timely improvements to the Irish language services provided. This pillar will encompass:

- Establishing 'supportive relationships' with reviewed services and functions.
- Issuing Information Packs personalised to all reviewed services outlining requirements of the Act and supports available to assist the service in achieving compliance
- Identify the gaps in Irish Language Service Provision and provide support and guidance to local service managers and HBS Recruit to increase Irish language service capacity
- Incorporating into our work plan where possible representations made to the ILS through the review process
- Performing minor translation tasks for HSE services. Supporting the process of outsourcing larger translation tasks. Auditing translations.
- Assessing relationships, effectiveness, compliance and momentum



Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
<b>Pillar 2 – Support for HSE Services and Functions</b>				
1. Establish supportive relationships with HSE Services and Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 200 new relationships established annually</li> <li>b) A reputation for a proactive, engaged and supportive service established</li> </ul>	IL Service with support from relevant HSE Services and Functions	2019-2023	Access to HSE Services
2. Irish Language Information Pack for Services and Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) 200 personalised information packs delivered to all reviewed services annually</li> <li>b) Generic Information Pack placed on HSE.ie in Irish and English</li> <li>c) Information about the IL Service, obligations on HSE services, supports available and contacts placed on HSE Intranet</li> </ul>	IL Service	2019-2023 Q2 2019 Q4 2019	Access to HSE Services Digital
3. Support and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Irish Language Services Gap Analysis completed and consolidated on all reviewed services</li> <li>b) Support and Guidance to local service managers on how to increase Irish Language service capacity delivered daily</li> </ul>	IL Service	2019-2023	Demand Dependent

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
4. Incorporate Representations for Irish Language services made to our ILO's during the review process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Analyse representations on a quarterly basis</li> <li>b) Incorporate/ Adopt where practicable</li> </ul>	IL Service	2019-2023	Capacity and Budget Dependent
5. Translation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A) Perform minor translation tasks</li> <li>b) Support outsourcing of larger translation tasks</li> <li>c) Audit translations</li> </ul>	IL Service	2019-2023	Demand Dependent
6. Assess the quality of the Irish Language Service we provide	Report on availability, responsiveness and effectiveness through a survey of Services	IL Service	Q4 2020 and Q4 2022	

### 7.3 Pillar 3 - Training, Recruitment and Development

The primary means of developing HSE services through Irish is through the recruitment of Irish speaking staff. The HSE recruitment policy, which is subject to the agreed national recruitment procedures framework, takes account of the need to improve Irish language capability especially in the Gaeltacht.

The HSE recognises that Gaeltacht Communities, including the islands, have a very specific linguistic requirement and therefore HSE Gaeltacht posts are identified and filled according to the HBS Recruit National Gaeltacht Recruitment Protocol. Further work needs to be undertaken to review HSE recruitment campaigns and communication tools to assess if a more targeted approach to attract Irish Language speakers could be adopted.

A secondary focus for the HSE is to improve the language skills of existing staff in accordance with the objectives of the Government’s 20-Year Strategy and in order to build the capacity internally. The objective is to develop an Irish language training and development culture that prioritises language skills development to ensure staff are equipped to confidently deliver health services to people wishing to be communicated with through Irish.

This Pillar will encompass:

- Irish Language Training and Development Plan (Staff)
- A review of the Irish Language Recruitment Protocol and assist in its operation
- Reintroducing Language Awareness Training



Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
<b>Pillar 3 - Training, Recruitment and Development</b>				
1. Develop a Training and Development Plan that builds individual and organisational capacity and knowledge to meet current and strategic Irish language requirements for Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Training plan developed</li> <li>b) Learning needs assessment process developed</li> <li>c) Trainers identified</li> <li>d) Staff needing training identified</li> <li>e) Courses written and tiered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comprehensive /Intensive</li> <li>2. Intake (1 day)</li> <li>3. Reception (1 day)</li> </ul> </li> <li>f) On-line courses developed</li> <li>g) A culture of self-referral for staff interacting with Irish speakers created</li> <li>h) Awareness of IL training and development disseminated across CHOs and HGs</li> </ul>	ILS	Q4 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Line Managers</li> <li>Source trainees using review feedback</li> <li>Self-referral</li> <li>Digital/CHOs/HGs</li> </ul>
2. Irish Language Recruitment Protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) ILOs consulted on appointments that require bilingual staff. ILOs will assess competence</li> <li>b) Evidence the IL recruitment protocol is being applied</li> </ul>	ILS	2019-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HBS Recruit</li> <li>Line Managers</li> </ul>
3. The HSE Induction Programme	Irish Language obligations and information included in updated Staff Induction Programme	ILS HR	Q4 2019	HR

## 7.4 Pillar 4 - Promotion & Communication of the Irish Language from within the HSE

One of the key objectives of the Irish Language Strategy is to improve the experience of people using our health service wishing to be communicated with through Irish and to ensure that HSE service owners across the organisation are aware of the obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003 and language legislation.

The HSE's current digital footprint consists of multiple websites, microsites, transactional portals and social media channels. Every single citizen is a stakeholder in health, and at some stage in their lives most will engage with the health service online for personal or professional reasons.



HSELive is the multi-channel public information service available six days a week by phone, email, Twitter and LiveChat.

HSELive provides a service through Irish for phone and email users and intends to further develop the service through Irish for Livechat. The availability of these services through Irish should reduce health service navigation problems for Irish Language speakers as the information service will be available to assist them with questions they may have.

This pillar will encompass:

- Promoting the Irish Language Service and the use of the Irish Language via HSE Digital Channels (including Twitter, Facebook, Linked In, HSE Website, Yammer, You Tube, Intranet)
- The appointment of a bilingual staff to HSElive
- Reviewing and improving Irish Language online content on HSE website
- Continuing to develop electronic forms, marketing and health information in Irish as required
- Provision of an improved service to Irish language media
- The development and maintenance of a database of Irish Language services by location
- Maintaining and making available online the English Irish Phrasebook for Medical Personnel
- The development of a brand which would identify and promote the availability of healthcare services through the Irish language in identified locations
- Development of online health information videos with Irish language text overlay with the HSE's learning and development website
- Roll-out of targeted internal Irish Language awareness campaigns on the importance of language sensitivity for public facing staff
- Supporting the provision of Irish speaking staff on the PCRS support line.
- Facilitate the dissemination of language awareness information through relevant ante-natal maternity services in Gaeltacht regions.

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
<b>Pillar 4 – Promotion and Communications</b>				
1. Greater use of Irish on digital channels to promote the Irish language and the HSE’s Irish Language Service	<p>a) Public health messages tweeted in Irish (Particularly in Gaeltacht areas)</p> <p>b) HSE Facebook used as a platform for public health messages in Irish</p> <p>c) Broadcast emails reminding staff of the organisation’s Irish language duties</p> <p>d) Establish a presence on the HSE’s new Intranet online platform for staff and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about the ILS Service</li> <li>• The obligations on HSE services</li> <li>• IL supports available</li> <li>• Contacts</li> </ul>	IL Service Digital	2019-2023	Digital capacity
2. Bilingual HSELive staff	Bilingual HSE staff person appointed to HSELive	Digital	2019	Budget

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
3. Review and Improve Irish Language content on HSE website	<p>a) Prioritise 'Do It Online' high traffic area of the HSE website, (Medical Cards, EHIC, GP Visit Cards, Fair Deal Scheme, Cross Border Directive, Treatment Abroad Scheme, Long-term Illness Scheme, National Lottery Grants, Blind Welfare Allowance etc.)</p> <p>b) Competitions for translation services held</p> <p>c) Priority content translated</p> <p>d) Process to keep this service up-to-date designed with HSE Digital Office</p>	IL Service  Digital, PCRS	Q3 2019- Q4 2020	Digital capacity
4. Develop marketing and health information in Irish as required	<p>a) The following resources will be made available in Irish to support Health Promotion projects through Irish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPHE Junior Cycle Resource</li> <li>• Trust Resource for Senior Cycle RSE</li> <li>• Alcohol Resource for Senior Cycle</li> <li>• Growing up LGBT</li> <li>• Active Playgrounds</li> <li>• Get Your School Walking</li> </ul>	IL Service	2019-2023	Health and Wellbeing  Digital capacity



Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
<p>4. Develop marketing and health information in Irish as required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get Active in the Classroom</li> <li>• Busybodies</li> <li>• Talking to Your Young Children about Relationships Sexuality and Growing up Parents Guide</li> </ul> <p>b) To support the delivery of the Health Promoting School through Irish, the Parents Information Leaflet and Schools Information Leaflet, will be made available in Irish.</p> <p>Health Promoting Schools, HPS branding is Bi-lingual and HPS banners will be made available in Irish and in bi-lingual formats.</p> <p>c) Support PCRS in the production of bilingual material continued</p> <p>d) Online tools and supports to assist services in fulfilling HSE obligations under the Official Languages Act provided</p>	<p>IL Service</p>	<p>2019-2023</p>	<p>Health and Wellbeing</p> <p>Digital capacity</p>

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
5. Provide where possible improved content and information to service users via Irish language media	<p>a) Utilise online research to identify the content our service users need and then provide them with selected content online and via Irish language media outlets</p> <p>b) Irish Language Team to identify and test opportunities to post Irish language content online and via social media channels</p> <p>c) Bilingual spokespeople on national health issues in Irish provided</p> <p>d) Media training provided</p>	<p>IL Service</p> <p>Digital</p> <p>Press Office</p>	2019-2023	<p>Digital</p> <p>SMT</p> <p>Press Office Capacity</p>
6. In cooperation with the development of the Digital Services Directory, develop and maintain a database of services supplied through Irish in the HSE by CHO and Hospital Group	Database developed and updated 2019-2020	<p>IL Service</p> <p>Digital</p>	Q3 2019	Digital
7. Maintain Medical Phrasebook, place online	<p>a) Place Irish English medical Phrasebook online</p> <p>b) Ongoing maintenance of Phrasebook</p>	IL Service	Q3 2019-Q2 2020	Digital

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
8. Develop an 'Irish Language used here' and/or 'Irish Language User' brand for HSE Services, Functions and Staff	Irish Language Brand Developed	IL Service Communi- cations Division	Q2 2023	
9. Overlay new and existing health information videos with Irish language text as required	Database developed and updated 2019-2020	IL Service Digital	Q3 2019	Digital
10. Develop material for local Irish Language awareness workshops and presentations emphasising the importance of language sensitivity to public facing staff	a) Awareness Campaign material developed b) 12 local workshops delivered for each year of the strategy	IL Service	2019-2023	
11. Provide support to the PCRS Irish Speaking Support Line	Assess Irish language competency of new recruits to the helpline	IL Service	2019-2023	PCRS
12. Facilitate the dissemination of language awareness information (Created by DOHAG) through relevant ante-natal maternity services in Gaeltacht regions	DOHAG Information booklets disseminated.	IL Service	2021-2023	DOHAG

## 7.5 Pillar 5 - Expand and Develop 3rd Level Incentives, Educational Supports, and Career Guidance

We know from our commissioned surveys, representations and research that in addition to GP services, there is a sizeable demand for other services to be provided through Irish such as Public Health Nursing Services, Home Help, School and Infant Services, Community Nursing etc. In addition, we have learned that if Irish Language services were equal in quality and capacity as those in English, many more of our service users would choose to receive these services in Irish.

Accepting that fluent Irish speakers are key to the provision of health services in Irish, our fifth pillar is designed to support and encourage new people, particularly health care professionals, who have the capacity to speak Irish fluently or to deliver services through Irish with confidence, to join the organisation.

To this end the HSE (in cooperation with Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge) supports a scholarship scheme for Irish speaking students in return for a commitment to work in the HSE on completion of their studies. Currently 14 Gaeltacht students, who are pursuing health related third level courses, benefit from this scholarship scheme.

The HSE also supports the inclusion of Irish Language modules in respect of student doctor and nurse training at NUIG and it is our objective to expand these modules to other third level colleges.

With respect to second level students the HSE will provide career advice sessions to pupils of Gaeltacht Schools and Gaelscoileanna contemplating careers in healthcare.

This pillar encompasses:

- The provision of incentives and support mechanisms to attract more Irish speakers into medicine, nursing and other health professions.
- The provision of course materials to third level institutions, including medical and nursing schools, for the delivery of foundation course modules and on-going modulated language training opportunities as part of the standard training of health and social care professionals. E.g. 3rd Level Patient Care Assessment Modules in Irish Recruitment awareness campaigns promoting opportunities
- Recruitment awareness campaigns promoting opportunities in the Health Service in Irish speaking areas (Internal and External)
- The development of presentation and educational materials on potential Irish language careers in the HSE for use by career guidance organisations and individuals, with an initial focus on Gaeltacht Schools and Gaelscoileanna.

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
<b>Pillar 5 – 3rd Level Incentives, Educational Supports and Career Guidance</b>				
1. The provision of incentives and support mechanisms to attract more Irish speakers into medicine, nursing and other health professions	<p>a) HSE Funding Secured</p> <p>b) In cooperation with Údarás na Gaeltachta there will be up to 15 scholarships provided to Irish speaking students studying Medicine, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Nursing, Pharmacy and other health disciplines. This is done in exchange for a 3 year commitment to work in the Gaeltacht post-graduation.</p> <p>c) IL Scholarship student supervision implemented</p> <p>d) Facilitate the placement of Irish speaking 3rd level students in the Gaeltacht as part of their training</p> <p>e) Review of demand for expansion of scholarship scheme completed and proposals to stakeholders submitted</p>	IL Service	<p>Each year for the duration of the strategy</p> <p>2019-2023</p> <p>2021</p>	<p>Funding from:</p> <p>1. Údarás na Gaeltachta</p> <p>Gaelscoileanna</p> <p>Gaeltacht Schools</p>

Work Plan	Deliverables	Owner	Time Frame	Dependencies
2. Assist in the provision of IL Patient Care Modules	a) Irish Patient Care Modules in NUIG reviewed and expanded to other institutions	IL Service 3rd Level Institutions	2021	Other 3rd level institutions
3. Develop internal and external awareness of the opportunities for Irish speaking health professionals to serve Irish language patients. Awareness initiative designed to attract more Irish speakers into medicine, nursing and other health professions	a) Internal and external IL career promotion plan developed in cooperation with Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge	IL Service	2020	Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge
4. Career Guidance	a) Partnerships with Gaeltacht Planning Groups, Údarás na Gaeltachta, Foras na Gaeilge & schools to provide information sessions/material on careers in healthcare, targeting Irish speakers b) Roll-out plans developed c) Presentations and material developed d) 10 information sessions delivered (minimum) for students and parents		2020 2019-2023	

## 8. Summary

The objective of the HSE's Irish language strategy is to promote increasing compliance with legislative and statutory requirements with a view to incrementally improving the experience of people using our health service who wish to be communicated with through Irish.

The main pillars of this strategy are designed to increase the availability and improve the quality of Irish Language Services provided by the HSE:



Furthermore this strategy will serve as a mechanism to assist in identifying potential gaps in Irish Language Service provision, arising from which support and guidance will be provided to local service managers and HBS Recruit, so as to increase the Irish language service capacity;

Over the lifetime of this strategy the HSE will collaborate with other state agencies as appropriate and in this regard will:

- Work with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DOAHG), to produce Language Plans as required under the Gaeltacht Act 2012, in association with Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge;
- Develop a proactive relationship with DOAHG to assess the impact on the HSE of the planned new language standards;
- Develop plans to implement the new Irish Language legislation promptly when launched;
- Support DOAHG initiatives, for example the family language support programme.

In addition to the services we will develop and support outlined above, there are actions the Irish Language Service will complete as priorities, which are outside the 5 pillars described. The ILS team will:

- Continue and expand the support given to the Speech and Language Therapy Network offered through Irish to primary care teams;
- Prioritise our resources to ensure deployment in areas where impact is greatest;
- Continue to support CHOs in the provision of HSE documentation to Gaeltacht Schools and Gaelscoileanna (E.g. immunization ) in Irish, and expand this where possible;
- Support Public Health/Environment Health in the provision of HSE documentation to the public in Irish;
- Support the implementation of ‘Patient Language Preference Tracking’ to more services in UHG and Donegal (Saolta HG), with a view to expanding it to other areas.
- Review the deployment of bilingual staff by Home Help service providers to ensure compliance with agreed SLAs initially in CHO2 and other CHO areas in line with available capacity and demand.
- As part of the compliance reviews, assess the signage erected by external suppliers on campuses to ensure compliance with the Official Languages Act

Through the implementation of this strategy the HSE will develop a more systematic, proactive approach to responding to people’s need for care in their own language, where it becomes standard practice for people who need assessment and care through the medium of Irish to receive it.



## Irish Language Service

Our Irish Language team provides the following services:

- Compliance Reviews
- Advice re: Official Language Act/Language Scheme
- Complaints handling and resolution
- Liaison with Irish Language Commissioner's Office and Údarás/Dept. of the Gaeltacht
- Education and training in Irish language
- Translation services

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# Irish Language Strategy

2019-2023