Background

1. The Department of Health (“the Department”) wishes to see the development of a national oral health policy for Ireland. This work will be undertaken through a number of work streams involving a wide range of stakeholders including both professional groups and the public.

2. The work to help develop the national policy will be the undertaken by two groups, the Oral Health Policy Academic Reference Group (“the Academic Group”) and the Practitioners Reference Group (“the Practitioners Group”). The role of the Academic Group is to help identify relevant evidence to ensure a framework for services that are underpinned by informed practice. The role of the Practitioners Group is to develop the framework policy into practice.

3. To help ensure that the Academic Group and the Practitioners Group achieve their goals, the Department of Health has created a third group, the Oral Health Policy Independent Panel (“the Independent Panel”). These three groups will work together with the Department reporting through the Chief Dental Officer to help produce an oral health policy.

4. The Department of Health will seek advice and direction from the Independent Panel in relation to the Academic Group and the Practitioners Group and other advice as it sees fit. The Department will take independent decisions on foot of any advice or direction provided by the Independent Panel.

Purpose

5. The aim of the Academic Group is to identify and collate information to provide an evidence base for the decisions taken when developing oral health policy.

6. The Academic Group will consider any new scientific evidence or information relevant to the programme that might have a direct bearing on the future conduct of any of the work-packages and will provide advice on the transferability of the research findings into recommendations for practice.

Key Tasks

7. To identify and determine the qualities and relevance of the existing literature on oral health needs assessment.

8. Compare the current arrangements for oral health needs assessment in Ireland to the material identified in (7) and suggest arrangements to address possible shortcomings. This will include the identification of any key data requirements and arrangements to ensure their subsequent collection.

9. Propose models for delivery of oral health care working with the Practitioners Group and liaise with the Independent Panel to help ensure the qualities of the work.
Working methods

10. The work will be led from within the Department of Health with administrative support from a secretariat appointed by the Department.

11. The Academic Group will report monthly or as required to the Department of Health via the Chief Dental Officer and respond to requests to attend other meetings as felt appropriate by the Chief Dental Officer and/or Department personnel in order to achieve its key tasks.

12. The Academic Group will take account of the feedback from both the Practitioners Group and the Independent Panel as their work develops during the development of the national oral health policy. It will also pay heed to possible other developments affecting the work for example regulatory changes or workforce and education developments.

Outputs

13. The Academic Group will report on their activities to the Practitioners Group, the Independent Panel and the Department of Health as requested to ensure timely progress on their work and the overall development of the oral health policy framework. In addition, the Academic Group will present at meetings as requested by the Chief Dental Officer and/or other Department of Health personnel.

Accountability

14. The Academic Group will report to the Department of Health via the Chief Dental Officer.

Timescale

15. The Academic Group will establish a schedule of meetings internally to ensure their work can be completed and will continue to undertake their work until the Chief Dental Officer and/or the Department of Health is satisfied that the group has provided the final feedback necessary to develop the national oral health policy.