



# HRB Strategy 2016-2020: Share your views

## 1. WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

The Health Research Board (HRB) is the lead Irish agency responsible for funding health research, managing health information systems and providing evidence for policy and practice. Our aim is to support research that will improve people's health, patient care and health service delivery. We achieve this through three core areas:

- **Research Funding:** We fund key infrastructure, excellent researchers from clinical and academic disciplines and inspiring projects across health and social sciences.
- **Information:** We manage five health information systems which provide key data for the assessment and management of services in the areas of disability, mental health and drugs and alcohol.
- **Evidence Generation:** We make relevant information available, on specific subjects, in an accessible way, to support evidence-based policy.

Full details of our work, and the responsibilities that we have, can be [viewed on our website](#).

## 2. CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN

Our existing strategic plan 2010 – 2015 has four goals:

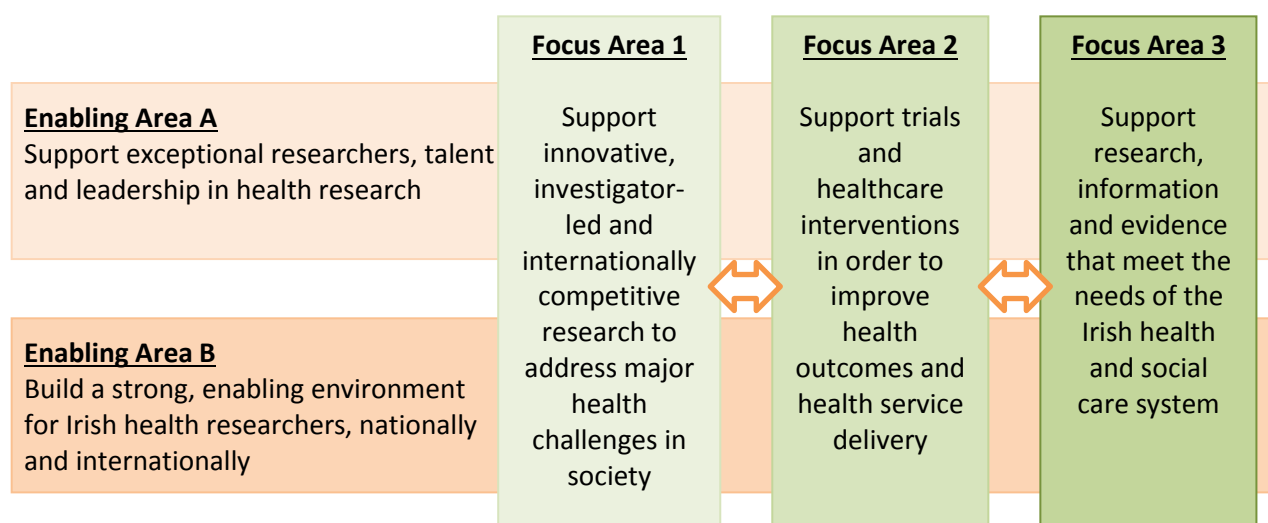
1. Driving the development of excellent clinical research, including applied biomedical research, within a coherent health research system.
2. Building capacity to conduct high quality population health sciences research and health services research.
3. Working with key partners to develop and manage high quality national health information systems.
4. Generating and synthesising evidence, and promoting the application of knowledge to support decision making by policy makers and relevant practitioners.

In preparation for the next strategy, we completed a detailed analysis of our current strategy and the delivery of these goals. This included external contributions from an International Review Panel and key stakeholders. We are now using the outcomes of this analysis to inform our thinking as we develop a new Strategic Business Plan for 2016-2020.

## 3. HRB STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2020 – YOUR VIEWS ARE IMPORTANT

The HRB has started the process of developing a new strategic plan which will direct our activity for the period 2016 – 2020. An integral part of this process is engaging with people interested in the future of health research in Ireland. We want to ensure that we will continue to deliver high quality, research, data and evidence that is relevant to societal health challenges, the needs of the Irish health and social care system and of Irish citizens.

We have defined three key priority areas that we consider to be the most appropriate ones to lead the HRB and its community in the period 2016-2020 and beyond. Progress in these priority areas will be enabled by a series of actions across related themes.



**Figure 1: HRB Strategic activities 2016-2020**

## 4. HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

We are seeking constructive, useful feedback from HRB stakeholders to:

1. Test our provisional ideas 'in the field'
2. Identify any significant gaps, or potential errors, in those ideas

The following pages contain a brief outline of the proposed areas of focus, enabling themes and associated objectives for the next five years.

We would appreciate your feedback on these, your suggestions for actions to support them, as well as ideas around how we measure success.

We realise that you are busy, but would welcome your thoughts and views at this stage in the development of the HRB strategy. To provide feedback, just follow this [SurveyMonkey link](#).

Thank you.

# KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

## Focus Area 1

### **Support innovative, investigator-led and internationally competitive research to address major health challenges in society**

All the advances in health care that we enjoy today are based on research. Improvements in life expectancy - in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, and in healthcare delivery and outcomes - have their origins in research that was carried out over many decades. Researchers in Ireland have played their part in these discoveries, often working with international partners to create the knowledge needed to address major health challenges, and to find solutions.

Despite these advances, considerable challenges remain. Health care costs are rising; the incidence of chronic and infectious diseases is a burden in countries worldwide; an ageing population brings with it an increase in cancers and neurodegenerative disorders; the links between health and environment are poorly understood; migration patterns mean that health problems are increasingly globalised; rising inequalities threaten much of the progress we have made; mental health problems are a cause for concern at all ages.

Between now and 2020, the HRB will support Ireland's research community to carry out innovative, internationally competitive research to address major health challenges in our society. We will encourage new and established groups to collaborate more effectively and, for those problems that can only be addressed on a larger scale, we will work with national and international partners to add value to the HRB's investment. In doing so, we will focus on research that is driven by excellence and originality, with the aim of informing the future development of innovative or novel therapies, treatments, prevention strategies, services and interventions.

**Objective 1.1: Support high-quality, investigator-led, internationally competitive research**

**Objective 1.2: Develop and implement co-funding opportunities with international agencies and institutions**

## Focus Area 2

### **Support trials and healthcare interventions, in order to improve health outcomes and health service delivery**

The benefits of health research can only be fully realised when the knowledge generated is tested and applied in practice. Trials and intervention studies are essential for developing better treatments and improving health care. By testing the efficacy, cost and impact of new therapies, treatments or services, trials and intervention studies have a significant part to play in changing the way health care is practised and delivered.

The HRB's support for clinical trials has played an important role in improving the outcomes for cancer patients in Ireland by enabling patients to gain early access to new treatments, and by providing high-quality care. Between now and 2020, we will expand HRB support for clinical trials networks and interventions in other areas of health and health services. In addition, we will invest in

the structures and supports needed to coordinate multi-centre trials and interventions in Ireland, promote access to European-wide trials, and ensure that the trials and interventions studies we fund are of the highest quality.

**Objective 2.1: Support the design, conduct and evaluation of trials and intervention studies**

**Objective 2.2: Facilitate national and international collaborations that improve the volume, quality, relevance and impact of trials and intervention studies in Ireland**

### **Focus Area 3**

#### **Support research, information and evidence that meet the needs and challenges of the Irish health and social care system**

Improvements in national health systems only come about when knowledge and evidence are discovered, collected, adopted and implemented. With health care becoming more complex – and with associated costs increasing – the Irish health care system has a growing need for timely, relevant, high-quality research and evidence to inform public health policy, health delivery and decision-making.

As the lead agency for health research in Ireland – and also as the repository of five key national information systems – the HRB has an important role to play in generating the evidence needed to support the Irish health and social care system. Over the period 2016–2020, we will grow our evidence synthesis and knowledge translation activities, in order to help policy-makers, service planners and providers make the best decisions possible. The HRB will support research that addresses questions of national relevance for health services management and practice, and will work with the Department of Health and the HSE to develop new guidelines for clinical practice. In recognition of the fact that implementing research and changing practice are complex processes, a critical component of these initiatives will be strong collaboration and partnership between researchers, practitioners, decision-makers and knowledge users.

**Objective 3.1: Support research that addresses questions of national relevance for clinical and population health practice and for health services management, and its corresponding translation into policy and/or practice**

**Objective 3.2: Provide high-quality, timely and relevant data for policy, service planning and research through the HRB's national health information systems**

**Objective 3.3: Promote and support evidence synthesis and knowledge translation activities, in order to assist policy-makers, service planners and providers in making evidence-based decisions**

# ENABLING AREAS

## Enabling Area A

### **Support exceptional researchers, talent and leadership**

Key to the successful delivery of each one of the HRB's objectives is a highly skilled research workforce. Health research requires the talent, expertise and ingenuity of a wide range of people – clinicians, health professionals, scientists, social scientists, epidemiologists, health economists, statisticians, and many others. As well as generating ideas and undertaking research, a highly skilled workforce will ensure that research and evidence are integrated into policy and practice, thus improving decision-making and, ultimately, health outcomes.

The HRB supports training and career development through a number of mechanisms and at many different levels – ranging from PhD students and postdoctoral fellows to investigators and leaders. Between now and 2020, we will continue to invest in excellent PhD training programmes, so as to attract the best people into health research. We will provide opportunities for postdoctoral researchers and new investigators to continue their research. We will support leaders who can promote research in the health system, and we will encourage our research community to develop international links. In recognition of the fact that training and career development is a shared responsibility which requires input from many stakeholders, we will work with the higher education system in Ireland, as well as with the HSE and professional training bodies, to develop a coordinated approach to building capacity in health research in Ireland.

**Objective A.1 Attract the best people into health research by supporting excellent PhD training programmes**

**Objective A.2 Provide opportunities for career development for postdoctoral researchers and emerging investigators**

**Objective A.3 Work with HEIs, hospital groups and the HSE to identify, develop and support leaders in health research**

**Objective A.4 Work with national and international partners to identify training opportunities and skills gaps**

## Enabling Area B

### **Build a strong enabling environment for health research in Ireland**

Ireland needs a positive enabling environment if it is to effectively translate health research into societal and economic benefits. Such an environment should encompass good co-ordination between the health care system and industry; excellent facilities and infrastructure; appropriate systems for data management, regulation and policy support; a coordinated and credible approach to establishing research priorities; and a culture that recognises patients and the public as partners in the health research process.

Good research should not be hindered or constrained by national boundaries. Research is an international enterprise, and international collaboration delivers many benefits to both research

communities and individual countries. The HRB and its' partners have much to gain by working together on regulatory and legislative developments that impact on research. Moreover, an increased focus on synergies between European and national agencies makes it increasingly important that the HRB aligns its activities with those of its European partners.

Between now and 2020, the HRB will provide the strategic leadership required to shape the national health research agenda. We will continue to invest in the research infrastructure – in order to promote excellence and critical mass, and improve coordination across the system. At international level, we will continue to support and encourage our research community to participate in Horizon 2020 and other European research programmes, and to play our part in European initiatives that influence the environment for health research.

**Objective B.1 Provide strategic leadership to shape the national research agenda in relation to health and social care**

**Objective B.2 Contribute to, and benefit from, international developments in policy, regulation and legislation relevant to health research and healthcare in Ireland**

**Objective B.3 Invest in research infrastructure to promote excellence, critical mass and coordination, in order to support focus areas and the wider health community**

**Objective B.4 Support Irish health researchers to participate in Horizon 2020 and other European research programmes**

**[Give your views on the HRB strategy ideas on SurveyMonkey](#)**