Health Information and Quality Authority

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

Brief for the scoping consultation to inform the development of a national framework for the responsible and safe use of Artificial Intelligence in health and social care services

April 2025

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1. Background

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is defined as the ability of machines or systems to mimic human intelligence and perform tasks at a scale that exceeds what humans are capable of.[1] AI has been found to have many benefits for health and social care, for example, it can be used to support decision-making and streamline administrative tasks.[2] However, there needs to be proactive measures in place to ensure that AI is used in a safe and responsible way, for example, building the knowledge and capabilities of staff.[3] The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has been requested by the Department of Health to develop a national framework to promote and drive the responsible and safe use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in health and social care services to ensure safer, better care for people using health and social care services. HIQA is now undertaking a scoping consultation to inform the development of this framework.

At a high level, the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment's *AI- Here for Good National Strategy*, provides a roadmap for how Ireland can leverage the potential of AI through a person-centred, ethical approach to AI development, adoption and use.[4] The EU Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act 2024 establishes a harmonised regulatory framework for AI systems developed or deployed in the EU. It is designed to provide a high level of protection to people's health, safety, and fundamental rights and to simultaneously promote the adoption of human-centric, trustworthy AI. The use of AI in Ireland will be governed by the Act.[5]

In relation to health and social care, the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and HIQA, are working together to prepare for and ensure that the health and social care sector is ready for forthcoming policy and legislative requirements for AI. To achieve this, a system-wide approach to supporting the responsible and safe use of AI in health and social care is needed and the Department of Health, the HSE and HIQA are developing separate but interlinked programmes of work in line with their organisational remits.

The Department of Health and the HSE have commenced the development of an AI in Health Strategy, as committed to in the Programme of Government 2025, to

promote and support innovation and digital transformation in health and the responsible and safe use of AI in health and social care services.[6]

As an independent statutory body established to promote safety and quality in the provision of health and social care services, HIQA is responsible for developing national standards, recommendations and guidance to support the Irish digital health and health information landscape to ensure safer, better care. To do this, HIQA develops person-centred standards, guidance and frameworks that are underpinned by principles of a human rights-based approach, safety and wellbeing, responsiveness and accountability.

HIQA will develop a national framework that will provide an overarching set of principles to guide and promote a responsible and safe approach to the use of AI in the health and social sector in Ireland.

2. Purpose of HIQA's national framework

A range of frameworks and principles to support the responsible and safe use of AI have been developed internationally. These frameworks and principles place people at the centre of any decisions relating to the use of AI. Key principles include human oversight, equity, safety, governance, transparency and education. These principles align with the four principles underpinning HIQA national standards, guidance and frameworks. These are: a human rights-based approach, safety and wellbeing, responsiveness and accountablilty.

The national framework developed by HIQA will provide an overarching set of principles to guide and promote a responsible and safe approach to the use of AI in the health and social sector in Ireland. All services and organisations that provide health and social care services can use this framework to develop and embed good practice to ensure safer better care for people using health and social care services.

This evidence-informed framework will be used to promote awareness and build good practice among service providers and staff about the responsible and safe use of AI in health and social care services. This framework will also be of use to people using services by educating and empowering them on what their expectations should be, in respect of the responsible and safe use of AI while engaging with health and social care services.

3. Purpose of the Scoping Consultation

HIQA is now undertaking a scoping consultation to give stakeholders, including people delivering and using health and social care services, services providers, advocates, researchers and policy-makers, with an opportunity to provide input on the development of the framework.

HIQA is seeking input on the following topics:

- key areas this national framework should address
- examples of good practice in the responsible use of AI in health and social care
- key stakeholders (including organisations and bodies) for further engagement
- what will support the implementation of the framework

HIQA will carefully assess all feedback received and use it, along with other available evidence, to develop the national framework for the responsible use of AI in health and social care.

Further Information

If you have any questions or queries, please contact us on hist@hiqa.ie.

References

[1] OECD. AI and the Future of Skills, Volume 1: Capabilities and Assessments, Educational Research and Innovation. Paris: OECD Publishing; (2021) Available online from https://doi.org/10.1787/5ee71f34-en.

[2] Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health: WHO guidance. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021. Available online from https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240029200

[3] Mennella C, Maniscalco U, De Pietro G, Esposito M. *Ethical and regulatory challenges of AI technologies in healthcare: A narrative review*. Heliyon. 2024 Feb 15.

[4] Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. *Artificial Intelligence – Here for Good a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy for Ireland*. Dublin: Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. Accessed on 6th November 2024 www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/284061/8c8f36f1-0860-496d-bc8f-029e3d964c54.pdf#page=null Refreshed 2024 version. Accessed on 9th January 2025 https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/publication-files/national-ai-strategy-refresh-2024.pdf

[5] European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689). Brussels: European Commission; 2024. Available online from https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/the-act/

 [6] Department of the Taoiseach. *Programme for Government 2025- Securing Ireland's Future*. Available online from gov.ie - Programme for Government 2025 - Securing Ireland's Future