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NICON Response to the draft Northern Ireland Executive Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021

1. Introduction

The Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care (NICON) is the representative body for the organisations that make up the HSC. Our parent body is the NHS Confederation and we additionally have 45 associate members involved in health and social care, from the not for profit and business sectors.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Draft Programme for Government Framework published on the 26th May 2016. Our response is based on a whole system approach we have been seeking to develop over the last number of years. The views expressed are drawn from our member priorities set out in our 2016 election briefing '*One Voice - Time for Change*'ⁱ which was agreed by over 50, organisations and the emerging themes at our annual conference in June 2016, when all of the key debates were set in the context of the new Programme for Government (PfG) approach.

For clarity this responseⁱⁱ is divided into three sections: Strategic Perspectives, Developing Practice and Comments on the Proposed Outcomes and Indicators.

2. Strategic Perspectives

2.1 Approach welcomed

The outcomes and whole of government based approach is welcomed, having been advocated in our last two election briefings in 2011 and 2016 as a way to facilitate improved population health and wellbeing by; reducing duplication, shaping services round citizens and communities, supporting innovation and collaboration, tapping into wider partner and citizen capacity and integrating services at local level.

Our members have identified 7 key challenges facing our sector; Rising need, Design of services, Workforce, Finance, Culture, Technology and Leadership. We recognise the potential of this new PfG approach to support work on these 7 areas in the broader context, involving other partners more explicitly.

Members believe the new community planning processes facilitated by local government will provide a key opportunity to deliver this work at local level, and look forward to participating and shaping new ways of working that will emerge.

2.2 Reform must be prioritised at pace and scale

Our members' primary priority is to ensure the implementation of reform in health and social care services at pace and scale. Members welcome the recommendations in the report of the Expert Panel on Reconfiguration of Health and Social Care, led by Rafael Bengoa, submitted to the Minister for Health Michelle O'Neill MLA on the 17th July. A detailed implementation plan must be a key priority in the PfG. Our capacity to deliver on this programme will significantly impact the better use of public resources to provide care and improved population outcomes.

2.3 Finance

Members recognise that the proportion of the HSC budget has been growing to meet rising demand and is now approaching nearly 50% of the Northern Ireland public sector budget. In the context of an aging society, there must be a public debate on future funding to ensure we can provide compassionate care which is affordable and sustainable, and is balanced with funding to other essential public services.

Members would additionally wish to see longer term financial planning, including multi-year budgets to give organisations more certainty when planning complex services and change management programmes. Within this context members also see the need for a specific HSC transformation fund, which will be essential to underpin significant reconfiguration and service change referred to above.

2.4 Preventative Approach

It is widely recognised that health and social care is impacted by the wider determinants for health. This new PfG approach has the potential to support a much greater preventative approach and improved quality of life. Members welcome this principle in every aspect of public sector planning and delivery.

2.5 Innovation

NICON members would welcome a significant focus on the opportunities presented by technology to drive change in health and social care and across the wider public sector.

3. Developing Practice

While the new PfG approach is supported in principle, there is significant concern around a range of practical issues that must be addressed.

3.1 Processes for planning, delivery and accountability

This new approach is very different and requires alternative underlying processes for planning, collaboration and accountability. Our members would wish to see;

- A greater level of detail around the new emerging processes for planning and accountability.
- Clarity on key programmes of action, detailing the what, how and who, building on many of the existing strategies in place, as well as the new mechanisms to integrate across government.
- Agreed innovative methods of communication and engagement with all partners to support effective collaboration and participation where appropriate.
- Clear ways to report progress, which may involve some process measures, as some of the outcomes will not be achieved within this PfG period.

3.2 Culture, Capacity Building and Leadership

Members recognise that this is a significant cultural change and therefore would welcome;

- Capacity building programme to ensure key leaders across the HSC and our wider partners are involved in shaping these new processes and can model good practice. Additionally it may be helpful to undertake some capacity building on a cross-sectoral basis to support colleagues seeking to develop new ways of working.
- The development of mechanisms for engagement to ensure visibility and transparency, both for government actors and partners.
- Leaders should be supported to model collaborative working, engagement and enabling behaviours. This type of leadership must be top down, and encouraged more generally in other management levels.

3.3 Transitional arrangements or blended approach

Given that this is an entirely new approach, our Members would welcome agreed transitional arrangements between the old and the new systems to maximise potential to deliver on key programmes, while seeking to build new processes.

4. Comment on the suggested outcomes and indicators

4.1 Strategic Outcomes

The strategic outcomes are broadly welcomed. There are however some member comments that may be helpful.

- There is an opportunity to make the outcomes more meaningful and unifying to the public in Northern Ireland. There may be ways to articulate the outcomes pictorially to assist making these a recognised vision within of our society. Additionally the outcomes could be grouped under social, economic and environmental, to support effective communication and it may be helpful to shorten the list and combine some indicators, for example;
 - place, “we live long, healthy, active lives” centrally as all other outcomes flow from this one
 - There is an opportunity to reposition “high quality public services” as a process measure or indicator

- There is an opportunity to merge “We have a safe community where we respect the law and each other” with “We are a shared society that is safe and respects diversity”

4.2 Comment on Indicators

NICON members believe that many of the indicators will be helpful but care must be taken to ensure their use reinforces the agreed outcomes rather than becoming new sectoral targets. Specific comments are listed below.

- **Indicator 2** Reduce Health Inequality (Measure - gap between the highest and lowest deprivation quintile in healthy life expectancy at birth)

This indicator could be reworked to focus more on bringing up the lowest, rather than on reducing the gap. There may also be opportunity to include a gender perspective.

- **Indicator 3** Increase healthy life expectancy
In the narrative there is an opportunity to reinforce that people are the primary carers in their lives. The PfG can help support culture change where citizens are active partners in care.

- **Indicator 4** Reduce Preventable Deaths
There may be an opportunity to make the narrative around this measure a little more easily understood. Also, Indicator 4 appears to be subset of indicator 3? If so, this should be clarified.

- **Indicator 5** Improve the quality of the health care experience - (Measure - % of people who are satisfied with health and social care - based on recent contact)

We welcome this indicator and would welcome detailed consideration of the development of effective measurement methodology. The methodology used must be robust, transparent and independent where necessary. Additionally, there must be a closed loop where the evidence gained is used to improve safety, quality and user experience.

Members believe that it would be helpful to develop this indicator in the context where we are seeking to provide ways that patients and service users are much more involved in their care and have opportunities to shape their health and social care services.

- **Indicator 9** Improve support for adults with care needs (Measure - Number of adults receiving personal care at home or self-directed support for personal care as a % of the total number of adults needing care)

The measure for this indicator should be reviewed. Every citizen should be receive the care and support they need and quality of care must also be reflected in the indicator.

- **Indicator 10** Improve support of looked after children
Recognising that there are often transitional issues that children experience leaving care, we would welcome the age of this indicator being extended to 23 or 25.
- **Indicator 22** Increase Innovation in our economy (Measure - Regional Innovation Ranking)

The HSC in Northern Ireland has significant potential to be a major source of innovation and economic driver. The indicator used should include engagement of health and social care partners.

- **Indicator 23** Improve transport connections for people, goods and services.
This indicator should include access to key health facilities.
- **Indicator 41** Increase the proportion of graduates moving into employment or onto further study.

There needs to be some consideration of this indicator. The social care workforce will need to expand. There should be pathways to increase involvement and provision of good quality jobs, but not necessarily on a graduate basis.

5. Concluding Remarks

There is considerable support for reform across the health and social care sector and agreement that there needs to be a stronger focus on the inter-relationship of public services to address the wider determinants of health. This was strongly articulated at the NICON 2016 Conference on the 28/29th June which was attended by over 400 system leaders. NICON therefore would welcome strong leadership and clarity within the final programme of government to support a clear programme of change.

NICON welcome this emerging approach and would appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the developing work related to the Programme for Government.

Thank you for your consideration of these remarks.

Heather Moorhead
Director

ⁱ One Voice Time for Change – www.nhsconfed.org/resources/2016/01/one-voice-time-for-change

ⁱⁱ This response represents our members strategic perspectives. It has not been formally endorsed by member organisations, who may wish to make their own organisational responses.