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AN COMHCHOISTE UM SHLÁINTE

Clár Oibre 2016/2017

JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Work Programme 2016/2017

Work Programme 2016/17 (July – June)

Introduction

The Joint Committee on Health was established following Orders of Dáil Éireann on 16 June 2016 and of Seanad Éireann on 20 July 2016. Standing Orders 89(4) of Dáil Éireann and 75(4) of Seanad Éireann require that “as soon as may be following its appointment and thereafter at annual intervals, each Select Committee shall prepare a work programme and shall lay such programme before Dáil/Seanad Éireann”.

The Committee was established with a remit to examine legislation and to scrutinise policy, expenditure and administration of the Department of Health, and the public bodies under its remit.

It is a forum for Oireachtas Members from all parties and none to have meaningful input into key legislation and policy matters under the Department of Health.

It plays a key role in influencing the agenda in relation to the physical, mental and public health of the people of Ireland. The Committee regularly meets with the Minister for Health and the HSE to scrutinise performance.

This Work Programme sets out the Committee’s agreed priorities in accordance with Standing Orders, including key policy areas agreed for consideration by Committee Members. In so far as possible, the Joint Committee will focus on strategic issues.

Select Committee

The function of the Select Committee is to scrutinise Bills, to review Estimates, to consider Motions referred to it by the Dáil and any other business referred to it by the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Membership of the Select Committee on Health is made up of representatives from the Dáil only. Members of the Seanad cannot attend a Select Committee Meeting. Any Member of the Dáil may attend a Select Committee Meeting, but in the event of a vote taking place at a meeting of the Select Committee, only the Members of the Committee or their nominated substitutes may cast a vote.

When the Select Committee meets to consider a Bill (i.e. Committee Stage), the Members can propose amendments for consideration.

Legislation (Bills)

The Government Legislative Programme makes provision for the publication of a number of Bills which will be referred to the Select Committee.

Legislation (Statutory Instruments)

The Joint Committee considers draft Statutory Instruments which transpose EU legislation in the area of health, prior to their being signed into law by the Minister for Health. The Committee also has the opportunity to examine any Regulations made by the Minister.

Motions

Occasionally Motions may be referred to the Select Committee (or to the Joint Committee) by the Dáil or Seanad. It is not possible to say in advance what those matters might be, or when they might arise. However, there are no items currently referred to either the Select Committee or to the Joint Committee.

Scrutiny of Estimates

The Estimates are the Department of Health's spending plans for the coming financial year. When the Estimates are referred to the Select Committee on Health for examination, the Members have a valuable opportunity to question the Minister about proposed spending and performance. It should be noted that the Select Committee is required to consider the Estimates but is not empowered to amend them.

The Estimate which the select Committee can examine is as follows:

- Revised Estimates for Public Service (Vote 38 – Health)

(Note since the beginning of 2015, the HSE is funded by grants provided under Vote 38.)

A Supplementary Estimate is required to be considered, if additional monies are required by the Department of Health.

Joint Committee

The duties of the Joint Committee are discharged in two ways: (1) there will be items of business referred to it by one or both Houses and (2) it can select business for consideration from the areas within its terms of reference. In practice, the Joint Committee's work will comprise the examination of EU business and key policy priorities.

(1) EU Business

Oireachtas Committees have the capacity to improve regulation at an EU level by scrutinising EU legislative proposals. The Committee system in the 32nd Oireachtas will continue to mainstream consideration of EU Legislative Proposals across all sectoral Committees.

EU Councils

Irish Ministers attend Council of Ministers meetings in their relevant policy areas, and it is intended that the Minister for Health will come before the Committee in advance of, or following, Council meetings to brief the Committee.

(2) Key policy priorities

The Joint Committee is empowered to consider such other policy issues as it may select within its terms of reference.

The following are the high priority policy issues identified by the Joint Committee which it proposes to examine in detail during 2016/17:

A. Primary Care

Under the heading of Primary Care, particular issues to be cognizant of include:

- i. How conditions can be realistically managed in the community
- ii. The cycle of care for diabetes
- iii. Possible improvements in how different parts of the health service work together
- iv. How to prevent/ameliorate chronic illnesses
- v. Support services and requirements for children with special needs
- vi. The costs of residential and/or day care services for the elderly

- vii. The extent to which primary care centres continue to alleviate the burden on the A&E sector.

B. The National Maternity Strategy

C. Medicinal Cannabinoids

Other areas of work which the Committee will look to undertake, time and resources allowing, include:

- i. Consideration of The Emergency Department Taskforce and Winter Initiative 2016
- ii. Engagement on the location of the National Children's Hospital
- iii. Consideration of the Independent Clinical Review of Cardiology cover and the provision of a second catheterisation laboratory at University Hospital Waterford (Herity Review)
- iv. Analysis of public funding models for assisted human reproduction
- v. Analysis of indirect societal factors influencing health
- vi. Examination of the report of the Clinical Advisory Group on the development of guidance on assessing medical card applications involving significant medical conditions, when it is published
- vii. Engagement with the Review Group of Áras Attracta
- viii. Consideration of the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- ix. Consideration of the new GP contract
- x. Review of capacity in the provision of care for people with intellectual and physical disabilities
- xi. Review of the current programme of education outlining the risks of obesity and highlighting the associated dangers of diabetes
- xii. Review of the current manner in which front line staff are employed by the HSE including Medical Consultants, General Doctors and Nursing Staff
- xiii. Consideration of the optimum number of day and long stay surgical and medical beds in all regions throughout the country with a view to improvement where and as required

- xiv. Comparison between the public and private health sectors with a view to determining of the extent to which private health insurance is utilised by either
- xv. Review of the extent to which the Health Services have universal access to e-technology with particular reference to its use within the hospital and primary care sectors
- xvi. Comparison of the cost of various prescribed medicines in Ireland with other EU countries
- xvii. Evaluation of the cost of various medical procedures here as compared with the costs applicable in the UK or EU jurisdictions

(3) Quarterly Meetings with the Minister

The Joint Committee meets on a Quarterly basis with the Minister for Health accompanied by the Director General of the HSE. The purpose of these meetings is for the Minister and the Director General to update the Committee on strategic issues, as well as addressing current topics of concern to Committee Members.

(4) Chairpersons Designate of State Boards

An individual appointed as a Chairperson Designate to a State board or body is required to make themselves available to appear before the relevant Oireachtas Committee.

This procedure gives Committees the discretion to engage in public sessions with Chairs Designate, to discuss challenges facing the organisation, their approach to the role, and their strategic vision for the future. Following that discussion, the Clerk of the Committee forwards a copy of the transcript of the meeting to the Minister or the Government, as appropriate.

In practice, the Committee may wish simply to note the majority of Chairs Designate, and identify a small number of strategically important Chairs Designate with whom to hold meetings. It should also be noted that a Chair Designate meeting is not an interview process.

(5) Pre-Legislative Scrutiny

The Minister may request that the Joint Committee consider carrying out pre-legislative scrutiny of a proposed piece of legislation.

The decision to carry out PLS is at the discretion of the Committee, having regard to its Work Programme and competing priorities. However, the PLS process offers a good opportunity for a Committee to analyse the draft Heads of a Bill at an early stage. The purpose of PLS is to:

- assist in the preparation and drafting of the final legislation;
- examine the policy aspirations behind each provision of the legislation;
- assess whether the legislation, as drafted, will meet its stated objectives;
- consider possible amendments which are aimed at addressing any gaps or weaknesses identified in the current Heads of the Bill.

To achieve these aims, the Committee will generally consult with stakeholders, seeking their views regarding the proposed legislation. A Report will then be published on the Committee's deliberations and it will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and submitted to the relevant Minister.

This Work Programme for 2016/17 of the Joint Committee on Health was agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 10 November 2016. In accordance with the Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, it was agreed that the Work Programme was to be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Subject to agreement by the Committee, the Work Programme will also be published on the Committee's page of the Oireachtas website.



Michael Harty TD,
Chairman
10 November 2016