



UL
Hospitals 2023-2027
Group Strategic
Plan

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Left: **Lorraine Spillane, Ciara Walsh** and **Shauna O'Dwyer**,
Student Nurses, UL Hospitals Group

Foreword

from the CEO

The past few years have been particularly challenging for our patients and staff and demanding on our services, as **we have faced unparalleled circumstances** across the healthcare system.

The core focus of UL Hospitals Group has always been the delivery of **excellent, person-centred care**.

With this strategic plan, we renew and reaffirm our commitment to:

- improve current patient flow and pathways of care
- implement the priorities and objectives detailed in Sláintecare, the 10-year Government programme aiming to establish a universal, single-tier and high-quality healthcare system

We continue to engage proactively with our patients, and we hope to further enhance this trusted relationship, which is based on compassion and continuous learning. This relationship will enable us to deliver improved services for the Midwest.

This plan also recognises the importance of supporting our staff and acknowledging the essential role they play in taking care of our patients. We believe our staff are central to the delivery of improved and essential end-to-end pathways of care. We are committed to equipping and empowering our staff to continue to deliver excellent care by supporting them in their personal and professional growth.

UL Hospitals Group is committed to fostering an environment where education and training are placed at the core of what we do. We aim to establish an Academic Health Science System (AHSS), which will:

- act as the pinnacle for the provision of education and training
- promote clinical excellence
- deliver better patient outcomes

We look forward to working with our partners, as part of the UL Healthcare Network (the UL Healthcare Network comprises key partners in the region and aims to promote clinical excellence) to achieve what is outlined in this strategy.

Sláintecare and the transition to Health Regions will lead the ambitious suite of reforms across the healthcare industry. These reforms present a significant opportunity for UL Hospitals Group to advance transformation and change in the Midwest.

I am confident UL Hospitals Group will continue to deliver improvements to the health services of the Midwest by implementing this strategic plan.



Professor Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group

A note on reading our plan

We hope that all staff and patients will find this plan useful and see where they fit in to making it happen.

We know this plan will take some time to read so we encourage you to start with the executive summary, see which parts of the plan appeal to you most and go from there.

It may also help to know that this document has two main parts:

Part 1:

The plan itself, which focuses on our four strategic priorities and five enablers, as follows:

Strategic Priorities:

1. Patient Experience and Public Engagement
2. People, Performance and Culture
3. Academic Health Science System
4. Integrated Care System

Enablers:

1. Operational Excellence
2. Financial Resilience
3. Strategic Transformation Office
4. Digital Excellence
5. Effective Communications

Enablers are resources, capabilities and capacities that will make our plan a success.

Part 2:

This part has appendices. There are four in all including a glossary and they tell you about the context of this plan, including an overview of the six different hospitals operating in the Midwest, along with other relevant facts. You can also read about national policies, directives and other documents we studied, used and referred to in this plan, as well as further information on our academic partner, the University of Limerick.

Important:

Six Health Regions will be established as part of Sláintecare, the 10-year Government programme aiming to establish a universal, single-tier and high-quality health system. UL Hospitals Group's catchment area, including the six hospitals covered in this plan will form part of a Health Region called HSE Midwest.



We have written this plan so that it is accessible, but there may be times where you will read some technical language. You are most likely to find this language in the parts where we talk about financial and digital information.

We look forward to putting this plan in place and appreciate your support.

Executive Summary

UL Hospitals Group 2023–2027 Strategic Plan

Introduction

This summary sets out the UL Hospitals Group 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. It builds on the work done in our Strategic Plan 2018–2022. It also takes account of the changing nature of the healthcare landscape.

You can read our 2023–2027 Strategic Plan in more detail on page 12 where you will find information on:

Our vision and values

Our vision is 'to promote a culture dedicated to the delivery of quality and safe patient care'. We uphold the four core values set out by the Health Service Executive (HSE):

- care
- compassion
- trust
- learning

Our four strategic priorities in the plan

Our plan has four strategic priorities that UL Hospitals Group views as critical over the timeframe of the plan. Each priority has its own set of outcomes to measure progress, as well as supporting initiatives.

The five enablers we need to achieve our strategic priorities

We have identified five enablers that are essential to achieve our strategic plan's priorities. Enablers are resources, capabilities and capacities that will make our plan a success. You can read about all five enablers we have selected on page 48.

Our initiatives

To demonstrate how we plan to achieve our commitments, we have also included an overview of how we will put this plan in place. This is in the section called Implementation considerations and it shows a roadmap of core initiatives and timings. See page 56 for this overview.

Here is a summary of our four strategic priorities:



Strategic priority 1 Patient experience and public engagement

This priority aims to make sure UL Hospitals Group is a welcoming, open place for all. It is essential that we build and maintain trust to ensure our patients have a positive experience. We have identified several initiatives that will ensure honest and clear communication. We will increase opportunities for patient involvement in decisions about healthcare provision. This will reinforce the trusted relationship we are committed to strengthening with the people of the Midwest.



Strategic priority 2 People, performance and culture

This priority revolves around our ambition to be an attractive place to work, where staff feel recognised and supported to carry out their roles. We strive to be recognised as an employer of choice, both within the region, nationally and internationally. We have proposed several initiatives to attract the best talent and to support them and our current staff.

Along with strategic priority 3 (below), we will ensure all staff have greater access to training and development opportunities. We recognise the importance of personal and professional development in creating high-performing teams that provide the best possible care. This priority also seeks to promote a more transparent and inclusive culture amongst staff.



Strategic priority 3 Academic Health Science System (AHSS)

This priority centres on the development and promotion of the AHSS. This is a coordinated partnership between our academic partner, the University of Limerick, and the healthcare system in the Midwest. It is focused on providing high-quality care and is underpinned by:

- promoting clinical excellence
- a culture of learning
- research and innovation



Dr Bing Wei Thaddeus Soh, Gold Medal winner at the Annual NCHD (Non Consultant Hospital Doctor) Conference at University Hospital Limerick for his research on how patient DNA affects risk of bleeding while on blood thinners.



Staff from the Health Sciences Academy and University Hospital Limerick with TY students from Gaelcholáiste Luimnigh at UHL STEMI (ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction) Patient Journey Video Launch 2023

The next five years will see the formal establishment of clear governance structures and involvement from across the healthcare community.

We have also identified initiatives to promote the work of the AHSS to staff and the wider community. We will promote initiatives so that more staff have opportunities to carry out research, and new developments are translated into clinical practice in a timely manner.

Effective partnerships with community stakeholders within and outside the healthcare system will also be essential to the success of this priority.



Strategic priority 4 Integrated Care System

This final priority is about developing an Integrated Care System for the Midwest. It is closely linked to the development of an AHSS (see opposite). Together, these priorities will promote quality healthcare and continual improvements to service delivery in the region.

We are committed to progressing the integration of services within the catchment area of our work, which is to be known as the HSE Midwest, in line with Sláintecare.

We have identified a number of initiatives that will support existing integrated services while also developing new ones.

We will work with partners from the healthcare system and broader public service to ensure patients receive holistic care in the most appropriate setting, as close to home as possible. Initiatives have also been identified that will remove any existing organisational barriers that could prevent integrated care, while also improving fair access to healthcare within the region.

What is an enabler?

For each of the above strategic priorities, we have committed to an outcome that we will strive to achieve over the next five years. To allow us to succeed in this, we will need to have a number of supports in place. For the purposes of this plan, we will refer to these supports as enablers.

Here's a summary of our five enablers which will help us achieve our strategic priorities

We have identified five enablers as part of the strategic plan. Each will be essential in making sure we achieve the strategic priorities. We will strive for:



Enabler 1:
Operational excellence

We will promote and use continuous improvement tools and techniques to ensure we further improve the quality and safety of the care we provide.



Enabler 2:
Financial resilience

We recognise the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing inflationary environment. Our focus on risk management, cost reductions and capital structure will make sure we can withstand future challenges.



Enabler 3:
Strategic Transformation Office

The Strategic Transformation Office (STO) will be a new office responsible for the coordination and implementation of our plan. The office will provide timeline and budget support while working with the broader Group to achieve the initiatives and outcomes associated with each strategic priority.



Enabler 4:
Digital excellence

We are committed to adopting new digital solutions to improve how we work to support patients, staff and others.



Enabler 5:
Effective communications

Our staff, patients and community partners need to be kept up to date with developments in the Hospital Group. We will strive to tell all the stories of UL Hospitals Group – our ambitions, our achievements, our plans and our people in a sustained and honest way using creativity, empathy and compassion.

Other parts of our plan

The context behind the strategic plan is also included in this document. This includes an overview of our six hospitals; Nenagh Hospital, University Maternity Hospital Limerick, University Hospital Limerick, St. John's Hospital, Ennis Hospital, and Croom Orthopaedic Hospital, along with details on particular statistics and features of the catchment areas including for instance:

- age of population
- housing and employment
- population health profile

National and regional policies and directives relevant to the plan are included and we also provide details on our academic partner – the University of Limerick (UL).

We developed this strategic plan based on the extensive input from a range of stakeholders within the Group and in the wider community. We really appreciated all inputs.

We hope all staff and patients will understand and see this strategic plan as guiding the direction of the Hospital Group for years to come. This plan provides the steps we need to continue to deliver better and improved health services for the Midwest.



Miranda Kiernan, Technical Officer School of Medicine, UL and **Prof Paul Burke**, Chief Academic Officer, UL Hospitals Group and Vice Dean Education & Health Sciences UL at the official opening of the Clinical Education & Research Centre and launch of the Health Sciences Academy at University Hospital Limerick (2019)



This summary was awarded the Plain English Mark

Our Vision and Values

Our vision is 'to promote a culture dedicated to the delivery of quality and safe patient care'.

We uphold the four core values set out by the HSE:

- care
- compassion
- trust
- learning

These values are embedded in all aspects of our operations as we strive to deliver quality care to all in the Midwest. We have also embraced the behaviours outlined in the Values in Action model and continue to make efforts to translate these values into clear behaviours.

Values in Action is about actively developing a culture where our values are a way of life for us all – a visible part of our everyday actions, throughout the health services.

“To promote a culture dedicated to the delivery of **quality and safe patient care**”

Care | Compassion | Trust | Learning

Minister for Health, Mr Stephen Donnelly TD, John Nally, patient, and Brenda Bleach, Registered Advanced Nurse Practitioner at the official opening of the new Injury Unit at Ennis Hospital

The 2023–2027 Strategic Plan

Overview

The UL Hospitals Group 2023–2027 Strategic Plan consists of two interconnected layers.

- The first layer consists of four strategic priorities, which we outline below.
- The second layer includes five enablers. We need these to achieve our four priorities.

Strategic priorities

-  **Patient experience and public engagement**
-  **People, performance and culture**
-  **Academic Health Science System**
-  **Integrated Care System**

Enablers

-  **Operational excellence**
-  **Financial resilience**
-  **Strategic Transformation Office**
-  **Digital Excellence**
-  **Effective Communications**

The **four strategic priorities** are a coordinated and collaborative set of initiatives within and between the six hospitals in the UL Hospitals Group. These priorities will help us to achieve our vision and ambition for the next five years.

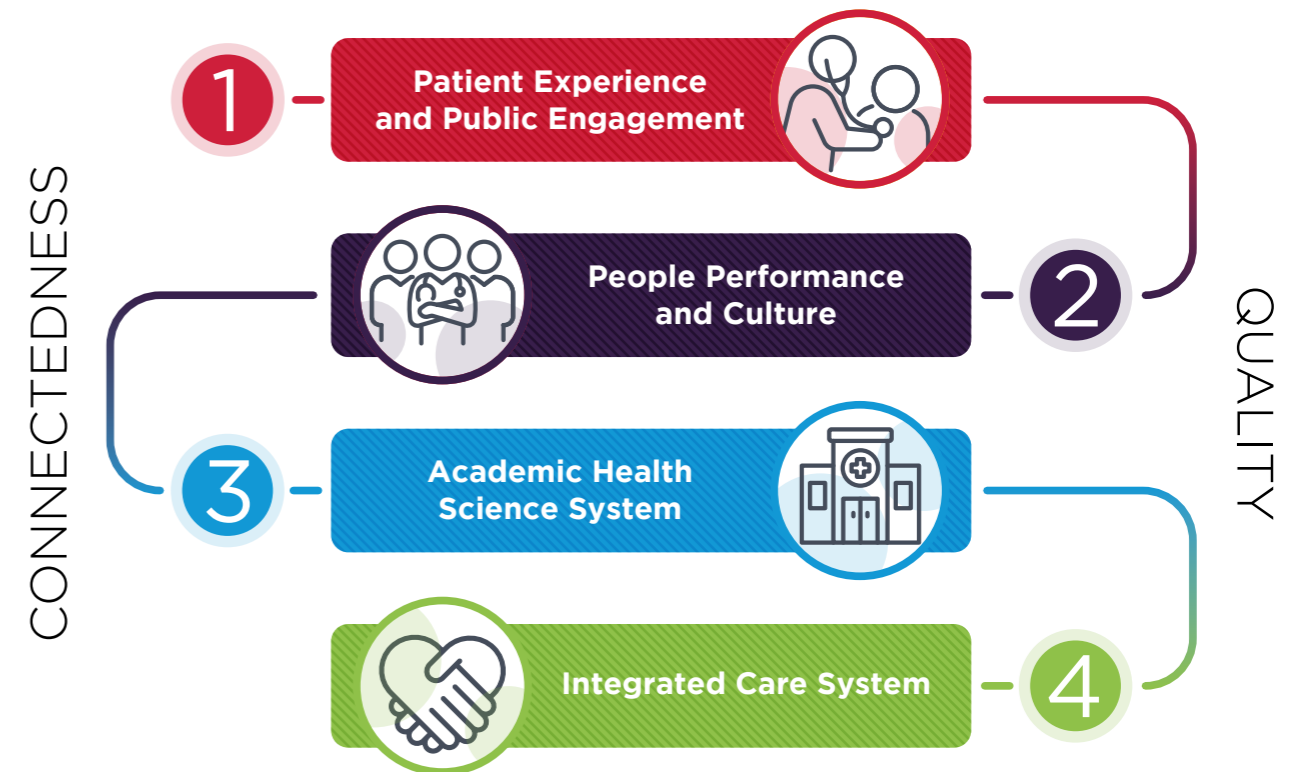
For each strategic priority, we have identified a list of expected outcomes. To achieve these **outcomes**, we have identified initiatives and actions that map the journey we will take to deliver this plan.

The five **enablers** give us the foundation we need to achieve the initiatives under each strategic priority. These enablers will allow us to implement the strategic plan we outline in the following section.

The overarching strategic framework is also underpinned by **quality** and **connectedness**. These are integral areas of focus for the organisation, supporting the delivery of the strategic priorities. Quality is the common theme of the four strategic priorities. Connectedness encourages re-connection and collaboration amongst staff and stakeholders, preventing and breaking down silos across the organisation. Silos mean working on your own or as part of an insular team or department.

Our 2023–2027 Strategic Plan will be led by a newly established **Strategic Transformation Office (STO)**. The STO will oversee and facilitate critical organisation-wide transformations. Read more about this office on page 51.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



ENABLERS

-  **Operational Excellence**
-  **Financial Resilience**
-  **Strategic Transformation Office**
-  **Digital Excellence**
-  **Effective Communications**

OUR VISION

To promote a culture dedicated to the delivery of quality and safe patient care

OUR VALUES

Care | Compassion | Trust | Learning



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

Patient experience and public engagement

Person-centred care informed by ongoing engagement and collaboration with the people of the Midwest

This strategic priority focuses on the following core components:

- an open and just culture
- patient experience
- patient activation
- public engagement and involvement

We discuss each of these core components below.

An open and just culture

It is core to our vision to develop and maintain the trust between:

- UL Hospitals Group
- our patients
- the wider population we serve

We are committed to working in an open, fair, transparent and just way. A 'just' culture means that our processes are designed to achieve a fair conclusion for those involved in an incident or a near miss. A 'just' culture needs to focus on:

- openness
- repairing harm
- learning rather than blaming

The HSE Patient Safety Strategy (2019-2024) outlines the aim for all health services to be compassionate, just, fair and have an open culture. This commitment is a cornerstone of our pledge to patient experience and public engagement.

Values in Action outlines how we should work to uphold our culture and ideals. We will continue to use our Values in Action model when we interact with colleagues and patients. This is vital to fostering an open and just culture within the Group. It will:

- highlight how important it is to acknowledge the work and experience of others
- keep people informed
- create a deeper understanding of how individual actions can impact other people

In modern Ireland we need to be aware of and embrace different life experiences, backgrounds and languages. This is true for both our patients and our staff.

- We will deliver care with empathy
- We will ask rather than assume
- We will create a non-judgemental environment to deliver and receive care

We understand how important high-quality communication and interaction is when building and maintaining trust. In this strategic priority, we try to maintain a close connection to all people living in the Midwest. Our style of communication and engagement will be influenced by our commitment to an open and just culture.

Patient experience

An effective approach to patient experience is vital. The people and communities using our services are best placed to understand:

- what they need
- what is working
- what improvements are needed

When we understand our patients' experiences, it can help us improve existing services and identify new and better ways to meet peoples' needs. We will drive a coordinated approach to understanding patient experiences in the Midwest. This is essential so we can deliver integrated care and address the fragmentation of services and lack of coordination that people often experience in the system.

Patient activation

Patient activation describes the knowledge, skills, and confidence a person has to manage their own health and healthcare. It is about people:

- engaging in behaviour that helps prevent health issues
- accessing appropriate treatments
- choosing healthy behaviours

Studies show that people who are more activated and the more knowledge, skills and confidence they have to manage their own health and healthcare, the more likely they are to avail of services and to attend:

- screenings
- regular check-ups
- immunisations

The relationship between patient activation and health outcomes has been demonstrated across a range of different populations and health conditions. We propose to collaborate with service delivery partners in the Midwest to:

- increase further activation levels across the population
- improve patient engagement
- improve health outcomes

Public engagement and involvement

It is important that we partner with the public and patients so we can deliver person-centred care. The HSE Patient Safety Strategy commits to fostering a culture of partnership. This is because it:

- maximises positive patient experiences and outcomes
- minimises the risk of error and harm

Partnership will include working with and learning from patients to design, deliver, evaluate and improve care. It will drive new ways to effectively and efficiently engage with the public.

Our culture focuses on encouraging and facilitating authentic patient and public involvement when delivering and improving care.

We will use a two-way approach with regard to public engagement and involvement.

1. We will provide clear, up-to-date information to patients about any new or proposed changes.
2. We will encourage patients to share their overall patient experience and identify areas for improvement.

This will involve actively working with patients and members of the public to deliver on our objectives across several areas. These include:

- quality improvements
- service design
- service evaluation
- research

The **Patient Council** is our vital partner in engaging with the public and with patients. The Patient Council gives patients and their families an opportunity to comment on our services and their overall hospital experience. It also supports the development of new initiatives.

Patients will continue to be a key partner in our decision-making, as they provide unique insights on our current performance, and highlight areas that need improvement.

We place a high value on sharing information and experience relating to services designed to:

- reduce health inequalities
- improve people's health and wellbeing
- reduce emergency hospital admissions

Our public engagement and involvement strategy will concentrate on a select number of areas such as those mentioned above.

The move to Health Regions is an opportunity to make sure people and communities are at the heart of health and healthcare. We will introduce a structured and responsive approach across the Midwest to achieve this goal. This will represent new ways of working for all service delivery partners.

Strategic Priority 1 Outcomes

we expect to achieve over the next five years

Communication

We will:

- inform and engage the public about how we provide healthcare services in the Midwest
- accept and use different ways to communicate and interact with patients

Trust

We will work to earn a renewed level of trust and confidence amongst the general public and patients about the design and delivery of healthcare services.

Feedback

We will make sure that service-design processes routinely and consistently take account of inputs from patients and the general public.

Interaction

We will make sure patients have an enhanced understanding of when, where and how best to interact with UL Hospitals Group services.

We will make sure patient activation is leading to enhanced levels of engagement in:

- preventive behaviours
- treatment
- healthy behaviours

Expectations

We will make sure:

- staff understand the expectations and preferences of patients
- patients understand the expectations and preferences of staff

Open and just culture

We will make sure:

- staff understand and acknowledge the principles of an open and just culture
- successes are acknowledged and celebrated
- to capture and disseminate organisational learning

Strategic Priority 1 Initiatives

to deliver expected outcomes

Engagement and communications plans

- 1.1 We will develop an engagement strategy and an accompanying communications plan so that we can effectively partner with patients and communities. We will do this together with:
 - all relevant service delivery partners
 - the political system
 - public representatives
 - trade unions across the UL Healthcare Network

Patients

- 1.2 We will develop a patient experience framework, based on patient stories, and supporting collateral.
- 1.3 We will collaborate with patients to co-design and put in place health and social care services within the UL Healthcare Network.
- 1.4 We will introduce a patient engagement approach. We will do this by using a survey process that focuses on models of integrated care.

Collaborative health promotion

- 1.5 We will design and put in place a health promotion programme in collaboration with Public Health Mid-West. This will focus on delivering person-centred care and redesigned care pathways tailored to the needs of the region.

Expand Patient Council

- 1.6 We will oversee the staged expansion of the UL Hospitals Group Patient Council. This will make sure there is balanced geographic representation and evolution of remit in alignment with the transition to the HSE Midwest Health Region.

Citizens' Panel

- 1.7 We will set up a Midwest Citizens' Panel to bring people from the region together on an annual basis. This panel will enable people to comment on, inform and influence key decisions about health and social care services in the Midwest.

Public themes

- 1.8 We will introduce theme-specific public engagement initiatives designed to enhance understanding and awareness of the UL Healthcare Network.

Electronic health records

- 1.9 We will phase in electronic health record and digital platforms that will promote and enhance patient engagement.

Strategic Priority 1 Enablers

that help us put our strategy in place

We will deliver this strategic priority by strengthening the following:

● Digital excellence

Digital excellence is critical for delivering the expected outcomes within this strategic priority. We aim to extend the reach of digital systems for both staff and patients. We will work with national teams to use an integrated, patient-centred electronic healthcare record. This will be extended with modern patient engagement tools that use mobile and web-based technologies. This will enhance the flexibility and convenience of the patient experience.

● Communications

A key area of focus will be to develop an engagement and communications platform and supporting communications technologies. This will allow us to use a two-way approach when engaging with the public. This will make sure we communicate and inform the general public and will give us a designated channel for the public to engage with us.

● Quality and safety

We recognise the importance of quality and patient safety. They are essential so we can move from a reactive approach to quality management, assurance, and improvement to a proactive model. The proactive model will allow us to enhance and refresh capabilities across the organisation.



Croom Orthopaedic Hospital, Limerick

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2



People, performance and culture

Empower and equip our people and foster a culture of inclusion and transparency

Our second strategic priority consists of four core parts aimed at empowering and equipping our staff. They mean that we:

- are an employer of choice
- are a purpose-driven organisation
- have high-performing teams
- have a transparent and inclusive culture

Here is a detailed explanation of these four core parts.

Employer of choice

Attracting talent is a key challenge across organisations operating in the healthcare sector nationally and internationally. The total number of healthcare professionals in Ireland is still below the required levels to meet current and future demand for services. In line with national and international trends, we have also experienced recruitment challenges across our various disciplines and services. We aim to:

- establish our organisation as an employer of choice in the Midwest, attracting exceptional talent
- be recognised as having a strong reputation as an employer in the region in the eyes of patients, key stakeholders and the wider community

As part of becoming an employer of choice, we are committed to developing an onboarding programme which supports staff moving to the Midwest. This includes working with local partners to help newly appointed staff secure accommodation and to familiarise them with local services. We will promote the benefits of working within the Group to improve our brand and recognition.

Our new **People Strategy**, which will be launched in 2023, also looks at this area.

While we want to attract and recruit the best people to come to work with us, it is equally important that we retain our existing valued team members. This has become increasingly difficult following the service pressure and challenges to workforce resilience associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to think differently about how we attract, recruit and retain our future workforce so we can:

- develop an integrated workforce
- support a diverse workforce and inclusive culture

Purpose-driven organisation

We recognise that staff are indispensable for the organisation's success and the achievement of excellence in the provision of care. Evidence has shown that purpose-driven organisations:

- perform better
- have more engaged employees
- deliver better outcomes as a result

This reflects our ambition and commitment to deliver improved services for our patients and the wider population in the Midwest. Following the rollout of the 'Values in Action' programme across the organisation, we are committed to creating a more positive environment for staff and improved experiences for patients.

In line with the commitments outlined as part of Strategic Priority 3 – Academic Health Science System (AHSS) (see page 30), we recognise how important it is to support professional development for staff as they progress in their careers. This has resulted in a shared commitment to secure protected and dedicated time for staff to attend training and avail of educational opportunities.

High-performing teams

An empowered and satisfied workforce is the cornerstone of every successful organisation. It is essential that we equip our staff with the necessary tools and skills to help them succeed in their roles. Education and training is a crucial way of retaining staff and making sure they feel valued and supported in their career. Through this proactive approach to career management, professional progression is supported, and staff feel valued.

We will assess education and training needs regularly to make sure we embed an environment of continuous learning in the organisation. This will be further fostered by the initiatives and remit of the AHSS, as outlined in Strategic Priority 3 (see page 30).

The Health Services People Strategy 2019–2024 provided important direction to engage, develop, and retain the country's healthcare workforce. Building on these objectives, we will continue to use the HSE's Performance Achievement process. This process aims to develop staff and create a forum to discuss learning and development needs. It fosters an increased level of support across the organisation and boosts staff confidence. Greater emphasis will also be placed on the development of leadership capabilities across the Group.

We will explore the opportunity to provide shared posts with UL to enable staff to pursue research opportunities and, ultimately, to foster clinical excellence. We are also committed to investing further in our infrastructure and staff facilities to make sure we have appropriate settings for our staff.

Transparent and inclusive culture

Transparency and inclusivity are essential elements of our culture. We recognise the need to have a free flow of information within the organisation and encourage connection amongst staff. This is part of how we are putting in place new ways of working.

It is important to make sure that our values and culture are embraced at all levels. This can be seen in our commitment to bringing these values to light and fostering opportunities for collaboration across the organisation.

We are committed to embracing and fostering an inclusive culture, where staff can benefit from transparency across the organisation. The development of a **Diversity, Equality and Inclusion plan**, amongst other initiatives, will play a pivotal role in enabling us to achieve this goal.

This ambition is closely linked with the aim of fostering an open and just culture amongst our patients, as outlined in Strategic Priority 1 – Patient Experience and Public Engagement (see page 15). We recognise how creating an inclusive culture is essential to our staff, as it acknowledges the diversity of our workforce. An inclusive culture also promotes a strong communication programme across all levels of the organisation.



Values in Action is about actively developing a culture where our values are a way of life for us all – a visible part of our everyday actions, throughout the health services



Thoko Magaya, Staff Nurse, Children's Ark, University Hospital Limerick

Strategic Priority 2 Outcomes

we expect to achieve over the next five years

Employer of choice

We aim to be recognised as an employer of choice in the Midwest, nationally and internationally, proven by our ability to attract, retain and develop talent.

Value staff

We want our staff to feel valued and proud of being part of an organisation that respects and values diversity. This will lead to the development of a sense of belonging.

Retain staff

We aim to increase our overall staff retention rate for the Group. We will do this by taking a proactive approach to making sure staff are satisfied and appropriately challenged.

Empower staff

We will embed a sense of purpose in the organisation, so that staff feel empowered and have the appropriate level of autonomy and authority.

Support staff

We will make sure our staff members have access to the right supports, education, and training. This will help them progress in their career. This is supported by the initiatives of Strategic Priority 3 - Academic Health Science System (AHSS) (see page 30).

Staff culture

We will foster an inclusive, supportive, and positive culture.

Accountability

We will have internal mechanisms in place to support, enable and measure performance and accountability, for example personal development plans.

Wellbeing

We will recognise health and wellbeing as fundamental to boosting the resilience of staff and enabling a culture where individual wellness is promoted.

Sustainability

We will foster a culture where staff take on sustainability as a responsibility.

Communication

We will foster an environment where information is shared in our organisation using a proactive, collaborative approach.

Magnet mental health accreditation

We will become a Magnet-accredited organisation, dedicated to improving mental health and wellbeing amongst healthcare professionals.

Empower staff to make decisions

We will use and embed a decision-making model focused on empowering staff at all levels.

Holistic care

Our multi-disciplinary teams that represent UL Hospitals Group's future staffing model will deliver a holistic provision of care in the most appropriate setting.



Staff at University Hospital Limerick on International Nurses Day 2023

Strategic Priority 2 Initiatives

to deliver expected outcomes

Welcome new staff

- 2.1** Streamline the induction process for new staff.
- Use a suite of resources and an orientation package to ease the relocation process
 - Familiarise new staff with the Midwest
 - Help new staff access local services

Recruitment

- 2.2** Design and put in place a recruitment operating model that outlines the future recruitment needs and processes. It will also enhance the recruitment experience for candidates.

Plan workforce needs

- 2.3** Develop a strategic workforce plan that assesses our current and future resourcing and capability gaps and identifies the steps required to bridge them.

Education and training

- 2.4** Develop an education and training model for UL Hospitals Group in parallel with the AHSS. This will create a reputation of excellence and give staff tools and skills to succeed in their careers.

Staff wellbeing

- 2.5** Expand dedicated health and wellbeing facilities and improve access to facilities for all staff.

Staff survey

- 2.6** Launch a survey focusing on health and wellbeing and staff lifestyle behaviours. This will be translated into a programme with targeted initiatives aimed at supporting staff.

Diversity and inclusion

- 2.7** Develop a diversity, equality and inclusion plan that promotes an inclusive environment for staff.

Retain staff

- 2.8** Develop a staff retention plan. Part of this will include analysing exit interviews into themes and follow up with quality improvement plans.



Dr Terry Hennessy, Consultant Cardiologist, on a 640km cycle from Mizen Head to Malin Head to promote physical activity, & health and safety in cycling

Blended working

- 2.9** Develop and support the rollout of blended working models across UL Hospitals Groups for roles that can be executed remotely.

Staff decision making

- 2.10** Make staff part of the decision-making process by setting up multi-disciplinary teams across the organisation.

Digital platforms

- 2.11** Use a phased approach to introduce digital platforms to promote and enhance staff engagement.

Continuous improvement

- 2.12** Develop a high-performance culture that prioritises continuous improvement. This will be in line with our three-year continuous improvement cycle. It will include accountability and good governance in line with the Governance Framework.

Sustainability

- 2.13** Develop a sustainability campaign aimed at raising awareness among staff.

Strategic Priority 2 Enablers

that help us put our strategy in place

Strategic Priority 2 will be supported by the following enablers:

E-learning

We will use e-learning platforms such as ULHG Achieve for staff as part of our Digital Excellence enabler. This will be crucial so we can support professional development plans for our staff. In addition, we will develop new training resources and programmes.

Digital communications

A digital communications platform and supporting communications technologies will further support engagement amongst staff and will help foster interconnectedness amongst our workforce.

Operational excellence

The commitment to operational excellence is aimed at reducing operational inefficiencies across the organisation. This will enable our staff to dedicate more of their time to professional development. The AHSS will enable the fostering of best practice across our processes and operations.

Communications about staff opportunities

We will use a strong communications and engagement programme to make sure staff are aware of and take part in opportunities across the organisation. This is further supported by our commitment to encouraging an ongoing process of engagement between staff and their managers.



Above: Nenagh Hospital, Tipperary

Opposite: **Mary T Roche**, Clerical Officer, **Yvonne Crowe**, Clinical Nurse Specialist in Chronic Kidney disease and **Professor Austin Stack**, Consultant Nephrologist



Strategic Priority 3



Academic Health Science System

An Academic Health Science System (AHSS) designed with our partners, influenced by our landscape, guided and directed by our shared ambition

Our third strategic priority consists of four components focused on improving care for people in the Midwest by bringing together:

- research
- education
- innovation
- clinical practice

An AHSS is a fully coordinated partnership between a university and a healthcare system. It focuses on delivering high-quality care and is underpinned by a culture of learning, teaching and research that incorporates the whole healthcare workforce. Sláintecare supports this integration of academia, acute care and community clinical care.

Through our Health Sciences Academy (HSA, see appendix 3), we have started to develop this model, in partnership with UL and HSE Mid West Community Healthcare. We have further ambitions for the next five years which are detailed below.

The identified components are as follows:

- AHSS establishment
- promoting clinical excellence
- culture of learning
- research and innovation

AHSS establishment

We see the AHSS as a model that would link service delivery and academia, creating a hub for partnerships. This will allow and enhance the translation of clinical research into clinical medicine.

To enable clinical practice integration across the Midwest, we need a coordinated approach to integrate service, research and innovation across the partner organisations. We also need clear governance and leadership arrangements. The ambition of the AHSS is to provide this platform for coordination and collaboration, while focusing on creating further opportunities for research.

We must have clear governance arrangements in place to set up and make sure we have a well-functioning AHSS for the Midwest. This will be complemented by formalising key partnerships with all third-level institutions in the region, alongside an enhanced collaboration between UL Hospitals Group and our academic partner, the University of Limerick.

When set up, the AHSS will work with and benefit from the regional structure that will be established as part of the development of HSE Midwest as a Health Region.

The Health Sciences Academy has done extensive work promoting clinical excellence, training and innovation in the region. The AHSS will formalise and build on this work.

Setting up the AHSS will be done in stages. This will make sure there is accountability and that clear governance is in place. The AHSS also aims to involve healthcare and community partners, such as:

- Public Health Mid-West
- the National Ambulance Service
- An Garda Síochána
- County Councils

The newly established UL Healthcare Network, comprising key partners in the region, will be the first of its kind. This will make the Midwest a leader nationally in education, research and innovation in the Irish healthcare sector.

Promoting clinical excellence

Evidence-based practice means that when approaching patient care clinical, decision-making is informed by the best available scientific evidence. It makes sure that treatment choices are regularly updated and it improves healthcare practices through rigorous evaluation of outcomes.

International best practice suggests better outcomes for patients arise, where care is integrated within an environment of:

- teaching
- training
- research
- innovation

This clinical practice integration will give the people of the Midwest access to high-quality care in line with best practice, delivered by a workforce that is centred around a culture of learning.

The Clinical Education and Research Centre (CERC) at University Hospital Limerick will remain the main training facility. It will provide a home to the University of Limerick's School of Medicine and Health Sciences Academy as well as the educational and research needs of our hospital staff. The centre will also enable the Group to grow our expertise in genomics and artificial intelligence at an accelerated rate. This will complement the Group's growing reputation in robotics. It will also enhance and progress the work of the Clinical Research Unit (CRU), the overarching research body jointly governed by UL Hospitals Group and UL.

Culture of learning

Our ambition is to develop a culture of learning across all aspects of service delivery. In line with international evidence, a focus on research and education leads to improved patient outcomes and staff satisfaction. To achieve this culture shift, we will require enhanced connection and collaboration across all aspects of care. It will need to be delivered by a committed, well-trained and research-literate workforce.

The development of an AHSS will provide highly trained healthcare staff with attractive posts incorporating teaching, training, research and innovation. It will also provide clear opportunities for career progression within the Midwest.

In collaboration with partner organisations and national postgraduate training bodies, the AHSS will focus on developing a strong culture of:

- practice development
- leadership development
- improvement

This will make sure that future leaders are equipped with the skillsets to succeed. The AHSS will champion inter-professional learning and access to learning opportunities for staff and patients.

Research and innovation

In addition to traditional academia, the interaction between research and innovation plays a crucial role in advancing healthcare and improving patient outcomes. Innovation in healthcare incorporates a wide spectrum of areas, including the development of:

- new medical technologies
- treatment
- the implementation of novel healthcare delivery models

The AHSS will drive healthcare innovation in the Midwest by providing a hub with resources, infrastructure and individuals with the expertise to support the development of new treatments and care-delivery models.

To promote research initiatives and innovation in the Midwest, securing clear partnerships and funding arrangements will be key to development over the lifespan of this strategy. These partnerships will leverage the skill and expertise of current partners, for example, the UL Rapid Innovation Unit (RIU), a research group between UL Hospitals Group and UL supported by Science Foundation Ireland through the Confirm smart manufacturing centre. They will also work with potential future partners like government, industry, and other academic institutions. All of these are critical to the success of healthcare research and innovation.

The established AHSS will focus on areas including:

- genomics
- artificial intelligence
- robotics

These are key research and innovation areas for UL Hospitals Group. AHSS will identify fields where the Group could become recognised leaders. This also reflects the ambition of the Group.

Strategic Priority 3 Outcomes

we expect to achieve over the next five years

Throughout the strategy, UL Hospitals Group will work towards achieving the following outcomes:

Integration

Integration of the HSA leadership team with clinical and academic partners across the region and nationally – including the postgraduate training bodies of the different health disciplines.

Career opportunities

Enhanced staff attraction and retention through increased academic credibility, enhanced career opportunities and support of healthcare education as a career choice.

Clinical excellence

A culture of clinical excellence, innovation, education, and research across the UL Healthcare Network will be embedded in the Midwest.

Collaboration

Enhanced connection and collaboration delivered by a committed, well-trained and research literate workforce.

Excellence

Excellence in integrated healthcare, underpinned by:

- translational research
- innovation
- education
- patient and public involvement (PPI)

Improved evidence-based care

Improved patient and staff experience through service change and evidence-based care.

Research leading to better care

Development of an innovation ecosystem through partnerships with industry to accelerate translation of research to improved clinical care.

Collaboration platform

Act as the platform for collaboration across the health and care system, supporting the implementation of evidence-based interventions and service changes.

Recognition of academic excellence

UL Hospitals Group becomes recognised as driving a culture of academic excellence within the Group and in the wider community.

Strategic Priority 3 Initiatives to deliver expected outcomes

Clear AHSS governance

3.1 Establish clear governance structures and leadership for the AHSS to enable integration of services, shared learning and research and innovation across the partner organisations.

Research governance

3.2 Continue to implement the National Research Governance Framework.

Promote initiatives

3.3 Promote the RIU and initiatives like the Winter Education Series. The Winter Education Series is an initiative of the HSA, specifically targeting the objective of “Building a culture of innovation in the Mid-West”.

Equal opportunities

3.4 Promote equal opportunities across the multi-disciplinary spectrum for engagement in education across the entire health and social care workforce.

Shared posts

3.5 Develop shared academic and clinical posts across the health and social care spectrum.

Staff research training

3.6 Train staff to increase their understanding of research and evidence implementation. This will be part of an overall shift towards a values-based culture that focuses on quality improvement, using staff experience as a main indicator for success.

Awareness of AHSS and UL Hospitals Group research

3.7 Drive awareness of the AHSS and the role of the HSA in developing and delivering high-quality care across the Midwest, encouraging patient and public involvement in research.

Research partnerships

3.8 Support research through the creation of partnerships aligned with the Group's corporate and clinical strategy.

Digital infrastructure

3.9 Continue to invest in our digital infrastructure to enable more readily accessible and reliable health information for our patients and staff.

3.10 Start work to develop an electronic health record, an associated data lake (a centralised repository which stores all your structured and unstructured data at any scale), and population health management capabilities. These will generate insights and opportunities for improvement across the region.

Collaborate on evidence-based care

3.11 Promote a culture of evidence-based care delivery across acute and community settings in collaboration with various partners such as:

- Public Health Mid-West
- the National Ambulance Service
- General Practitioners (GPs)

Collaborate on staff development

3.12 Collaborate with educational partners such as UL and other international entities to enable staff development. For example, provide access to:

- MSc in Design for Health and Wellbeing
- Lean Academy
- UL Kemmy Business School

Expand international partnerships

3.13 Expand and develop international partnerships such as with John Hopkins Hospital and Leicester Diabetes Centre. This will promote best practice in the region and gain the Group international recognition as a leader of clinical excellence.

Develop science campus

3.14 Develop a Hospital Health Science Campus incorporating facilities for teaching, training, research, and collaboration. For example, the Centre for Simulation and Patient Safety.

Develop experience centre

3.15 Develop a Creative Life and Health Promotion Centre (Patient and Staff Experience Centre) to make sure that patients receive the support and advice to engage with care and live healthier lives.

Make most of existing partnerships

3.16 Leverage existing partnerships and promote research focus on:

- genomics
- digital medicine
- artificial intelligence
- robotics

These areas are uniquely suited to UL Hospitals Group, and could lead to widespread recognition of competence in those fields.

Intellectual property

3.17 Set up a Technology Transfer Office (TTO) dedicated to managing intellectual property.

Business and research

3.18 Ensure and promote the incorporation of Business Principles in Healthcare Research project.

Strategic Priority 3 Enablers

that will help us put our strategy in place

Strategic Priority 3 will be supported by the following enablers:

International best practice and governance

International best practice and experience will inform the design and development of the AHSS. This includes setting up strong governance that will support us as we develop current partnerships and identify new alliances, especially across the healthcare industry.

Digital infrastructure

The development of an electronic health record will enable sharing of data and reporting of outcomes to enhance practice development. An enhanced digital infrastructure will also enable improved access to training opportunities and education, as well as supporting the use of innovative solutions. The AHSS will strengthen best practice and the putting in place of digital solutions to promote access to training and innovative practices.

Staff engagement

A comprehensive staff engagement programme is a key enabler to inform and educate staff about the ambition and opportunities associated with the AHSS. This will generate awareness among staff and other stakeholders of the AHSS and increase access to opportunities to further develop their careers. A targeted communications plan will make sure we have buy-in across the organisation and key stakeholders. This will give the AHSS an enhanced and expanded remit.

Operational excellence

Operational excellence will be a critical enabler within this strategic priority. Setting up the AHSS will help foster best practice and create an environment of constant learning, where evidence-based practices are adopted. This will lead to the streamlining of processes and increased efficiencies across the Group, enabling the redistribution of resources.



Above: Ennis Hospital, Clare
Opposite: University Hospital Limerick

Spotlight

Hospital Health Science Campus

We are committed to developing a Johns Hopkins-style campus. This model envisions the close proximity of healthcare services, creating the ideal platform and setting the foundations for greater efficiencies and smoother pathways of care for patients. We see that the Hospital Health Science Campus will further our expertise in genomics and artificial intelligence. In addition, it will continue to place great emphasis on our growing reputation in robotics, as well as enhancing and progressing the work of the Clinical Research Unit. Digital medicine will also be a key area of focus for the Hospital Health Science Campus. At the centre of this development will be the Institute for Learning, Leadership & Innovation.

Creative Life and Health Promotion Centre

The focus of the Creative Life and Health Promotion Centre will be placed on lifestyle medicine, for example anthroposophic medicine. Health promotion and wellbeing programmes will be central to how we deliver our services. This will be supported by effective communications and enhanced public engagement capabilities, which will be critical for delivery of health promotion messages. It is envisioned that the Creative Life and Health Promotion Centre will serve patients and staff.

Academic Health Science System (AHSS) Structure

UL Hospitals Group is working closely with its academic partner to define the governance structure for the AHSS. The governance structure will be complemented by strong partnerships between healthcare and community stakeholders, such as Public Health Mid-West, the National Ambulance Service, and An Garda Síochána.



Strategic Priority 4

Integrated Care System

Lead the interconnected provision of health services

Our fourth strategic priority focuses on the following components:

- organisational integration
- integration of clinical care
- health equity

The development of an Integrated Care System (ICS) in the Midwest is linked to the development of an AHSS. They will work together to deliver quality health and social care for the region.

Organisational integration

We are committed to formalising and improving integration across our health and social care system in the Midwest. This is in line with Sláintecare's commitment to developing six new Health Regions. In these areas, healthcare services are primarily provided in the community in line with patients' needs.

We acknowledge that varying levels of integration currently exist in Ireland, and the Midwest is no exception. Organisational integration is key to the delivery of the goals set by Sláintecare and this strategic priority for UL Hospitals Group.

We will collaborate with partners from across the health and social care landscape including:

- acute hospitals
- primary care services
- allied health professionals
- the wider public service landscape

This is in line with the future establishment of HSE Midwest and Sláintecare's goal to provide a higher level of care in the community. We recognise how important it is to use a bi-directional approach to patient flow, between hospitals and other healthcare settings. This means that we will prioritise and respond to the needs of patients in the right place at the right time, without any unnecessary delay, and with the most appropriate clinical team.

We will promote and support the integration of services and the subsequent integration of organisational structures. We will achieve this by promoting the work being done by the regional pod, which has been established as an interim body to facilitate the transition towards the establishment of HSE Midwest.

The Midwest is the only catchment area that already aligns one hundred percent with the boundaries of the newly defined Health Region. This unique positioning will facilitate and ease the transition towards setting up the HSE Midwest Health Region. The longstanding focus on integrated care in the region can also be leveraged by our service delivery partners in the Midwest.

Integration of clinical care

The integration of acute and community-based care is a crucial part of developing an ICS that provides seamless, person-centred care across different healthcare settings and service providers. This involves refocusing the design and delivery of services around the needs of patients.

We recognise how important it is to have care teams comprising healthcare professionals from different settings and disciplines. It is important that they work together to develop care pathways and provide coordinated care to patients, removing and overcoming organisational barriers.

In line with Sláintecare's goal to integrate both acute and community care, more care will be provided in the community, as appropriate, with more complex care provided in the acute hospital environment. This approach aims to:

- break down the barriers that exist between acute and community care
- create a more integrated and coordinated approach to healthcare delivery

We are committed to putting in place integrated care pathways and we aim to make sure that patients receive consistent, timely, and high-quality care in the right place at the right time.

A successful integrated care model needs a fit-for-purpose acute hospital system. It is essential that the development of our acute services is maintained and accelerated where possible.

In addition, further clinical integration will be progressed as appropriate within and across our acute services. This will make sure that patients experience a seamless service, irrespective of hospital location or model in the Midwest.

Health equity

A key area in the development of an ICS is the focus on improving health equity. We want to make sure that everyone in the Midwest has access to the same quality of care. Through organisational, clinical, and digital collaboration, we will:

- work with partners from across the Midwest to improve access to healthcare services
- drive a health promotion and health prevention agenda
- address social and economic inequalities impacting access to healthcare

The Midwest has a diverse population with diverse needs. This highlights how important it is to make sure everyone has access to healthcare services. We recognise this is a priority for the region and we are committed to keeping health equity at the centre of our operations.

The transition to HSE Midwest presents the unique opportunity to ensure that the Midwest leads by example on issues relating to health equity.

Strategic Priority 4 Outcomes

we expect to achieve over the next five years

Here are the outcomes we will work towards:

Governance

A clear governance structure for the provision of integrated care, with strong leadership at its core.

Integrated care through partnership

Successfully set up integrated care, using the structures of the HSE Midwest Health Region, through collaboration and partnership across providers of health services and social care partners in the Midwest.

Smooth transitions of care

Align patient pathways so there are smooth transitions of care:

- across organisational boundaries
- between health and social care professionals

Promote staff connection

Future-focused staffing models that promote connection between different health care settings.

Enhance digital infrastructure

An enhanced digital infrastructure of the HIMSS (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society Level 3 Certified). This will support integrated ways of working and shared access to information.

Equal care for everyone

Equal and fair access, experience, and outcomes for all individuals in the catchment area of HSE Midwest.

Care in the most appropriate setting

An enhanced care delivery model, co-designed with community care, in end-to-end care pathways that prioritises the delivery of care in the most appropriate setting.

Community partners

Strong and proactive collaboration with community partners and the regional pod to support the evolution of the HSE Midwest Health Region.



St. John's Hospital Limerick

Sustainable system

Continuously try to move and deploy a sustainable system in collaboration with partners across the Midwest.

Care integration

Integration of pathways of care and delivery of services in the most appropriate settings, leading to improved patient outcomes.

Regional needs

Redesigning services to address the regional needs of the population in the Midwest, resulting in increased access to healthcare services.

Strategic Priority 4 Initiatives to deliver expected outcomes

Hospital Street Model

4.1 Continue to design and develop the Hospital Street using the Johns Hopkins Hospital model as a guide. A Hospital Street model has healthcare facilities that are better connected and strategically located to provide improved access for patients and reduce reliance on acute services.

Shared digital information

4.2 Oversee a phased approach to shared information access across services. Do this using a single platform, electronic health record (EHR) and supporting data lake across the Midwest. A data lake is a centralised repository for storage of all structured and unstructured data at any scale. The ultimate aim is to reach HIMMS Level 3.

Collaboration with partners

4.3 Leverage the work undertaken by the regional pod to set up clear leadership, organisational structures and governance arrangements. Collaborate more with health and social care and community partners as we progress towards setting up HSE Midwest as a Health Region.

Blueprint operating model

4.4 Review organisational structures and governance arrangements to develop a blueprint of the future operating model of the organisation as it transitions to HSE Midwest.

Follow the patient

4.5 Collaborate with key health and social care partners to streamline resources and processes to make sure that services seamlessly follow the patient across acute and community settings.

Enhanced care

4.6 Support the delivery of the funded enhanced care delivery model, co-designed with community care. This will incorporate end-to-end care pathways to make sure that care is provided in the most appropriate setting.

Future workforce

4.7 Focus on developing the future workforce and associated funding requirements through collaboration with staff when designing shared staffing models across the acute hospital and community.

Improve fair access

4.8 Focus on improving equitable access to the healthcare system for individuals across the Midwest, for instance through extension of services outside of standard working hours.

Population health

4.9 In line with Sláintecare, focus on population health. This will enable services and staff to work flexibly together across the system to promote health and wellbeing management throughout the patient journey.

Health equity

4.10 Collaborate with services across the health and social care landscape to:

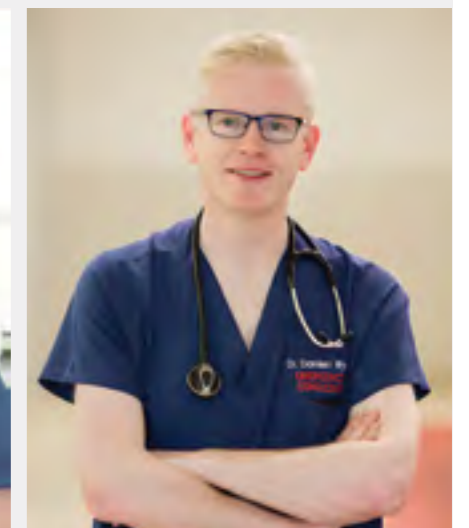
- further health equity
- increase access to care in the Midwest

Patient flow

4.11 Support the expanded use of a bi-directional patient flow based on patients' needs and rights to access alternative care pathways.



Annmarié Gilmartin, Jean Sheehan, Maria Clifford, Clinical Nurse Managers, University Hospital Limerick



Dr Damien Ryan, Consultant in Emergency Medicine, University Hospital Limerick

Strategic Priority 4 Enablers

that help us put our strategy in place

The supporting enablers for this Strategic Priority are as follows:

HSE Midwest

The national blueprint for the establishment and functioning of Health Regions, and in particular the HSE Midwest Health Region, will be key to this strategic priority. This, coupled with an increased autonomy for the Midwest to tailor certain areas of the Health Region, will make sure that the newly created Integrated Care System (ICS) will best serve the population in the region.

Single digital platform initiatives

The use of single digital platform initiatives will improve our digital ability when measured against our advanced colleagues across the world.

This is essential to successfully integrate services and care pathways across acute and community settings. The ambitious enhancement of digital infrastructure and technologies across UL Hospitals Group will:

- allow for an increased collaboration between hospitals in the region
- further streamline processes surrounding the provision of care.

Communications

The further development of an internal and external communications strategy will enable efficient and coordinated collaboration across stakeholders. This will support the involvement of patients and the public, making sure that they become co-creators of future health and social care services.

Financial resilience

Financial resilience will be enabled due to the integration of services across the system. As a result of the streamlining of processes and resources, UL Hospitals Group expects to increase cost avoidance and improve its budget management. In addition, this will allow for the re-distribution of budget towards additional priority areas and support the delivery of additional outcomes.

Operational excellence

Operational excellence will be an integral part of delivering an ICS. It will:

- reduce inefficiencies
- focus on current synergies amongst processes
- avoid duplication across the system

This enabler underpins the delivery of the expected outcomes and supports the swift and coordinated launch of the supporting initiatives.

Opposite: University Hospital Limerick

Spotlight

Hospital Street Model

The Hospital Street Model will follow Johns Hopkins Hospital Street Model

UL Hospitals Group plans to secure the required capital investment to support the delivery of this model. This includes new capital developments, such as the new surgical hub and the new ambulance centre. The aim of the establishment and development of the Hospital Street Model is to leverage various healthcare settings to relieve pressure on acute settings. This further supports the ambition and national emphasis on promoting community care and hospital avoidance as set out by Sláintecare.



Connections and interdependencies in this Strategic Plan

The four strategic priorities depend on each other, and this will ultimately help us to deliver this plan over the next five years.

Figure 6 below outlines the interdependencies and connections across the four strategic priorities.

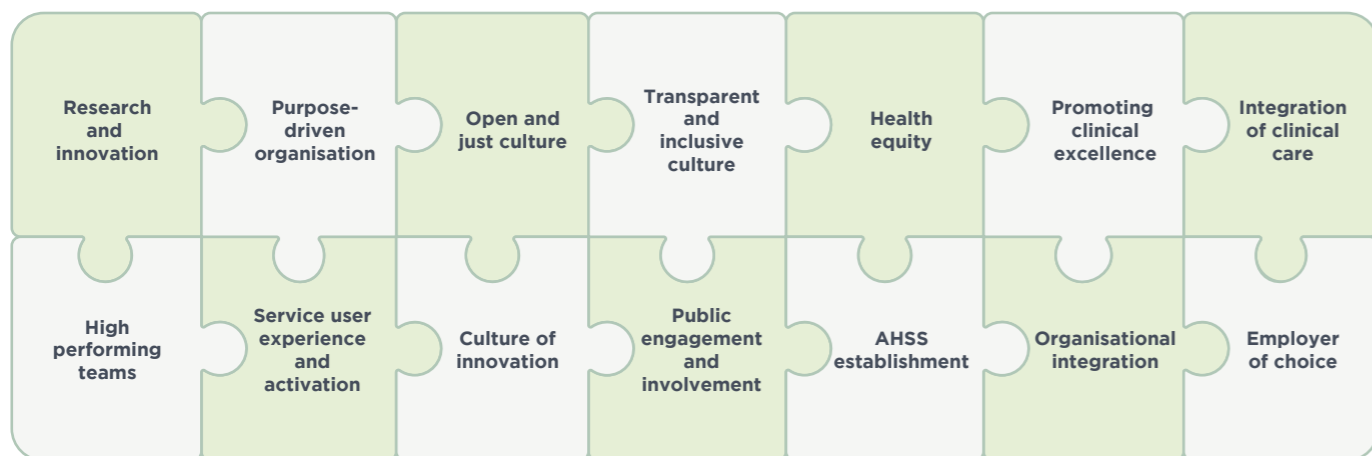


Figure 6: Interdependencies and connections diagram

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Opposite: Clinical Education and Research Centre (CERC), University Hospital Limerick



Enabling the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan

Overview

We will implement the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan and its strategic priorities with the support of five strategic enablers. These enablers are crucial to carrying out the initiatives and expected outcomes within the four strategic priorities.

The five enablers are:



1. Operational excellence



2. Financial resilience



3. Strategic Transformation Office



4. Digital Excellence



5. Effective Communications

Strategic enabler 1: Operational excellence

We recognise the importance that the ongoing pursuit of operational excellence plays across clinical, clinical support and non-clinical services. Leveraging the use of continuous improvement tools and techniques, operational excellence strives to deliver improvements in care, quality and safety.

The transformation of pathways of care is at the forefront of our ambition for the next five years. This includes the co-creation of new pathways of care with patients and key partners to improve access to care, as well as best practice to inform the design and implementation of the new pathways.

As an enabler, operational excellence will support the following initiatives:

Create pathways of care that drive success

- to define and agree standards for the creation of pathways of care in collaboration with key partners and patients and monitor compliance across the Group
- to assess how well pathways of care are performing and develop a plan that reduces undue costs and inefficiencies
- to develop a guide outlining the principles and required steps for collating, processing, and using insights from patients on pathways of care

Review services and staff training

- review services to gain insights on barriers to equitable access to healthcare for all individuals across the Midwest and prioritise pathways for targeted improvement
- assess available courses and staff capabilities to inform the development of an education and training model for the Group
- develop quality improvement plans based on staff exit interviews which will inform the development of a staff retention plan

Improve how we manage data

- develop a standardised approach to collecting and analysing data on population health and share insights to inform the creation of new pathways of care
- establish robust data quality and governance structures
- develop a survey process to engage with patients and inform the co-creation of end-to-end pathways of care
- review infrastructure and identify ways to better use current available space
- do a gap assessment of resourcing and capabilities to inform current and future requirements as part of the development of a strategic workforce plan

Opposite: Da Vinci Xi Dual Console Robot, University Hospital Limerick

Strategic enabler 2: Financial resilience

We recognise that we need to be financially resilient to achieve what is set out in this strategic plan. This is particularly the case as the cost of services within the wider healthcare system has increased substantially in the past few years. The volatility of the financial environment and the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic also put further strains on our finances and the financial requirements of the initiatives in this strategic plan.

Moreover, the healthcare environment is also changing rapidly. This is partly due to the use of new digital solutions and the modernisation of the sector's supply-chain. These factors influence our financial performance, and can add to uncertainty around financial risks. Therefore, we need to focus on achieving value for money, and we will do this through a process of continuous improvement and proactive management of financial risk.

As an enabler, financial resilience will support the following initiatives:

Evaluate our finances

- evaluate our income realisation, as part of this initiative, we need to consider legislative changes for statutory charges for hospital services as well as the impact of the new Public Only Consultant Contract 2023.

Improve our financial processes, including agreed practices and reporting

We will:

- develop data analytical and business intelligence tools to support and enhance financial management reporting across the Group
- adhere to the HSE Finance Reform Programme ensuring the development of staff, processes, and infrastructure
- continue to invest in Activity Based Funding (ABF) to develop the capability of the Group in terms of overall asset and resource use
- apply a consistent and suitably comprehensive Value for Money lens to all strategic and key operational investments throughout this strategic plan
- continue to support compliance with procurement (buying of goods and services) and other initiatives across the Group by adopting industry best practices
- collaborate with colleagues from the wider HSE financial community to support the development of the HSE Midwest Health Region and ensure seamless financial integration

Use new and effective resource models

We will review and use innovative and alternative resource models to support hospital services.

Improve staff financial literacy

We will develop and roll out a training programme to ensure greater financial awareness and strengthen financial capabilities across all staff

Strategic enabler 3: Strategic Transformation Office

As part of implementing the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, we will establish a Strategic Transformation Office (STO) to provide a coordinated and centralised approach. The STO will:

- oversee and implement the strategic plan
- engage with key stakeholders and partners to ensure their understanding and collaboration
- provide governance, timeline and budget support for the initiatives stemming from the strategic plan
- provide strategic direction, identify and drive value generating activities

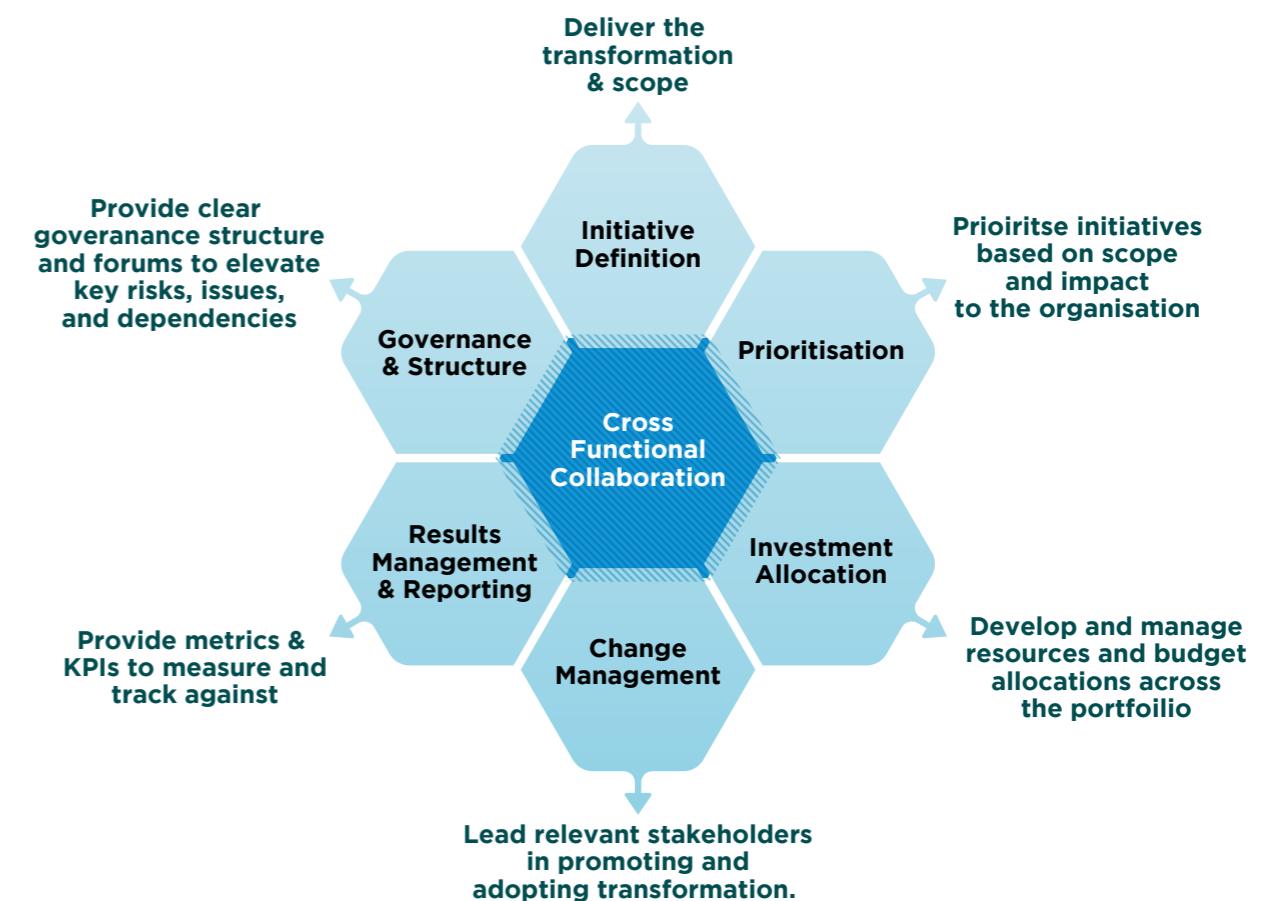


Figure 7: Capabilities of the Strategic Transformation Office

One STO will be set up centrally to coordinate the efforts and initiatives across the hospitals in the Group. This will be complemented by the establishment of local strategic transformation offices on each hospital site, which will support the delivery of the strategy. These sites will be established over the course of the strategy.

These offices will:

- provide support and guidance in relation to the implementation of the strategy
- provide clear governance structures for all initiatives and projects arising from the strategy
- monitor and track progress against the agreed objectives and outcomes
- enable a lean management of budget allocations
- act as change networks, ensure organisational buy-in, liaise with key stakeholders promote and accelerate change

The STO will have three distinct units:

1. Portfolio Management

This unit will develop and oversee the initiatives to carry out the ambition outlined in the 2023–2027 strategic plan. It will also track and report on financial and performance outcomes.

2. Reporting and Governance Management

This unit will conduct regular meetings with stakeholders, facilitate governance forums and brainstorming sessions to ensure the work being done is in line with the overall aims of this strategy.

3. Communications and Change Management

This unit will distribute communications about the strategy and ensure positive engagement with the process.

Benefits of the STO



Coordinate across workstreams and external partners



Work in partnership with the communications team to develop internal and external messages



Support change management across the organisation



Onboard and train relevant stakeholders



Manage transformation budget



Establish and track metrics and project timeline

Strategic enabler 4: Digital Excellence

eHealth and the development of digital solutions play a crucial role in the shift towards an In-Home Supportive Service (IHSS). This system is one where services ensure the delivery of care in the most appropriate setting, while addressing the needs of patients. Digital Excellence is a key enabler in the establishment of the proposed IHSS and the move towards the integration of services and pathways of care.

It will provide the tools to engage with:

- the general public and patients in the delivery of person-centred care
- our staff throughout the strategic plan

As an enabler, Digital Excellence will support the following initiatives:

Develop an eHealth strategy

We will:

- develop an eHealth strategy to enhance the digital maturity of the organisation towards the international benchmark: HIMSS Level 3 for digital transformation, digital infrastructure, digital data management and an electronic health record. Simply put, this means we will make the very best use of digital technology and its networks.
- audit software we use to:
 - identify potential integration
 - remove outdated software
 - streamline the use of various applications
- audit the digital infrastructure across the Group to identify priority areas for improvement and investment

Develop a new digital unit

We will:

- develop a digital transformation unit to help the organisation take advantage of new and existing technologies across the Group
- procure and use digital patient engagement technologies (including satisfaction surveys and a patient portal) where information can easily be accessed
- re-establish a digital skills training team and service for the Group
- develop and use new data analytics and business intelligence tools to provide shared access to information across the Group
- build data and information capabilities across the Group to support achievement of the initiatives proposed
- develop a digital innovation unit to support engagements with UL, local industry organisations and local industry partners

Strategic enabler 5: Effective communications

We recognise that effective communications will build on the principles outlined in our Communications Strategy 2022-2024. To improve the overall patient experience, communications must be:

- accurate
- fair
- consistent
- balanced
- accessible
- inclusive

Communication that does not meet the needs of our audiences can affect the reputation of the Group, and lead to a breakdown of trust and a reduction in confidence.

Effective communications will be essential to:

- increase confidence and trust in our health system
- reduce internal communication blocks
- inform staff of upcoming changes and training opportunities
- promote a positive, inclusive culture within the Group
- empower patients to take greater control and responsibility for their own health

The expansion of both the Academic Health Science System (AHSS) and Integrated Care System (ICS) will require clear, timely communications at every stage. We will need to inform internal and external stakeholders about changes being made and encourage their engagement with the process.



Mr Colin Peirce, Colorectal Surgeon, University Hospital Limerick, with the Da Vinci Xi Dual Console Robot

As an enabler, Effective Communications will support the following initiatives:

Communications plans

We will develop communication plans as follows:

- a communications plan to support the launch of the strategy and provide ongoing updates on progress with staff and key stakeholders throughout the lifetime of the strategy
- a communications plan that fosters a proactive approach to engaging with the general public and patients

Communications strategies

We will develop strategies as follows:

- A digital communications strategy and digital communications platforms appropriate to the targeted audiences
- A system-wide strategy for engaging effectively with patients and communities informed by an agreed patient engagement approach
- A support strategy to establish patient engagement forums to inform decision-making about the provision of health and social care services in the Midwest
- A communications strategy and approach to engage staff and create awareness and foster understanding of the AHSS and the opportunities for them to get involved
- An engagement strategy to collaborate with key partners in the Midwest and enhance coordination across services

Develop important information campaigns

We will develop two core information campaigns as follows:

- information campaigns targeting disease prevention
- an information campaign to promote wellbeing
 - support the development of a survey focusing on health and wellbeing and staff lifestyle behaviours to inform the development of new initiatives for staff

Improve our own communications

We will:

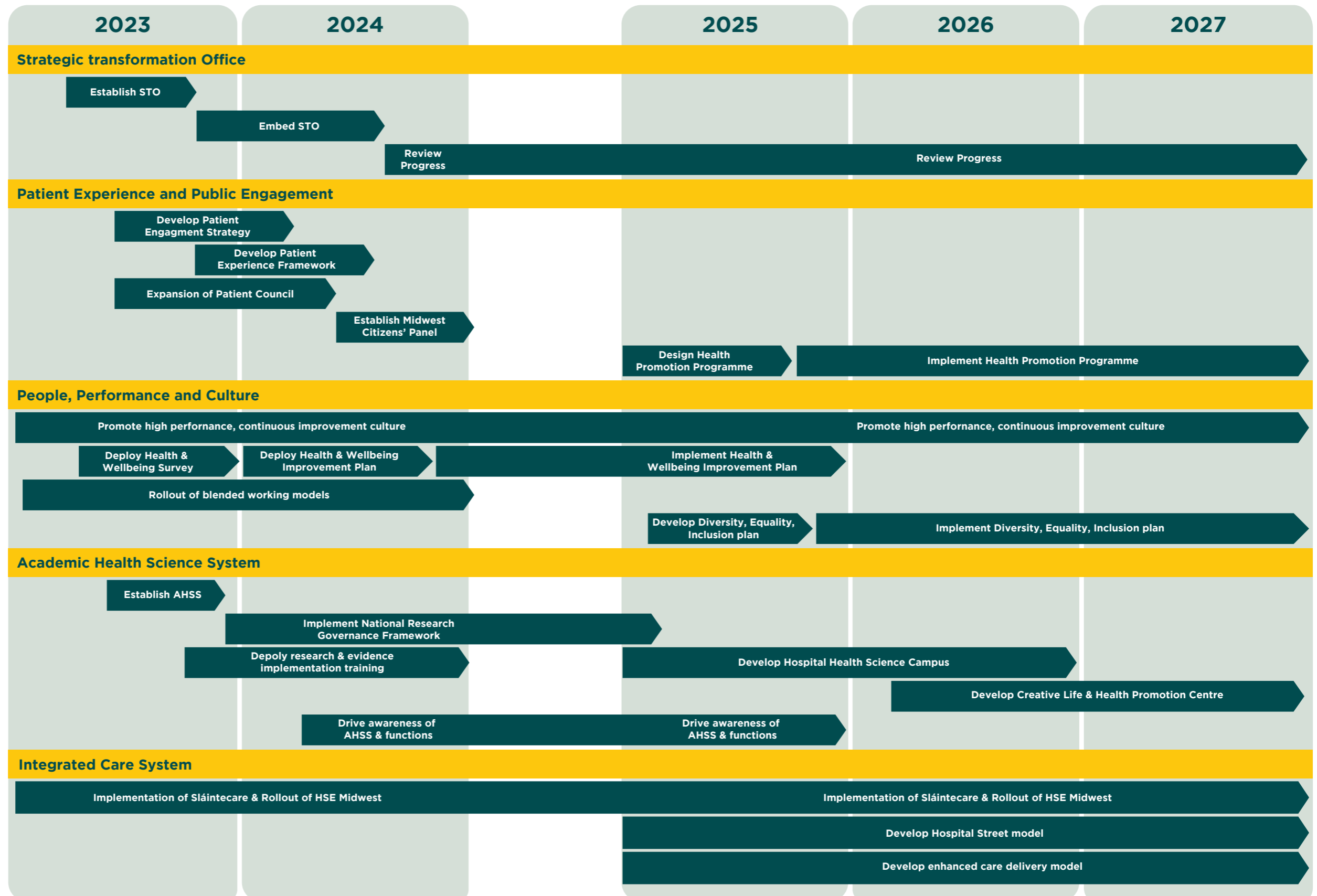
- ensure all our outgoing communications and engagement is in plain English, in line with HSE Communicating Clearly Guidelines and the National Adult Literacy Agency's plain English guidelines
- develop and use (with the support of Digital Team) a digital communications platform which supports the new HSE Midwest Health Region.

Implementation considerations

High-level overview of implementation

Figure 8 opposite provides a high-level plan of the sequencing and timing of the initiatives comprising the UL Hospitals Group 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. This high-level plan is complemented by a detailed strategy implementation plan for the five-year strategic cycle.

Figure 8: UL Hospitals Group Strategic Framework - Implementation Roadmap



Appendix 1: Strategic context of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan

Overview of UL Hospitals Group today

UL Hospitals Group comprises six different hospital sites in the Midwest of Ireland (Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary). Serving a population of about 410,000, the Group provides a range of emergency, surgical and medical services.

- University Hospital Limerick (UHL)
- University Maternity Hospital Limerick (UMHL)
- Nenagh Hospital
- Ennis Hospital
- Croom Orthopaedic Hospital
- St. John's Hospital, Limerick (Voluntary)

How UL Hospitals Group operates

UHL is the designated Model 4 hospital for the Midwest. Emergency services, acute general medicine and critical care services are centralised for the entire region. Operating on a hub-and-spoke system, the centralised critical care facilities at UHL are supported by:

Model 2 hospitals

Nenagh Hospital, Ennis Hospital, and St John's Hospital (voluntary) are the Model 2 hospitals in the region. These hospitals each have Injury Units (IUs) and Medical Assessment Units (MAUs). They provide non-complex day surgery and endoscopy services to the local population.

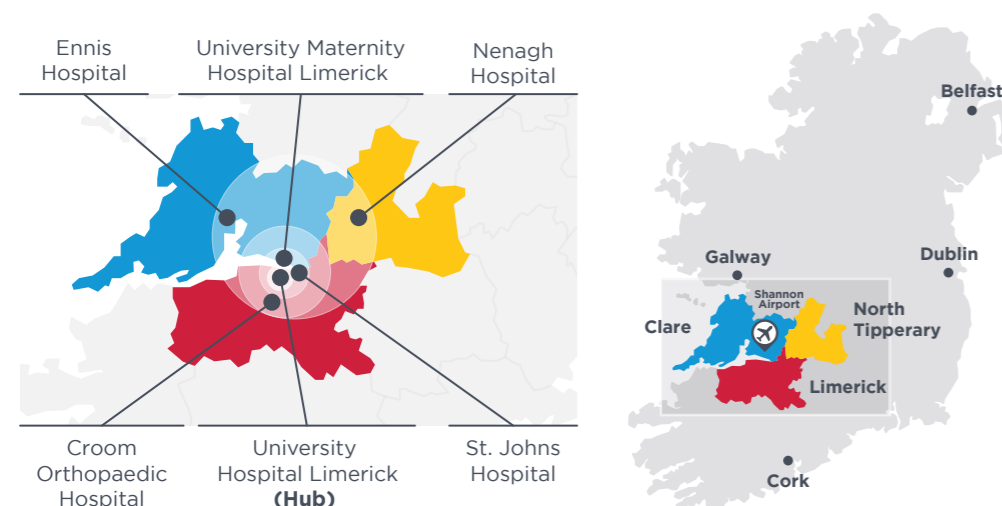


Figure 1: Map of UL Hospitals Group catchment area and hospitals, with UHL as 'hub'



University Maternity Hospital Limerick

Specialist hospitals

The Group has two specialist hospitals, University Maternity Hospital Limerick (UMHL) and Croom Orthopaedic Hospital. University Maternity Hospital Limerick provides obstetrics services to women in the region, whilst Croom Orthopaedic Hospital is a specialist hospital for adults and children for elective orthopaedic activity.

We operate on this basis to allow for a more streamlined and specialised regional service, and to ensure people can still be treated as close to home as possible. Together, these hospitals deliver a range of crucial services and provide a robust, comprehensive healthcare network for our patients across the Midwest.

The six hospitals functioning as a single system, employ approximately 6,000 staff. The Group has a total of 839 inpatient beds, reports to the Acute Hospitals Division within the HSE and is governed by an Executive Management Team, led by its CEO. The Group is supported by six Clinical Directorates (Cancer Services, Diagnostics, Maternal and Child Health, Medicine, Perioperative and Urgent and Emergency Care) responsible for services across the six hospitals. Each directorate is led by staff with both clinical management and financial expertise to provide a positive patient experience and outcomes. The Operational Services Directorate supports the clinical work throughout the Group, while the Finance, eHealth, HR, Communications and Strategy departments support the work of all Directorates.

Injury Units

Operating seven days a week, the three Injury Units (IUs) in our Model 2 hospitals treat minor injuries such as broken bones, minor burns, wounds, and dislocations.

Medical Assessment Units

The three Medical Assessment Units (MAUs) in our Model 2 hospitals and Acute Medical Assessment Unit (AMAU) in UHL, assist patients who are referred by either the Injury Unit or their GPs. Since their establishment, the AMAU and MAUs have consistently exceeded the annual targets set by the HSE. Of note, the HSE Midwest region has been the only region to be consistently compliant with the HSE's performance metrics for acute medical patients discharged or admitted through an MAU from 2017–2021¹.

¹ Hospital Performance: An Analysis of HSE Key Performance Indicators

Our catchment area

We pride ourselves on our tailored, research-driven, and evidence-based care as the cornerstone of how we deliver our services. We have carried out a detailed analysis of the population and patients' profile to inform this strategic plan. The catchment area is broadly similar to the national picture, as it continues to experience the effects of an ageing population, coupled with increasing dependency population ratios within its healthcare system. However, there are several trends that are unique to the Midwest that have also been identified.

In 2022, the UL Hospitals Group served about 410,000 people across the Midwest. The region has seen a gradual increase in population in the last few years, growing 6% from 2016-2022 (compared to a 7.6% increase in the national population for the same period). This growth was a result of both migration to the region and a natural increase.

As of 2022, one-third of the population is under the age of 24. This is broadly in line with the national average, while 5% is over the age of 75 (slightly below the national average of 6.5%). The birth rate in the Midwest is in line with the national average, with the region having a rate of 11.2 per 1000 people, compared to 11.4 for the State.

Between 2016 and 2022, all three counties covered by the Group showed a death rate per 100,000 people higher than the national average (6.5), with Tipperary having the highest rate (7.9), followed by Limerick (7.2) and Clare (7.0).

Housing and employment

In line with the rest of the country, housing demand remains a key challenge to address in the Midwest. In 2021, Limerick ranked sixth nationally for the number of households with children identified as being in need of social housing. Tipperary and Clare were in line with the national average, ranking eleventh and thirteenth respectively².

To meet the demands of a growing region, the number of additional anticipated households needed by 2028 is about:

- 15,000 in Limerick
- 6,000 in Tipperary
- 4,500 in Clare

353 hectares of land across 154 sites in Limerick City and suburbs have been identified to meet the growth target, as outlined in the Limerick City and County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Unemployment – slightly lower than the national average

Unemployment in the region decreased between 2016 and 2020, but there was an 18% increase between 2020 and 2021. The region had an ILO (International Labour Office) Labour force participation rate of 61.9% as of the end of 2022, below the State average at 64.8%. The services sector is the largest employment sector in the Midwest, employing about 38% of the population, while industry and construction employ around 20%. Five per cent of the region's population work in the agriculture, forestry, or fishing industry³.

² More information about the development of housing in the region can be found here; Limerick Development Plan 2022 - 2028 | Limerick City and County Council, Clare County Development Plan 2017 - 2023 | Clare County Council and Tipperary County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 | Tipperary County Council

³ Source: CSO Labour Force Survey

Unique health profile

The Midwest has a unique health profile and health challenges that have been taken into account when developing the 2023-2027 strategic plan, in particular when adapting national policies and directives to address regional needs. UL Hospitals Group is the only Hospital Group that has only one Emergency Department serving a large catchment area, placing significant pressure on the only Model 4 hospital in the region.

Underserved by private healthcare, residents must regularly travel outside the region for treatment. Distance and transport were cited as the main reason for unmet healthcare needs, above the national average.

The Midwest has the second-highest prevalence of long-standing conditions in the country, and 22% of the region's population identified as having some form of disability. Despite the health challenges faced by the region, 80% of people in the Midwest perceive their health as good or very good, broadly in line with national figures.

Self-perceived health status

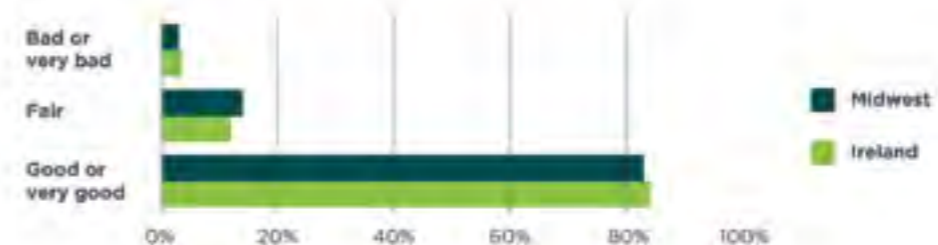


Figure 2: Self-perceived health status

Disabilities and limitations in everyday activities

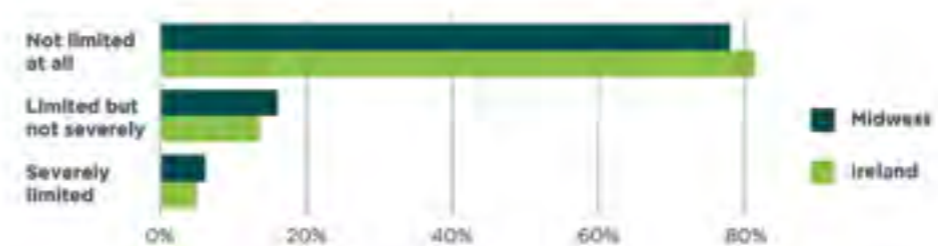


Figure 3: Disabilities and limitations in everyday activities

Prevalence of long-standing conditions

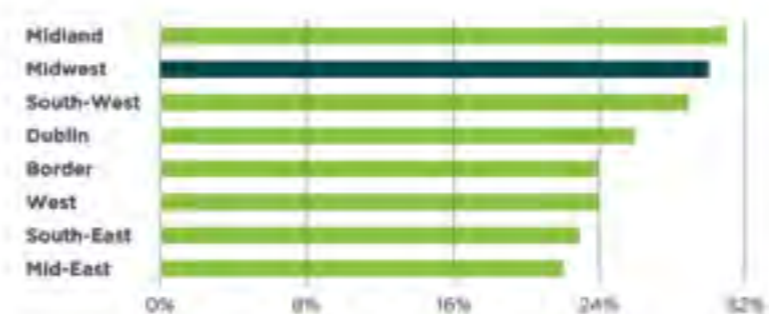


Figure 4: Prevalence of long-standing conditions by region⁴

⁴ Health in Ireland: Key Trends 2021

Appendix 2:

Key national and regional documents that inform UL Hospitals Group 2023–2027 Strategic Plan

An analysis of regional and national policies has been undertaken to inform the development of the 2023–2027 Strategic Plan. As part of the development of our strategic plan, we have taken account of:

- national directives such as the Enhanced Community Care programme and Digital Framework
- the changes to the health system arising from the rollout of Sláintecare

We have analysed regional initiatives and policies to address our unique needs and challenges.

We discuss these policies and directives in further detail below.

National policies and directives

Sláintecare

A national emphasis has been placed on promoting community care and hospital avoidance. Sláintecare⁵ is at the forefront of this reform. Sláintecare will establish a universal, single-tier and high-quality health system. As part of this reform, there will be a shift from a hospital-based model of care towards community-based provision of services.

Six Health Regions will be established as part of Sláintecare, with UL Hospitals Group's catchment area directly translating to the newly established HSE Midwest Health Region. Our strategic plan aims to continue this emphasis on providing care in the community and hospital avoidance in line with Sláintecare.

The Enhanced Community Care Programme⁶

This programme is currently being rolled out by the HSE. It identifies integrated care and enhanced community care as the preferred future model of healthcare, with a particular focus on ensuring appropriate care pathways. This also involves ensuring the population has timely access to all health and social care based on their medical needs. Our strategic plan seeks to build upon the Enhanced Community Care Programme currently being rolled out, to reduce pressure on hospital services and deliver services in a setting most appropriate to the requirements of the patients.

National Digital Framework

In line with the National Digital Framework 'Harnessing Digital'⁷, an increased focus on eHealth initiatives and digital solutions are a major driver for the Strategic Plan. The aim is to provide staff with easy access to patient information and clinical history.

⁵ gov.ie - Sláintecare (www.gov.ie)

⁶ Enhanced Community Care - HSE.ie

⁷ gov.ie - Harnessing Digital - The Digital Ireland Framework (www.gov.ie)

eHealth initiatives enable health service efficiencies, optimise resource utilisation and economic opportunities by using technology enabled solutions. This emphasis on eHealth initiatives will place the patient at the centre of the healthcare delivery system with the use of these solutions. The Strategic Plan aims to empower patients in looking after their own health and wellbeing.

Where possible, tele-healthcare (phone or online health advice) can also prevent unnecessary visits of non-urgent cases to the emergency department. A significant priority in the National Digital Framework is the phased development of an **Electronic Health Record (EHR) system**⁸, which aims to:

- eliminate paper records,
- streamline access to patient data, and
- promote integrated care

Several of the outcomes and initiatives included in this strategy promote EHR systems that will be rolled out in the coming years.

The Health Services People Strategy⁹

This strategy outlines the proposed development for people services across the healthcare system. It has been developed to increase the system's ability to deliver Sláintecare and has three key pillars:

- leadership
- talent
- capability

Our strategic plan will build on the objectives of the People Strategy to encourage greater staff recruitment and engagement.

Patient Safety Strategy 2019-2024

Patient safety, the avoidance and prevention of adverse [negative] outcomes or injuries resulting from the process of healthcare¹⁰ are critical aspects of the strategic plan.

The principles and commitments of the Patient Safety Strategy 2019–2024¹¹ have been incorporated into this strategic plan to ensure patient safety is prioritised and promoted across the Group and is a shared responsibility amongst staff. By incorporating the strategy, we have made a number of commitments relating to patient safety:

- a reduction in the common causes of harm,
- anticipating and responding to patient safety risks, and
- engaging with patients and staff to improve safety

The strategic plan aims to maximise positive patient experiences by fostering a culture of partnership and collaboration.

⁸ Electronic Health Record (EHR) - eHealth Ireland

⁹ Health Services People Strategy 2019 - 2024 - Leaders in People Services

¹⁰ Vincent, C. (2006) *Patient safety*. Edinburgh: Elsevier Churchill Livingstone

¹¹ HSE - Patient Safety Strategy 2019 - 2024



Professor Subhasis Giri, Consultant Urological and Robotic Surgeon, University Hospital Limerick



Dr Ihsan Ullah, Consultant Cardiologist, University Hospital Limerick

The National Service Plan¹²

This plan outlines the health and social care services that will be provided nationwide during the year within the budget allocated to the HSE. The report also outlines the key priorities and challenges faced in the upcoming year. The priorities for 2023 include:

- the rollout of additional general acute beds
- continued development of Community Healthcare Networks
- additional spending for both mental health and disability services

€21.124bn has been allocated to health and social care services for 2023, an increase of 5.7% over the previous year.

Scheduled Care Transformation Programme

Work on the **Scheduled Care Transformation Programme**, a national initiative to reduce waiting times and a strategic objective of the 2022 plan, is still ongoing. Enabling reforms that are being developed and rolled out include:

- patient-centred booking arrangements
- a strategy for managing 'did not attends'
- new elective only hospitals are being developed and rolled out

HSE Midwest Health Region Integrated Urgent & Emergency Care Delivery Plan

A three-year Unscheduled Care development plan will be published later in 2023 to address similar reforms and reduce waiting times. The strategic plan will ensure consistency across regional and national health strategies.

The National Development Plan 2018–2027¹³

This plan outlines the government's proposed capital investment until 2027. Access to quality childcare, education and health services are included in the 10 National Strategic Outcomes for the period. The plan outlines several capital developments for the region, including:

- the relocation of University Maternity Hospital Limerick
- a new ward block at University Hospital Limerick
- a new Limerick ambulance base

¹² HSE - National Service Plan 2023

¹³ National Development Plan 2018 - 2027

Regional policies and directives

The UL Hospitals Group Patient Flow Report¹⁴

This plan was published in September 2022. It reviewed the Group's unscheduled care pathways and highlighted some of the challenges facing us in managing unscheduled care demand. The report highlights an increase in Emergency Department demand that exceeds demographic growth, often resulting in increased triage time for patients. The report also highlights the ability of technology to improve efficiency and quality of care. The recommendations regarding the expansion of integrated community and hospital services included in the Patient Flow Report have informed the development of Strategic Priority 4 - Integrated Care System of this strategic plan (see page 38).

The Mid-West Palliative Care Strategy 2021–2025

This strategy outlines the roadmap for delivering high-quality palliative care across the region in the coming years. The strategy's key focus areas include:

- equity of access to services
- collaboration between key partners
- ensuring palliative care is understood by the public and staff alike

St John's Hospital Corporate Strategy

In 2022, **St John's Hospital** launched its own **corporate strategy** for the period 2022–2027¹⁵. The strategy's 'patient first' ethos closely aligns with the principles underpinning this strategy and the work of the UL Hospitals Group. St John's identified the following strategic themes:

- excellence in patient experience
- staff wellbeing
- advancing strategic partnerships

These strategic themes are present throughout this strategy, to ensure alignment in approach across the Hospitals Group.

University of Limerick's Research Strategy 2022–2027

As an academic partner, the **University of Limerick's Research Strategy 2022–2027**¹⁶, 'Wisdom for Action', is of great significance to the Hospital Group. The strategy's focus on driving research excellence and creating meaningful partnerships highlights the institution's commitment to working closely with the Hospital Group in the years to come. Buy-in from UL and the Hospital Group will be crucial in the development of an Academic Health Science System, as discussed under Strategic Priority 3 of this plan (see page 30).

The Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan¹⁷

This plan outlines several projects and initiatives for the development of the region across five strategic objectives. The plan's first strategic objective to 'enable innovation to make the Midwest a leading digital region' includes the intention to develop a Healthcare Innovation Centre based in Innovate Limerick's Engine Collaboration Centre, whose purpose is to enable healthcare staff to come together to identify and address challenges facing the sector.

¹⁴ UL Hospitals Group Patient Flow Report

¹⁵ St John's Hospital Strategy 2022 - 2027

¹⁶ UL Research Strategy 2022 - 2027

¹⁷ gov.ie - Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024 (www.gov.ie)



Appendix 3: Our academic partner

UL is the academic partner of UL Hospitals Group. Our partnership with UL was consolidated further in 2019 due to the establishment of the Health Sciences Academy (HSA). The ambition and intention of the HSA is structured around three main pillars:

- research and innovation
- clinical practice integration
- equality and inclusion

The **research and innovation** pillar aims to support research through networking and foundation-building. As part of this pillar, there is a commitment to building a culture of innovation and best practice in the Midwest, which will benefit staff and ultimately provide a better level of care for patients. Key initiatives to date include:

- a winter education series for staff. This series is an initiative of the HSA, run as part of the Workstream 1 “Research and Innovation” and specifically targeting the objective of “Building a culture of innovation in the Mid-West”.
- student immersion in healthcare through the MSc in Design for Health and Wellbeing
- the implementation of the National Research Governance Framework

The **clinical practice integration pillar** focuses on clinical initiatives such as a structured education programme for the management of Type 2 Diabetes in collaboration with the Leicester Diabetes Centre. A key priority for the HSA is to learn from international partners at the forefront of best practice and to gain international recognition for research outputs of the region. Several initiatives have already been undertaken as part of the **equality and inclusion** pillar, including:

- staff interprofessional education
- community research projects
- a white paper reviewing equality and inclusion practices in the healthcare sector

We are committed to the establishment of an Academic Health Science System (AHSS). This will be a coordinated partnership that aims to deliver high-quality healthcare through a shared focus on education, research, and innovation. We aim to reinforce the existing ongoing relationship and the foundations laid by the HSA, UL and UL Hospitals Group. The AHSS will result in better patient outcomes by closely integrating innovative practices and research with training. It will also lead to increased staff retention by providing clear pathways for career development.

Priority 3 of this Strategic Plan (see page 30) captures this ambition and serves as the foundation for the wider healthcare system to engage with its initiatives. We are committed to developing and enhancing the UL Healthcare Network. This is a newly established collaborative network with key partners from the region. We are also committed to promoting clinical excellence within the Midwest community, especially as the region transitions to the HSE Midwest Health Region.

Opposite: **Professor Ruth Clifford**, Consultant Haematologist at University Hospital Limerick, and **Professor Aedin Culhane**, Professor of Cancer Genomics at UL School of Medicine and the Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre at the launch of the Limerick Digital Cancer Research Centre

Appendix 4: Glossary of terms

ABF	Activity Based Funding, funding based on type and volume of services provided
AHSS	Academic Health Science System
CRU	Clinical Research Unit
Data Lake	Centralised repository for storage of all structured and unstructured data at any scale
EHR	Electronic Health Record
GP	General Practitioner
HIMSS	Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society
HSA	Health Sciences Academy
HSE	Health Service Executive
ICS	Integrated Care System
MAU/AMAU	Medical Assessment Unit/Acute Medical Assessment Unit
Health Region	Six new Health Regions will be established as part of Sláintecare
HSE Midwest	The Health Region that will be in the Midwest of the country and will include the UL Hospitals Group's catchment area and the six hospitals covered in this plan as well as that of HSE Mid West Community Healthcare
RIU	Rapid Innovation Unit
Sláintecare	The 10-year Government programme to transform our health and social care services
STO	Strategic Transformation Office
UL	University of Limerick
UL Healthcare Network	The UL Healthcare Network comprises key partners in the region and aims to promote clinical excellence

Photo Credits:

Alan Place Photography
Brian Arthur Photography
UL Hospitals Group Communications Team



“I am confident UL Hospitals Group will continue to deliver improvements to the health services of the Midwest by implementing this strategic plan”

Professor Colette Cowan
Chief Executive Officer
UL Hospitals Group
2023