

National Engagement on Digital Health and Social Care

As part of its mandate, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is charged with evaluating the quality of the information available on health and social care and making recommendations in relation to improvements and filling in gaps where information is needed but is not currently available. In line with this remit, HIQA has commenced a National Engagement on Digital Health and Social Care.

The scope of digital health and social care is wide. One example includes telehealth where consultations take place over the phone or online using a smart phone or tablet. Remote monitoring of blood pressure using a device that a person wears is another example. People having access to their health and social care information online via a website or portal is also an example.

Aims of the Project

The national engagement will look at what digital health and social care services mean to the Irish public, patients, service users, and health and social care professionals. It will gather evidence on opinions, attitudes, gaps, and comfort levels around digital services. It will look at people's expectations, how ready people are for digital services, and how they would like to use them. This is especially in light of potential changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and attitudes to eHealth information technologies as a result of the cyber-attack in the HSE.

The national engagement will also aim to identify the purpose of a health and social care portal for Irish people and health and social care professionals. The engagement will ask both the public and professionals what they would want from a portal and so help form recommendations on its implementation.

In addition, the findings will be used to inform future work carried out by HIQA, the Department of Health, and the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The findings, including anonymised survey data, will also be publically available.

What the Project Involves

The project will involve research with the public and health and social care professionals through telephone or online surveys and focus groups. It is anticipated that the research will be carried out in early 2023.

As chiropodists and podiatrists work in many different settings across public, private, and voluntary services and in acute and community sectors, recruiting them for the research is a challenge HIQA needs to overcome in order to properly represent their views and needs in the research findings.

Your Contribution to the Project

Therefore, HIQA is looking for your assistance in:

- communicating and promoting the engagement project among your members
- recruiting participants.

Our ask of you is, when HIQA is running the surveys and focus groups in early 2023:

1. Is your organisation in a position to communicate and promote this work among your members?
2. If yes, what can you do to help us promote the work and recruit participants?

Our Assurances to You

HIQA will:

1. Attain ethical approval for the project.
2. Treat all participant information, including survey and focus group responses, safely and securely in line with GDPR and according to HIQA's Privacy Notice.*
3. Prepare all promotional materials, such as participant information leaflets and frequently asked questions (FAQs), for your use.
4. Make the findings available at project end.

Outputs of the Project

The National Engagement on Digital Health and Social Care follows on from HIQA's 2021 National Public Engagement on Health Information whose key objective was to listen to the Irish public, understand the research findings, and make measurable improvements to how personal health information is collected, used, and shared.

The National Engagement on Digital Health and Social Care builds on the health information engagement but extends its reach by consulting with both the public and professionals. The focus of the work also differs. However, the type of outputs will be similar. These will include the overall findings, the technical report on how the research is carried out, the anonymised survey data, and responses to the findings from the Department of Health, HSE, and HIQA. The documents from the health information engagement are available on the HIQA website.†

Your organisation's consideration and support in this important and timely work is appreciated.

* HIQA's Privacy Notice: <https://www.hiqa.ie/sites/default/files/2018-05/HIQA-Privacy-Notice.pdf>

† Findings of the National Public Engagement on Health Information: <https://www.hiqa.ie/reports-and-publications/health-information/national-public-engagement-health-information>