



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

Impact Case Study

Influencing and Supporting Policy



The right care, in the right place, at the right time

Ireland's complex, fragmented health system continues to penalise patients through very long waits to access care, high out-of-pocket charges and an over reliance on hospital care. This is recognised by the WHO, the European Commission and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) as needing reform.

Sláintecare is Ireland's national healthcare reform plan, adopted by government in 2018, aiming to deliver universal, accessible, quality, integrated healthcare.

Professor Burke was part of the Trinity team, who provided technical support to the cross-party Committee on the Future of Healthcare who developed Sláintecare.

Professor Burke's research supports reform implementation through identifying the barriers to reform and promoting evidence-informed research and strategies to strengthen health systems and promote equity. She both collaborates with and challenges health systems leaders to deliver on reform.

This work showcases Trinity's expertise in supporting large-scale reform projects over the long-term, supporting policymakers in devising the policy while also holding them to account via rigorous analysis of the implementation process.

Prepared by Trinity Civic Engagement for Societal Impact, August 2025

Professor Sara Burke

CENTRE

Centre for Health Policy & Management, Discipline of Public Health and Primary Care, School of Medicine

PARTNER AGENCIES

Department of Health
Health Service Executive

FUNDERS:

Health Research Board
Department of Health
Health Service Executive

SUBJECT AREAS

Health systems and policy analysis
Health system reform
Health equity
Comparative health
The politics of health



Supporting the development of Sláintecare

As a key member of the Trinity team providing technical support of the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare, Professor Burke provided evidence and analysis, ensuring the plan was both realistic and ambitious. They hosted three workshops with the Oireachtas Committee – the first ever ‘workshops’ with an all-party Oireachtas Committee. This led to assisting the Committee with its remit ‘to devise cross-party agreement on a single long-term vision for health care and direction of health policy in Ireland’.

This work significantly influenced the final report, published on 30 May 2017, entitled Sláintecare. In 2018, Sláintecare was adopted by government and in 2025, it remains the key health pillar of the new Programme for Government and of Irish health policy.

Current Monitoring Project

She is currently Principal Investigator on a HRB/Department of Health Evidence for Policy grant researching and writing a new Health System in Transition report for Ireland.

Published in June 2026 by the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policy to coincide with Ireland’s presidency of the EC, this will give a high-level overview of Ireland’s health system and policy, allowing progress to be tracked over time.

COVID-19 Project

Previously, Professor Burke was funded in a Partnership Award with the Department of Health and the HSE to monitor progress on the design and implementation of the regions. This found the governance of the design and implementation of the new regions lacking transparency and accountability. Her work combines academic research, public commentary, and policy advice, pressing for stronger governance and genuine reform.

Presentations to Government

Professor Burke frequently presents to the HSE, the Department of Health and the Houses of the Oireachtas. In 2021 – 2024, she led a team which presented research findings at internal seminars to the Department of Health and public webinars to the HSE. These detailed her team’s research findings including the rapid system change that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of the system reverting to type. In March 2023, she was invited to appear before the Oireachtas Health Committee assessing progress on Sláintecare reforms.

Media and Public Conversation

June 2025 Guest on inaugural HRB evidence for policy [podcast](#) HRB podcast and chosen as one of four Irish [academics](#) giving expert tips to influence policy as part of HRB campaign

May 2025 [Interview](#) on RTE Radio 1’s Today with Claire Byrne on new Sláintecare policy

March 2025 Guest on two [USA podcasts](#) entitled Code WACK on Irish healthcare reform

March 2025 Keynote speaker at [European Parliament Spring Talks](#) series giving a public lecture on Health Policy and Implementation

February 2025 Keynote speaker at Business Post National Health Summit on the new health regions – getting the governance right?

May 2024: Irish Times [opinion](#) piece on the accountability of the new health regions being implemented by the HSE

February 2024: Featured on [Ireland’s Edge](#) podcast discussing healthcare system overload and Sláintecare implementation

March 2023: Presented to the Oireachtas Health Committee on Sláintecare, with coverage on [RTE](#) and in [Irish Times](#) and [Irish Examiner](#)



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Professor Sara Burke is Director of the Centre for Health Policy & Management in Trinity College Dublin's School of Medicine. She is also co-Director of the national SPHeRE PhD programme.

A recognised expert in Irish health service reform, she is currently the Principal Investigator of a research project entitled *Producing a Health in Transition health system review (HiT) for Ireland as part of the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies HiT series* and leads a team who report on Ireland for the European Observatory Health Systems COVID-19 response monitor.

She has over 25 years of experience as a researcher in health policy, publishing *Irish Apartheid, Healthcare Inequality in Ireland* in 2009 and being a consistent voice appearing weekly on healthcare reform on Irish national radio between 2008 and 2015.

For More Information

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