



**Children
In Hospital**
Ireland (CIH)



STRATEGIC PLAN

2023–2024

ABOUT CHILDREN IN HOSPITAL IRELAND

Children in Hospital Ireland (CIH) seeks to promote the wellbeing of children within the healthcare system in Ireland, particularly around the time of hospitalisation. CIH volunteers provide a play and recreation service in hospitals throughout the country and also a welcoming and way-finding service in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Crumlin. In addition, it provides information for parents and family members of children needing hospital care and it advocates for reform and improvement in the healthcare system so that the child's right to child-centred health services may be fully realised.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategic plan covers the period 2023–2024. This short period of time is in recognition of the fact that CIH anticipates that significant changes to the structure and delivery of services will be made in preparing for transitioning the volunteer service in CHI sites in Crumlin, Temple St, Connolly and Tallaght to the new children's hospital in Dublin 8 in early 2025. Discussions in relation to the development of the volunteer service are on-going and will continue through 2024. Work towards a new strategic plan will commence in mid-2024.



VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

VISION

An Ireland where every child and young person availing of hospital services has their fundamental rights fully respected.

MISSION

Promoting and supporting the well-being of children, young people and their families before, during, and after hospitalisation.

VALUES

INCLUSION

All types of people, from all communities and backgrounds, are to be found in hospital. We seek to be inclusive in all that we do and strive to reflect the diversity of those we serve and with whom we work.

PARTICIPATION

We believe that children, young people and their families have a right to have their voice heard and their views taken into consideration in any matters relating to their care. We promote and model the active participation of children, young people and of their families in all aspects of their hospital experience.

COLLABORATION

We understand that bringing about change requires working in collaboration. We partner with families, hospital staff, other childhood illness charities and others who can help us achieve our goals.

RESPONSIVENESS

We respond quickly and effectively to identified needs and put in place appropriate supports where we can. This includes responding to the needs of children who require hospital care and their families and to the requests of hospital staff.

EVIDENCE-INFORMED

We recognise the importance of robust evidence in our work. This includes feedback from families, research findings, as well as policies, standards and guidelines (both national and international).

VOLUNTEERISM

We value the unique contribution that our volunteers make to our organisation, to the communities in which they live and work, but especially to the children, young people and their families that we serve.

STRATEGIC AIMS AND SUPPORTING ACTIONS 2023–2024

The core priorities of Children in Hospital Ireland in 2023 and 2024 will be to continue to provide a range of services to children in hospital and their families and seek to influence public policy and the development of practice so as to ensure improved healthcare for children.



1

Provide support to children and their families in and around the time of receiving hospital care

OBJECTIVES

- Enhance and further develop CIH's informational support for parents when their child requires hospital treatment through the development of web-based and hard copy information materials.
- Continue to grow the high quality, volunteer-led play service for children in 14 paediatric units across Ireland, focusing on those areas and times where volunteers are most needed.
- Increase the *JustAsk* welcoming and wayfinding service to ensure support during peak periods for admissions and outpatient clinics.
- Increase the provision of a tailored one-to-one volunteer support for children requiring additional play hours while in hospital.
- Support parents of children in hospital through the development of a parent peer-support service.
- Ensure that CIH volunteer and information services work in an integrated way to support the whole family during their child's hospital experience.
- Deepen understanding of the needs of children and families that will arise in the new children's hospital setting and develop a plan for how CIH's play and other support services can best respond to those needs.
- Create a feedback mechanism for families who have used our service(s) in the hospitals and enact change in the services as required.

2

Be a strong, recognised and effective voice advocating for the highest standards of care for children, young people and their families before, during, and after hospitalisation

OBJECTIVES

- Promote the rights of children and young people in all aspects of healthcare, utilising the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Charter of the European Association for Children in Hospital (the EACH Charter), the National Healthcare Charter for Children and other relevant documents.
- Provide mechanisms for parents/guardians and young people to give feedback to us on their experiences of engaging with hospital care so that recommendations may be made for improvements.
- Publicise and promote the services of CIH and the unique role we play in supporting families.
- Provide educational and awareness-raising opportunities, such as lectures, webinars and seminars, which reflect current issues in healthcare for children and young people and promote best practice and standards in care.
- Use the evidence base of current research and CIH's direct contacts with children and young people and their families to advocate for changes in healthcare policy and practice.
- Continue to advocate for improved and additional public policy measures to support parents in meeting the non-medical financial costs of hospital care for children and young people.
- Advocate for the increased provision of play facilities and opportunities in hospital, supported by trained, professional hospital play staff.

SUPPORTING ACTIONS TO HELP ACHIEVE THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

ENSURE COMPLIANCE

- Continue to comply with the Charities Governance Code
- Continue to comply with all other relevant laws, regulations and guidelines

CONTINUE TO BUILD A STRONG VOLUNTEER AND STAFF TEAM

- Review the numeric and geographic spread and skills base of the volunteer team and the staff support required and take action as needed to ensure that the organisation has the capacity to provide the required services
- Develop new volunteer roles for expanded and new services and recruit sufficient numbers of suitable volunteers
- Further develop training and support systems to ensure that volunteers and staff can perform their roles to the highest standards
- Continue to seek annual feedback from Board members, hospital volunteers and paid staff in relation to the adequacy and quality of CIH services and enact recommendations for change as required

MAINTAIN AND INCREASE FUNDING

- Maintain funding from hospitals, statutory bodies, foundations, corporates and the general public
- Increase funding from these diverse sources

ENSURE A BROAD ORGANISATIONAL PRESENCE

- Contribute to national policy debates on issues of relevance
- Promote awareness of CIH among those who can influence change within paediatric healthcare settings and among the media and the wider public.

REVIEW AND PLAN

- Review organisation name and strapline
- Review theory of change. This strategic plan has been developed to reflect our desired outcomes and actions listed in our theory of change.
- Review progress on Strategic Plan 2023–2024
- Develop a new Strategic Plan for 2025 onwards



BACKGROUND TO STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan builds on our previous plan for 2019–2021 and on the results of a review conducted by independent consultants in late 2021. That review process included an analysis of all relevant documentation and extensive consultations with stakeholders both within and outside CIH. These showed that our organisation had a clear vision and was working successfully towards achieving stated goals. Our work was valued and was agreed to be of a very high standard. The consultants suggested that CIH should aspire to grow in capacity and in the range and reach of its services, while remaining focused on its core object and committed to achieving the highest standards in terms of governance.

In early 2022, we began discussions with Children’s Health Ireland (CHI) about developing a vision and a plan for the volunteer service that will be required for the new children’s hospital which is to open in late 2024/early 2025. It was initially decided to delay the development of the new strategic plan so as to take account of the outcome of these discussions. However, as the discussions continued into 2023, the Board decided to put in place a new strategic plan for the period up to the end of 2024

In early 2023, we were also supported by another independent consultant to develop a ‘theory of change’, which is a model that explains how we bring about positive impact. This has been incorporated into the development of the strategic plan.

CURRENT CONTEXT

We work in a constantly changing environment. This plan specifically takes into consideration the following key factors:

- The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on our volunteer-led play service and consequent need to rebuild volunteer teams in all 14 hospitals where this service operates
- The ongoing impact on children, young people and their families of COVID-19 restrictions in hospitals
- The growing awareness of the need of families for information and support on non-clinical issues in and around the time children are availing of hospital services
- The development of the new children's hospital and the need for services to support children, young people and their families in the new location.



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