

Children in Hospital Ireland Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Making hospital a happier place through
play and advocacy



Making hospital a happier place for children through play and advocacy

Foreword

In early 2018, the Board of Children in Hospital Ireland (CHI) made a commitment to develop a new Strategic Plan for the organisation, covering the period 2019 to 2021. Given the changing context and structure of paediatric healthcare in Ireland, the Board felt it was timely to reaffirm its commitment to providing services to support children in the healthcare system, and their families, through a plan specifying CHI's key objectives and priority actions for this three-year period.

CHI was founded in 1970 and in the decades since then has engaged in advocacy and education in regard to the specific needs of children and young people in hospital, has made available information for parents and families, and has provided a volunteer-led play and recreation service which is now available in children's hospitals and paediatric wards of hospitals – in all, in thirteen locations across the country. As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of CHI, we are motivated to continue to improve and expand our services by the enthusiasm and spirit of our more than 450 volunteers and by the positive feedback received from the hospitals in which we work and from the children and young people, and their parents and carers, availing of our services.

In developing this Strategic Plan, CHI consulted members of its Board, staff members, CHI volunteers, and also hospital staff and management and external stakeholder organisations. The consultation process provided important perspectives on CHI and its work and valuable suggestions for future development. CHI would like to thank all those who so generously contributed to the process of preparing this plan.

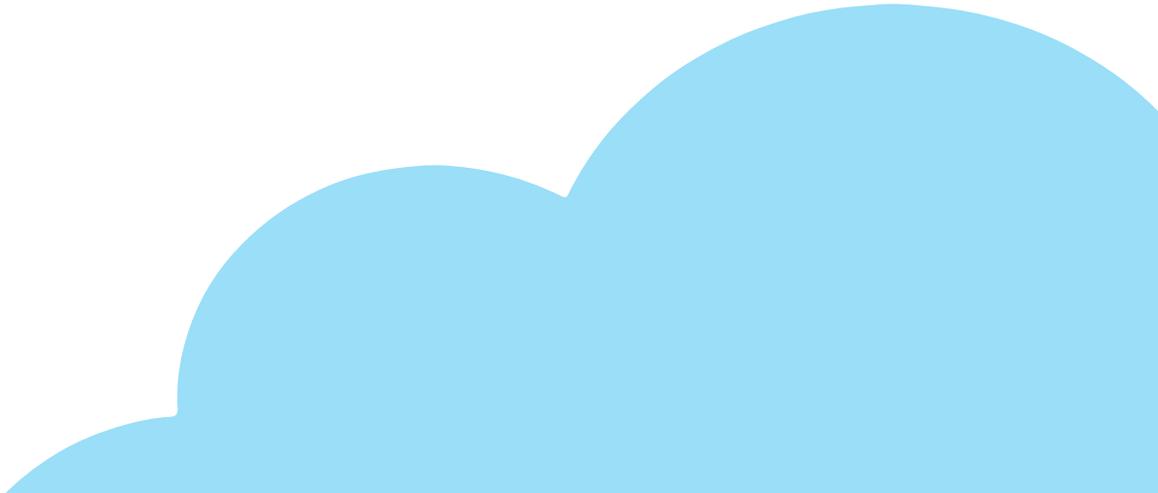
At the beginning of each year of the lifetime of the Strategic Plan, the Board and staff members of CHI will engage in operational planning for that year so as to identify key actions under each priority area and enable progress to be monitored.

We look forward to a productive three years, steering this plan to completion and working with other organisations, both statutory and voluntary, to promote the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in the healthcare system in Ireland.

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Chairperson, Children in Hospital Ireland

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January 2019





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Introduction

This Strategic Plan sets out the way CHI will continue its work in support of children in hospital and their families during the period 2019–2021.

We prepared this Strategic Plan following a review of our work and consultations with our Board, our staff, our volunteers and external stakeholders. Informed by the results of this process we identified six strategic priorities for 2019 to 2021.

These priorities represent both a continuance and a development of CHI's work over almost half a century. Our intention is to ensure that our services are of the highest standard and are relevant to current and emerging needs, and that CHI is an effective voice in advocating for improvements in healthcare services for children and young people in Ireland. To these ends, we seek to strengthen our organisation and increase its potential impact: we will work collaboratively with other groups in both the statutory and voluntary sectors, support our staff and volunteers, attend to the requirements for good governance and financial stability, and develop a clear presence and brand within the voluntary sector in Ireland.

The core objectives set out in this Strategic Plan are based on the assumption of continued funding at the current level. However, the Plan also envisages on-going efforts to secure additional funding for the further development and upscaling of our activities over the period 2019–2021.

Children in Hospital Ireland
Strategic Plan 2019–2021

1.

Strategic Priority One

Support Children in Hospital and their Families

To continue to provide supports and services for children, young people and their families

2.

Strategic Priority Two

Strengthen our Advocacy and Education Work

To continue developing our advocacy and education work in the best interests of children, young people and their families

3.

Strategic Priority Three

Cultivate Positive and Effective Working Relationships

To further develop our collaborative work with like-minded organisations in the best interests of children, young people and their families

4.

Strategic Priority Four

Value our Volunteers

To continue to recruit, train, support and appreciate all who volunteer with CHI

5.

Strategic Priority Five

Strengthen CHI Organisational Capacity

To continuously strengthen and improve our organisation and to attend to governance issues in line with regulatory requirements and recognised best practice

6.

Strategic Priority Six

Build Organisational Presence

To develop and maintain a clear brand and position for CHI within the voluntary sector in Ireland

About Children in Hospital Ireland

Origins

In response to concerns regarding parents' rights to be involved in their children's care while their child was in hospital and their right to stay with their sick child, The Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital (Ireland) was founded in 1970 by a small group of committed parents. The organisation changed its name to Children in Hospital Ireland (CHI) in 1998. At its inception, CHI had approximately 30 members. It obtained charitable status in 1973 and in 1999 it was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee.

Since its establishment, CHI has sought to highlight the rights and welfare of children in hospital, the specific challenges faced by children in hospital and their parents or carers, the right of the child in hospital to play, and the need for a more child-centred approach in the provision of healthcare services for children. CHI is widely recognised to have played an important role in influencing many positive changes that have occurred in hospital care for children in Ireland over recent decades.

Advocacy

In the early years, CHI advocated in particular for recognition of the right of parents to stay with their child in hospital, for visiting times to be extended, and for the facilitation of visits by siblings and other family members. It urged that children's units be provided in all general hospitals where children were being treated and that these units be staffed by personnel with paediatric training. CHI also promoted the right of children to have access to education while in hospital and the need to develop hospital play specialist services.

Today, CHI continues its advocacy activities, in particular by bringing to the attention of policy-makers and hospital managements, including the development team for the Children's Hospital Group, the insights and knowledge which CHI has gained from its work and especially from direct contacts with children in hospital and their families. CHI also continues to draw attention the importance of providing opportunities for play and recreation for children and young people in hospital, the positive role which play and recreation can have in recovering from illness and the need for increased provision of hospital play specialist services.

Information

From the outset, CHI has sought to make available to children and families information that will be of help before, during and after a child's admission to hospital or attendance at an outpatient appointment. Information for children, young people and families is provided on CHI's website and in hospitals around the country. CHI head office provides information in response to telephone or email queries from parents/carers and family members.

In addition, CHI provides a *JustAsk* welcoming and information service in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, Dublin. CHI volunteers greet families and children arriving into the hospital, respond to any queries they may have and direct or accompany them to where they need to go.

Play Service

In the late 1970s, CHI introduced a volunteer-led play service in Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin and in the National Children's Hospital, Harcourt Street, Dublin. Since then, there has been a significant expansion of this service: it is now available in thirteen hospitals around the country, with more than 450 volunteers providing play facilitation on a daily basis in wards, emergency departments, outpatient departments, and, where available, playrooms. This equates to an annual total of around 48,000 volunteer hours (provided through morning, afternoon and evening rotas) with the service reaching approximately 100,000 children. In providing this service, CHI strives to adhere to the highest standards in recruiting, training, mentoring and supporting its volunteers.

Education

Through advocacy and information work, and its play service, CHI aims to raise awareness and understanding of the experience of hospitalisation for children, the issues which may arise for them and their families as a result of this and the importance of a child-centred approach in healthcare services for children. CHI organises an Annual Lecture on a child healthcare topic delivered by an eminent speaker and open to health service practitioners, policy-makers, students and the general public.

European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH)

In 1988, CHI participated in a European Conference for national associations concerned with the welfare of children in hospital, which was held in Leiden in The Netherlands. The participants at this conference developed a Charter, comprised of ten Articles and based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, setting out in the core principles which should guide the provision of healthcare for children. Continued collaboration between these national associations, including CHI, led to the establishment of the European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH) in 1993. CHI remains active in this umbrella body, in which thirteen European countries are now represented, and continues to use the EACH Charter, and the Annotations to it agreed in 2015, as the basis for its work.

Preparation of CHI Strategic Plan 2019–2021

Consultations and Review

We contracted an external facilitator to gather the views of our Board members, staff and volunteers as well as those of a range of external stakeholders including hospital personnel, relevant voluntary organisations and a funding source. We reviewed our work, noting our strengths and areas for potential development.

The findings of these consultations show that CHI and its work are valued and highly-regarded and that the services we provide are considered to be of real benefit.

We are known for [making a positive difference](#) by:

- Facilitating a safe and happy child-friendly space for children and young people in the healthcare system
- Providing opportunities for everyday play and recreation for children and young people while they are in hospital
- Improving the experience of hospital for children, in particular for those who have to attend hospital frequently or who are in need of longer-term care
- Giving space and time to parents/carers, relieving them for a while from the stress associated with their child being ill and in hospital
- Enabling parents/carers to be confident that their child is safe with our volunteers
- Complementing the work of hospital staff in the areas of play and recreation
- Increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of play and recreation in aiding recovery from illness
- Advocating on behalf of the child in hospital and their family

Regarding our [future development](#), the key messages from the consultations were that CHI should:

- Continue to support children and young people in hospital and their families through our volunteer-led services
- Continue to emphasise a child-centred approach in our services
- Continue to raise awareness of our work
- Strengthen our communication, education, advocacy, working in partnership with other organisations in our field
- Promote understanding and appreciation of the importance of play and recreation for children and young people while they are ill

Challenges

The consultations and discussions undertaken for this Strategy identified a number of challenges, both internally and in the external environment, which CHI may encounter over the period 2019 to 2021.

These are:

Position and Presence

In an NGO landscape where there are many organisations, large and small, providing services to meet the healthcare needs of children and young people, it will be increasingly important for CHI to demonstrate the value of its services and the unique nature of these.

Emerging Structures in Paediatric Care in Ireland

Changes to the model of paediatric care in Ireland, and in particular the development of the new Children's Hospital and the allied satellite centres, will present challenges, as well as opportunities, for CHI. Maintaining a strong voice in the discussions concerning the evolution of the new structures and seeking opportunities for CHI to provide a distinctive and visible service within them will be priorities during the lifetime of this plan.

Play and Recreation

Even though play is increasingly recognised and valued as an integral part of childhood care and education, more needs to be done to ensure that hospital outpatient and inpatient services create adequate spaces and resources for play and recreation for children and young people.

Furthermore, the play and recreation needs and interests of children and young people are changing, particularly as a result of technological developments, and this requires CHI to develop and implement creative and innovative responses.

Minding our People

Volunteers, staff and Board members are the core resource of CHI. Recruiting and retaining people of integrity, committed to the ideals of the organisation and with the necessary skills to carry out their role, whether as a volunteer, a staff member or a Board member, will be a significant challenge, particularly in a context where alternative employment and volunteering opportunities are increasing.

Financial Stability

Financial stability and sustainability are critically important if CHI is to consolidate existing activities and expand into new areas in response to emerging needs. Securing adequate and sustainable funding is particularly challenging when there are many other organisations in the voluntary sector that are also seeking funding from statutory and private sources.

Governance

The legislative and regulatory environment within which voluntary organisations in Ireland now operate requires that they give due attention at all times to governance matters. This environment, while challenging, is also supportive of CHI's commitment to building and maintaining a transparent, accountable and respected organisation.

CHI Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

An Ireland where the rights of children are respected and prioritised within the healthcare system.

Our Mission

Our mission is to promote the wellbeing of children within the healthcare system in Ireland, in particular, before, during and after hospitalisation.

In order to fulfil our mission, we aim to provide information and support to parents and carers and to engage in advocacy in relation to healthcare services for children.

In addition, we aim to make the hospital a happier place for children and young people by providing volunteer-led play and recreation services.



Our Values

The work of Children in Hospital Ireland is firmly rooted in and inspired by the lived experience of children in hospital and their families and the knowledge and insights of our volunteers, staff and members.

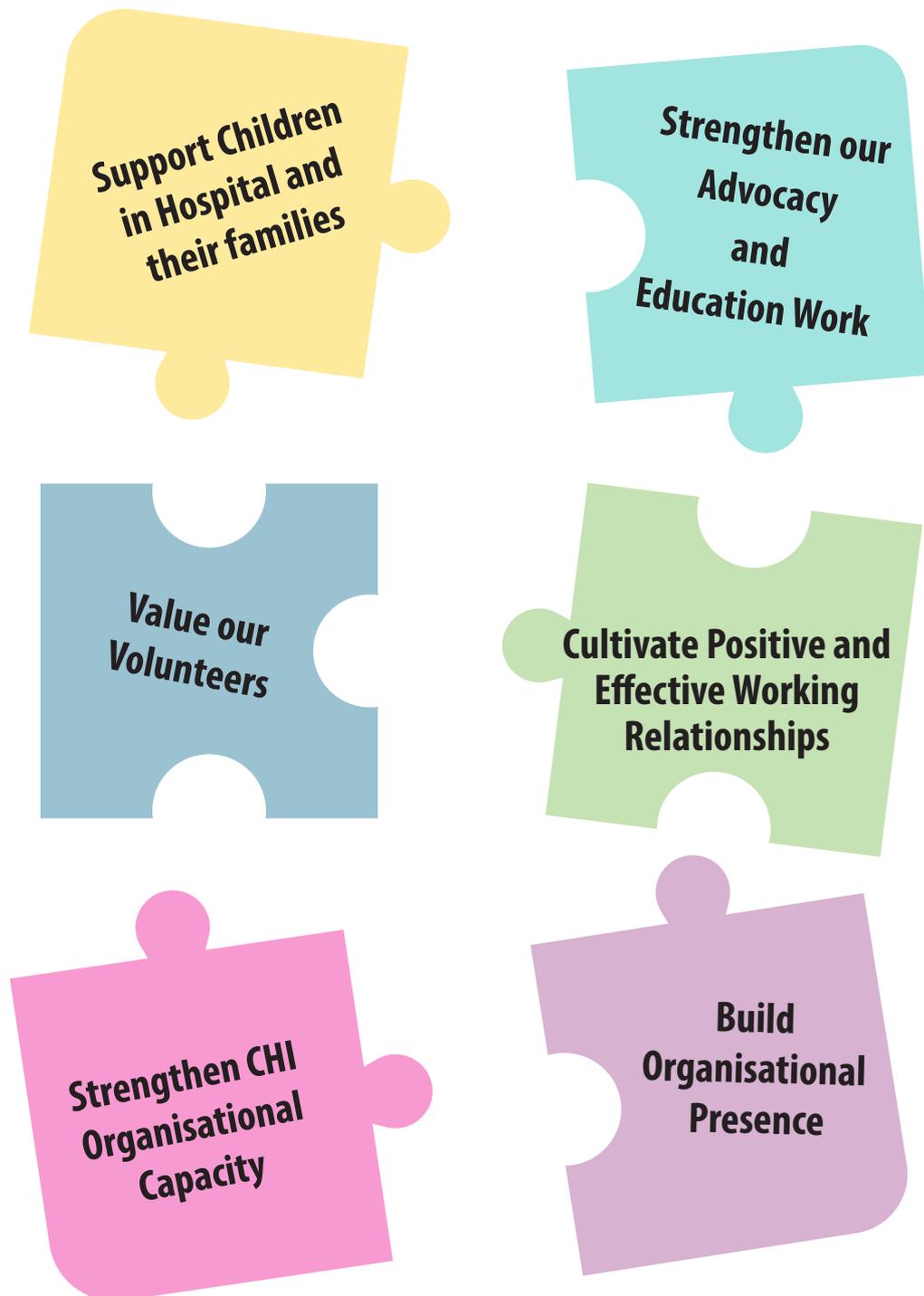
We value:

- Our [history and achievements](#) as a source of inspiration for the continued development of CHI
- The principles and provisions of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), in particular, the right of the child to health and healthcare, to play and recreation and to have a say in matters affecting him or her
- The [principles for children's healthcare](#) provision set out in the Charter developed by the European Association for Children in Hospital (the EACH Charter)
- The [place and power of play](#) and recreation in the lives of children and young people
- The [contribution of our staff and volunteers](#) – their skill, commitment and enthusiasm
- The [voice](#) of children and young people and of parents/carers and family members to inform our work and help us continuously improve
- [Collaboration](#) with hospitals and health service agencies and working in partnership with like-minded organisations
- Recognising and responding to the [changing context](#) of children and young people's lives, in particular in the areas of play and recreation
- Providing services that are [accessible to and inclusive](#) of all children and young people in hospital
- Using [evidence-based](#) information and analysis to inform good practice in the services we provide and to inform our advocacy work

In the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in Irish legislation contained in the Child Care Act 1991 and the Children Act 2001 a child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years of age.

Strategic Priorities 2019–2021

Over the three-year period 2019-2021, our attention will be on six strategic priorities:



For each strategic priority we have outlined a number of actions which we will take in support of the priority. We also include indicators of achievement for each priority.

1 Support Children in Hospital and their Families

Our first strategic priority is to continue to provide supports and services for children and young people in hospital and for their families.

Our intention is to help ensure that parents and carers have access to information and support that will assist them before, during and after the hospitalisation of a child.

Our intention is also to ensure that children and young people have access to facilitated play and recreation during their time in hospital. This service is not only of benefit to children but enables their parents and family carers to take a break, with the assurance that their child is having the opportunity to safely enjoy themselves.

Actions under this strategic priority:

- 1.1 Continue to provide high-quality information and support services for parents and carers of children in hospital
- 1.2 Continue to provide a volunteer-led play and recreation service in hospitals, ensuring excellence and accountability in these services
- 1.3 Expand our play and recreation services to make them available in more hospitals around the country
- 1.4 Based on evaluation of the pilot *JustAsk* information service in Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin, develop this service further and potentially provide it in other hospitals
- 1.5 Harness the opportunities presented by advances in technology to develop creative and innovative activities in the areas of play and recreation for children and young people in hospital
- 1.6 Strengthen and expand our work in responding to the requirements of adolescents, children with complex care needs, and children and young people with mental health care needs
- 1.7 Continue to work with the Children's Hospital Group regarding the provision of CHI services in the Children's Hospital and in the new paediatric outpatients and urgent care centres at Connolly Hospital Blanchardstown and Tallaght University Hospital

Indicators of Achievement

We will know that we are achieving success in relation to this priority when there is increased use of CHI information services, the *JustAsk* Information Service becomes an established part of CHI's activities, and our play and recreation services are more widely available and cater for the diverse interests and abilities of children and young people in hospital.

2 Strengthen our Advocacy and Education Work

Our second priority is to strengthen our advocacy and education work.

Our intention is to become a strong presence and reliable voice highlighting and advocating for the rights of children and young people in the Irish healthcare system.

Actions under this strategic priority:

- 
- 2.1 Develop our capability to engage in advocacy in relation to child and adolescent healthcare issues and to undertake research in support of this
 - 2.2 Utilise the principles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and of the Charter on Children's Healthcare developed by the European Association for Children in Hospital (the EACH Charter) as the basis for CHI education and advocacy
 - 2.3 Ensure that CHI's advocacy work reflects current issues of concern and draws on research findings and on the knowledge gained by CHI staff and volunteers through their contacts with children, parents and hospital personnel
 - 2.4 Advocate for increased play specialist services in hospitals with paediatric wards, highlighting the vital role of play and recreation in recovery from illness
 - 2.5 Continue our Annual Lecture series and seek new opportunities to engage with educational institutions and healthcare professionals so as to help create greater awareness and understanding of issues affecting children and young people in hospital
 - 2.6 Continue to engage in dialogue and advocacy with the Children's Hospital Group with the aim of ensuring that key issues of concern to CHI are addressed in the planning and implementation of the services provided by the Group
 - 2.7 Cultivate our working relationships with relevant voluntary sector organisations in order to strengthen the reach and impact of CHI advocacy work

Indicators of Achievement

We will know that we are achieving success under this priority when we see CHI recognised and respected as a significant voice advocating for the rights of children and young people in the Irish healthcare system and we have strong, strategic connections with like-minded organisations which enhance our advocacy and education work.

3 Cultivate Positive and Effective Working Relationships

Our third priority is to create and cultivate good working relationships with carefully chosen like-minded organisations.

Our intention is work with others to ensure that the rights of children and young people are recognised and prioritised within the healthcare system. We will seek to optimise our impact by working collegially and strategically with other organisations, both statutory and voluntary.

Actions under this strategic priority:

- 3.1 Strengthen strategic relationships with hospitals and the wider healthcare system at executive and practice levels
- 3.2 Work effectively alongside hospital play specialists at the practice level and in advocating for greater provision of play specialist services in hospitals
- 3.3 Ensure that there are opportunities for children and young people and their families to inform us of their experiences and views regarding the healthcare system so that these can help shape our service development and our advocacy work
- 3.4 Continue to develop purposeful partnerships and collaborations with like-minded organisations in areas such as children's healthcare; education and childcare; arts, play and recreation; children's rights
- 3.5 Build on the existing relationships with the Children's Hospital Group in a spirit of openness and commitment to constructive dialogue
- 3.6 Actively engage with our partners in other European countries through the European Association of Children in Hospital (EACH) as well as on a bilateral basis

Indicators of Achievement

We will know that we are achieving success under this priority when our contacts with statutory bodies and hospital managements become more established, our links with like-minded voluntary organisations deepen, and our capacity to gather the views and experiences of the children and families with whom we work is enhanced.



4 Value our Volunteers



Our fourth priority is to continue to support, value and appreciate those who volunteer their time and talents to enable CHI carry out its work.

Our intention is to ensure that there is an adequate number of volunteers trained and equipped to provide our information and play and recreation services in hospitals and that our volunteers are supported and valued throughout the time they are with CHI.

Actions under this strategic priority:

- 4.1 Build greater public awareness of CHI and our work so as to attract volunteers
- 4.2 Strengthen our presence in the voluntary sector as a professional and welcoming organisation providing a unique service for children and young people
- 4.3 Regularly review, update and enhance our recruitment and training processes to ensure our services meet best practice and safeguarding requirements and are of the highest quality
- 4.4 Support and value our volunteers throughout their time with us by providing staff support, on-going training and up-skilling, and by ensuring that the volunteer contribution is recognised
- 4.5 Keep our volunteers informed of developments in the new models of paediatric healthcare and the implications of this for volunteering with CHI
- 4.6 Seek feedback from our volunteers to inform continuous improvement of our services and ensure a positive volunteer environment and experience
- 4.7 Adequately resource our volunteers with play materials and guides to facilitating play and recreation in hospital

Indicators of Achievement

We will know that we are achieving success under this priority when we are recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of volunteers to maintain and expand our services in hospitals, we have enhanced training and communication to support volunteers, and systems are in place to recognise and acknowledge the contribution of volunteers.

5 Strengthen CHI Organisational Capacity

Our fifth priority is to strengthen our organisational capacity and effectiveness.



Our intention is to be a well-governed, well-administered organisation that is guided by and meets good governance standards. The purpose is to build our capacity and resilience in order to advance our work in response to the needs of children and young people in the healthcare system.

Actions under this strategic priority:

- 5.1 Continue to strengthen our team, our Board and our structures so that we meet our objectives effectively and efficiently
- 5.2 Maintain and enhance the range of expertise represented on the Board and engage in succession planning for Board membership
- 5.3 Encourage and support staff members through a culture of continuous professional development, shared learning and reflective practice
- 5.4 Increase and diversify funding from both statutory and private sectors to secure and further advance our work
- 5.5 Be ethical and transparent in all aspects of our finances
- 5.6 Ensure our policy and practice in all areas of our operations is of the highest standard and in keeping with current regulations and recognised best practice for the voluntary sector
- 5.7 Ensure compliance and best practice in all matters relating to safeguarding and child protection
- 5.8 Maintain the suitability and relevance of CHI services by regularly monitoring and evaluating all aspects of our work
- 5.9 Gather feedback on a regular basis from our stakeholders so that we remain in touch with and are responsive to evolving needs
- 5.10 Develop and implement long-term membership engagement plans to strengthen the capacity of CHI, thereby raising the profile of the organisation, increasing the breadth of expertise available within it and creating new fundraising opportunities

Indicators of Achievement

We will know that we are achieving success under this priority when the financial position of our organisation is more secure, Board membership reflects a range of skills and is regularly renewed, staff capacity is enhanced, and the organisation is compliant with the requirements of the Charities Governance Code for voluntary organisations.

6 Build Organisational Presence

Our sixth priority is to develop and maintain a clear brand and position for CHI.

Our intention is to be recognised and respected as an organisation which provides a unique service for children, young people and their families and is a credible voice in discussions regarding healthcare services for children and young people in Ireland.

Actions under this priority:

- 6.1 Generate greater awareness of CHI and its work among policy-makers, health service administrators, health professionals, educators and the general public
- 6.2 Increase visibility and branding of CHI within hospital settings so that our services become better known to children and young people and their families and among hospital personnel
- 6.3 Position CHI within the voluntary sector in Ireland so that its unique contribution is more widely recognised, understood and valued
- 6.4 Build and maintain relationships with broadcast and print media
- 6.5 Increase our presence on social media in order to promote our work and disseminate information relating to CHI and its services to a wide audience
- 6.6 Build and maintain relationships with our supporters so they can readily see the outcomes and value of the work they are supporting

Indicators of Achievement

We will know that we are achieving success under this priority when there is increased media coverage of CHI activities and events; CHI's social media presence is enhanced; the CHI brand and its distinctive services are more widely recognised in hospitals, among the general public, and by policy-makers and health administrators, and the number of supporters and their engagement with the organisation has increased.



These are some of the words used to describe our organisation
from our consultations with a range of stakeholders

KIND

CARING

VALUABLE

SUPPORTIVE

SIMPLE

IN GOOD HANDS

WELCOMING

APPROACHABLE

GENEROUS

PRACTICAL

TRADITIONAL

VOLUNTEER-LED





Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



pobal

government supporting communities

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