



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Joint Committee on Health

Meeting

Wednesday 25th September 2019

Opening Statement

By

Mr Dean Sullivan

Chief Strategy Officer

Health Service Executive

Good morning Chairman and members of the Committee and thank you for the invitation to attend this meeting to discuss Health Service Executive (HSE) Brexit preparedness. I am joined by my colleagues,

- Mr John Swords, National Director for Procurement
- Ms Paula Keon, Assistant National Director, European Union (EU) & North/South Unit
- Mr Shaun Flanagan, Head of Primary Care Reimbursement Services (PCRS)

A HSE Brexit planning group has been in place since 2017 and has been working closely with the Department of Health on a wide range of Brexit contingency planning and mitigating actions. The focus of this work has been on Brexit implications across the following key work-streams:

- Continuity of patient and client health services
- Cross Border and Frontier arrangements, including Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) programmes
- Emergency Health Services (including the National Ambulance Service)
- Public Health matters
- Environmental Health Services at ports
- Workforce issues and recognition of qualifications
- Continuity of supply of Goods and Services / Procurement arrangements
- GDPR compliance
- Communications

In relation to the continuity of patient and client services, the focus of the mitigation measures is on ensuring that updated service level agreements and memorandums of understanding (MOU's) are in place in relation to specific areas of healthcare (e.g. paediatric organ transplant).

The HSE's EU / North South Unit is working to ensure that services currently available to people living on both sides of the border continue to be available post Brexit: e.g. Cardiology and Radiotherapy services at Altnagelvin, and the specialist cardiac services provided on an all Island basis for children at Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin. A detailed mapping exercise has taken place between the two jurisdictions and this has produced an agreed list of all services being provided. In addition, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signature of the Common Travel Area in May has been very helpful to underpin services on an ongoing basis.

In relation to Emergency services, the National Ambulance Services here and in Northern Ireland have updated two key MOU's between the two respective Ambulance Services. Firstly, a *'Memorandum of Understanding on the Provision of Assistance in the Management and Resourcing of Emergency and Urgent Calls'* and secondly, an MOU with regard to "*A Declared Major Incident Mutual Aid*", which joins both jurisdictions in the response to a major emergency.

The HSE's Environmental Health Service is engaged in on-going discussions with the Departments of Health and Agriculture in relation to the import and export of food-stuffs and the possible divergence of food regulations and controls. Significant additional resources have been put in place to strengthen the Environmental Health Officer service capacity in this regard, with nearly 100 additional posts recruited. In Dublin Port and Rosslare Port work is nearing finalisation with the Office of Public Works in relation to new accommodation facilities for new and existing staff. Training for new and re-assigned staff is also taking place.

The Workforce implications of Brexit have been examined by the HSE Human Resource department and the regulators have confirmed that no delays or additional costs relating to UK qualifications are expected post Brexit. There is also no significant risk envisaged to the supply of UK qualified health professionals. The UK has issued a draft Statutory Instrument which will allow for qualification recognition of UK health professional qualifications in the event of a no-deal.

With regards to the provision of Goods and Services (such as medical and surgical supplies and Medicines), a key risk for the HSE arises in relation to the supply of Medical Devices. A number of suppliers have confirmed that the transfer of certification files from UK Notified Bodies is not complete and given the lack of capacity in the EU27, they will not be complete by 31 October 2019 or even for some time after that.

The number of medical devices that will have regulatory issues is significant and represents a particular risk to maintaining service continuity from early 2020 in the event of a "No Deal" Brexit and as existing supplies run out. To address this issue we are taking in additional stock in these vulnerable product lines and looking for alternatives that don't have certification issues. In addition, we have supplied the Department of Health with examples of devices affected so that the matter can be considered in the context of seeking appropriate derogation for a transition period.

A joint working group between the HSE, DoH and HPRA (Health Products Regulatory Authority) is engaged in intensive work which involves the identification of suppliers of critical medicines to obtain assurances in relation to their continued intention and capacity to supply the Irish Market post Brexit and assurances have been received from all relevant companies in this regard. 6,500 medicine line items were reviewed by Clinicians/Pharmacists to identify vulnerable product lines. Assurances have also been sought in relation to existing supply routes and while assurances have been provided (including confirmation that customs requirements have been considered where applicable), there remains a potential for delays and disruptions to supply routes (for example due to delays in transiting the UK land bridge or in UK airports).

The key supply chain challenges in the short or immediate term are likely to be related to medicines with a short shelf life, refrigerated supply chains, compounded products and time critical logistics. A strong focus has put in place to mitigate these challenges which include putting in place alternative supply arrangements, working with suppliers to increase stock in certain vulnerable areas and, putting arrangements in place with Revenue to fast-track vulnerable product lines through customs.

With regard to vaccines, a 2-3 months' stock is held in the HSE National Cold Chain Service which, with the stock held by companies in Ireland, gives approximately a 6-month supply to ensure the continuation of service delivery. None of our vaccines are sourced from the UK.

In terms of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance - extensive work is also underway to identify organisations who are hosting, accessing or processing HSE personal data within the UK. This is to ensure completion of EU Standard Contractual Clause agreements which will allow for the continued legal transfer of HSE personal data post Brexit. HSE ICT have put in place agreements with all of our main UK suppliers.

The HSE continues to notify all suppliers and service providers of their GDPR compliance requirements in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit, and appropriate steps are also being taken to address clinical trials compliance issues in cooperation with the HPRA.

We have put in place a detailed Communications plan and we are working closely with the DoH's Communication team to keep our stakeholders updated. We have held a number of stakeholder engagements and we are keeping our website updated regularly. We are engaging with our staff and have a dedicated email in place for any enquiries or questions.

In summary the HSE preparations underway are focussed on ensuring continuity of All Island Patient Services, Environmental Health Services at ports, Workforce issues relating the free movement of health personnel, maintaining the supply of essential Goods and Services, and ensuring the HSE is GDPR compliant. Notwithstanding, the risk of a 'no-deal' Brexit on 31 October 2019 still has the potential to cause disruption to health services despite the mitigation measures underway. Working closely with the DoH, the HPRA and Industry we are very focussed on finding positive and practical solutions for our patients, stakeholders and staff.

This concludes my opening statement and together with my colleagues we will endeavour to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.