



The Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International A.I.S.B.L.

HETI National Register 2 year pilot project final report April 2024

Mission of the National Register Pilot Project

- **Establish a National register in Ireland and the UK**
- **Provide a resource for service users, funders, practitioners etc to find ‘approved’ service providers**
- **Seek to provide trust and confidence in Equine Assisted Services by listing services that have demonstrated they align to the following criteria (based on the HETI Ethical Guidelines 2020):**

Professionalism: competence to practice and commitment to professional development

Equine welfare: high equine welfare and management standards

Service provision and service user engagement: communication of services and the potential benefits

Safe Practice: all safety protocols are in place for the benefit of humans and equines

Benefits and impact: professional reflection of the benefits and impact of the service being provided

Governance: sufficient management and governance structures in place

Establishment

Pilot project approved in June 2019 by the International Council.

HETI’s role:

HETI’s webmaster created the website for the register and the submission process based on the requirements given by the Irish working group and the UK steering group.

HETI had the responsibility of hosting the registers on the HETI website and received the application payments for the registers. This money was used to cover the costs of the initial setting up of the website and the continued maintenance of the website. The HETI office also provided administrative support to both registers. The HETI office provided random auditing of the Irish register approvals to ensure consistency and integrity.

The HETI office provided approved ‘badges’ and certificates for the Irish register.

Ireland

The Irish register was the first to be established and initially created a checklist of required documents that had to be submitted based on the HETI Ethical Guidelines. The Irish working group was led by Festina Lente CEO, Jill Carey. The registration year began on 1st June 2021 and all applicants were required to submit their applications by 30th July 2021.



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Year 1:

Expected uptake following advertisement and consultations – 50 applicants.

24 applications submitted

10 applications approved, 14 pending

Some applications were reverted due to missing information. This information was not supplied and so approval could not be completed.

Following year 1 applications, a survey was sent to all applicants for feedback. Of those that responded, 66% found the application process difficult due to the number of documents that had to be uploaded. Of those that had to resubmit documents 67% found the process difficult and required further assistance from the HETI office. However, 83% stated that they were likely to reapply for the next year.

Year 2

11 Applications submitted

10 Applications approved, 1 pending

One application was reverted due to missing information. This information was not supplied and so approval could not be completed.

In Year 2, those who had partially submitted and paid in year 1 were given their application for free for year 2. Those that were already HETI members, were also given free application. Following discussion with the UK steering group, it was agreed that the Irish register would change its name to the Human Equine Interaction Register Ireland and the HEIR logo was adapted to include the word Ireland in it.

The application process was also amended and streamlined so that only essential documents like insurance policies, which require yearly renewal and staff qualifications, were required to be uploaded. An agreement statement was put in place so that applicants agreed that all other documents required were up to date and in place. This, not only, made the application process easier but ensured the application review didn't take as much time.

Review of the Irish register:

Although the uptake for the register was considerably smaller than initially thought, those that registered recognised the importance of having such a register in place. As EAS provision is growing substantially in Ireland, there is a need for a register of practitioners to ensure best practice in EAS provision. The Irish working group are now working to establish a national body which could take on the running of the register. This, along with better advertising of the register, will increase the popularity of the register. The Irish working group requested that their pilot project be extended by a year in order to facilitate the forming of a national body. This was agreed to by HETI.



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United Kingdom

The UK register or HEIR UK was launched in March 2022. Prior to its launch, the steering group led by former RDA UK CEO, Ed Bracher, hosted a number of consultations around the UK to establish the need for the register and to advertise the register. HEIR UK acquired funding from the Peter O'Sullivan Trust which enabled them to employ a project manager – Anna Collins. HETI also provided funding (€1500) to hire an administrative assistant, Sharon Mawson, for a period of 8 weeks to help with the initial launch and intake of applications. A memorandum of Understanding was created between HETI and RDA UK to ensure clarity within the project.

Prior to the opening of the register, a 'soft launch' was held for all HETI members in the UK so that they could test the functionality of the register and feedback to HETI and the HEIR UK team prior to officially launching on 31st March 2022. This feedback was done via survey. In year 2 of the pilot project, a 'training organisation' application was introduced.

Year 1 – 64 applications

Individual: 22 of which 10 were HETI members, 2 pending
Small: 21 of which 13 were HETI members, 3 pending
Medium: 18 of which 10 were HETI members, 1 pending
Large: 3 of which 2 were HETI members

Year 2 – 70 applications

New applications (21)
Individual: 8 of which 4 were HETI members, 4 pending
Small: 8 of which 2 were HETI members, 4 pending
Medium: 4 of which 1 was a HETI member, 1 pending
Training Org: 1 - HETI member, pending
Large: 0

Renewals (49)

Individual: 15 of which 5 were HETI members
Small: 16 of which 7 were HETI members
Medium: 15 of which 8 were HETI members
Training org: 0
Large: 3 - all HETI members

Pending applications required more information which was not received.

Review of the UK Register

HEIR UK had a very positive beginning with the amount of applications. Initially registering HETI members to gain insight into the process and receive feedback working well so that when it was officially launched, there were fewer issues. It was very beneficial to have a project manager and administrative assistant in place to assist with any issues and to drive the promotion of the register. As receiving a free registration was an added benefit of HETI membership, the HETI office also promoted the register to all HETI members regularly and included articles about the register in The Global Gallop.



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Difficulties experienced

Technical issues: As HETI were providing the website creation and hosting, we relied heavily on our webmaster, Antti Rokka. The creation of the application came from the guidance of HEIR Ireland and HEIR UK. When Antti had created the forms, he provided a walkthrough of the applications and ensured their approval before launching. As with any newly established project, unforeseen issues arose in both registers. Some functionality was limited due to the Wordpress system which, at times, created more work for the steering groups and administration. Antti is not employed full time by HETI and so this also caused difficulties as there were delays in getting some issues resolved.

Currency

As HETI was overseeing the project, providing the website and hosting the registers, all income from the registers were paid to HETI. This was agreed upon by both HEIR Ireland and UK. However, there was an issue with the currency in the UK as they do not use Euro. Despite the register being a HETI run project, it was agreed that the register would be charged in British Pounds. Due to the currency conversion rates fluctuating, we agreed on a price based on the average currency conversion over a number of months. Due to the currency conversion, HETI received fluctuating amounts for the register applications from the UK.

Funding

HEIR Ireland did not secure funding for the register and so relied on their voluntary steering group and HETI to promote and run the register. Unfortunately, due to the time commitment needed for the register, this was not as successful as initially hoped.

HEIR UK secured funding from the Peter O'Sullivan Trust. This enabled the employment of a project manager and the extension of contract for an administrative assistant. However, some applicants were unhappy that the funding was coming from an organisation linked to the Horse Racing industry.

Cost

Although HETI received the income from the registers, the cost for HETI remained substantial, as well as the time it took from the HETI office.

Website development and maintenance for HEIR Ireland and UK

€3534

Administration assistant – HEIR UK

€1500

Travel costs for attendance of HEIR UK launch and conference

€545.69

Estimated administration costs for HETI office -HEIR Ireland and UK

€10,000



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Total: €15579.69

Total Income – HEIR UK: €6021.74 (estimated due to conversion charges)

Total Income – HEIR Ireland: €2305.69

Other registers

Within the UK, another register has been established since the launch of HEIR UK. The Athena Herd Foundation established the Accredited Practitioners Register (PSA) which is accredited by the Professional Standards Authority in the UK. While this may be seen as ‘competition’ for HEIR UK, it is important to recognise the best practice standard that is being established by the two registers. This can increase the awareness of EAS and raise the standard of Equine Welfare and service provision in the UK.

Outcome

HEIR Ireland

HEIR Ireland have extended their pilot project by one year while they secure funding to set up a national organisation for Ireland which can then take over the running of the register.

HEIR UK

HEIR UK have created the Equine Assisted Services Partnership CiC and in February 2024 hosted its first symposium and held its first AGM. As part of that AGM, a new board was established. EASP have employed a web designer to create the new EASP website which will take over the hosting of the register. They are liaising with HETI to ensure a seamless transfer of register information to the new website.

Summary

While the registers have taken time, effort and finances to establish, their importance outweighs all of these things. The registers have provided organisations guidance as to what is needed to have best practice in place for all involved in the service. It has given opportunity for applicants to ask questions, self-evaluate their services and promote their work. This pilot project has shown a need for standards to be set and monitored at a national level within EAS provision and has provided a model from which any country can establish their own register. However, in order to do this, an organisation which represents the different modalities of EAS needs to be in place to establish and run the register and funding needs to be secured for the register for administration and promotion.

HETI Executive Director/Secretary

13 March 2024