



## ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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## CEO's Review

This Annual Report for 2017 is dedicated to our late President, Dr Kathleen McGarry. Kathleen had been a member of the Irish Heart Foundation Board for five years and was the organisation's President from 2015 until her untimely death in January 2018.

I was privileged to take over the position of CEO of the Irish Heart Foundation in August 2017 and work with Kathleen for just a few short months. She was a passionate and dedicated leader in furthering our mission to prevent premature death and disability from heart disease and stroke. She is greatly missed by the staff and Board of the Irish Heart Foundation.

2017 was a year of change for the Irish Heart Foundation. After five years at the helm, my predecessor Barry Dempsey departed to take up the role of CEO of Chartered Accountants Ireland. I know I speak for everyone involved with the Irish Heart Foundation when I thank him for his leadership of the organisation. In December we also moved to our new permanent home at 17-19 Rathmines Road Lower in Dublin.

One of the highlights of 2017 was the success and growth of the CPR 4 Schools programme. With the generous support of Bank of Ireland, we are creating a generation of lifesavers, equipping secondary school students across Ireland with the skills and confidence to perform CPR in an emergency.

In July 2017 we celebrated the first birthday of our new Mobile Health Unit. The unit is a key part of our outreach work in local communities, in particular with disadvantaged and at-risk groups. In 2017, Irish Heart Foundation nurses in the unit carried out almost 10,000 heart health checks across the country.

Our Farmers Have Hearts initiative continued apace in 2017, with 982 farmers receiving heart health checks in their local marts. 65% of those checked were advised to see their GP, underscoring the importance and impact of the screenings.

Our network of Stroke Support Groups grew to 18 in 2017. People of working age now account for approximately 2,000 stroke cases each year. In response, in 2017 we launched a Young Stroke Survivors' Network to cater for the specific needs of younger people affected by stroke.

These are just a small sample of the programmes run by the Irish Heart Foundation in schools, workplaces and communities right across the country in 2017.

There has been a long period of decline in mortality attributable to heart disease and stroke, however there are worrying signs that increasing levels of obesity, diabetes and low levels of physical activity have the potential to jeopardise the gains of recent years.

Almost a third of Irish children are now overweight and in 2016 nine per cent of girls and ten per cent of boys in Ireland were classed as obese.

Smoking and alcohol consumption in young people and increasing levels of childhood obesity, particularly in disadvantaged communities, are significant challenges. As we turn to the future, these will be to the fore in our work.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated staff, volunteers and donors, and everyone who has supported our work over the past year. We simply could not do our work without your support.

**Tim Collins**  
**CEO Irish Heart Foundation**



# Chairperson's Report

**2017 marked a year of considerable change for the Irish Heart Foundation.**

In June our CEO of five years, Barry Dempsey, left for pastures new and we subsequently welcomed our new CEO, Tim Collins. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank Barry for all he did for the Irish Heart Foundation as CEO while also welcoming Tim to the role. As a Board we look forward to continuing to work closely with him and his team to drive the organisation forward and ensure that we deliver on our mission – to affect positive change in the lifestyles of Irish people, to achieve better outcomes for those affected by heart disease and stroke and to challenge when the health of our nation is put at risk.

As the Irish Heart Foundation nears the end of our current strategic plan, we look forward to working on a new strategy which will take us forward into the future. Significant challenges remain for cardiovascular health in Ireland and we in the Irish Heart Foundation must continue our work to reduce premature deaths from heart disease and stroke.

We would not be able to do our work without the dedication of all the staff and volunteers in the Irish Heart Foundation, and without the support of the public. You are at the heart of everything we do, and I would like on behalf of the Board to extend our gratitude for your commitment and generosity.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the sad passing of our President Dr Kathleen McGarry. On behalf of the Board, I would like to extend my sympathies to her family and friends. We are very grateful to have had the opportunity to work with her over many years and would like to acknowledge the great work she did for the Foundation. She is missed.

**Declan Sugrue**  
Chairperson, Irish Heart Foundation



# Dr Kathleen McGarry: Obituary

**The untimely death of Dr Kathleen McGarry on 5th January 2018 was an immense loss to her family and friends, as well as to the Irish Heart Foundation community.**

Dr McGarry was a consultant in General Internal Medicine with a special interest in non-invasive cardiology. She was a leading figure in the community in Navan where she was responsible for developing local cardiology services as a consultant physician in Our Lady's Hospital from 1983 until 2014 and ran an active clinical practice in the Mater Private Cardiology Clinic in Navan.

A lifetime of achievements began when Dr McGarry undertook cardiology training in the Hammersmith and Great Ormond Street hospitals in London. She subsequently spent a year as a Cardiology Fellow in Edmonton University Hospital in Canada before returning to Ireland in 1983.

Dr McGarry achieved more than 30 peer-reviewed publications related to cardiovascular disease including a major collaborative study which identified a unique gene in a large Irish family with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy.

Over many years, Dr McGarry shared her expertise and insight with the Irish Heart Foundation as chairperson of the organisation's voluntary council on women's heart disease, on the Irish Heart Foundation Board (2009-2014) and as President of the Irish Heart Foundation (2015-2018).

Dr McGarry was also an elected member of the Council of the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland for 25 years and served a term as Vice President and Censor of the College before being appointed to a senior role as the Associate Director of Hospital Site Accreditation. Dr McGarry also served on several national committees and boards including the National Drugs Advisory Board and the Irish Medicine Board.

The Irish Heart Foundation was extremely fortunate to have had the benefit of her inspiration, dedication and passion, which has contributed greatly to the fight against heart disease and stroke in this country. She was a thoughtful and compassionate colleague who is missed by the Board, management team and staff of the Irish Heart Foundation and we reiterate our sincere sympathies to her husband and family on their untimely loss.

**2017**  
in  
numbers



**10,810**  
people received heart  
checks in our mobile unit  
**52%**  
were advised  
to see their GP

We trained  
**71,628**  
people in  
 **CPR**

Support  
groups



Stroke  
400 members



Sudden cardiac death  
194 members



Long QT syndrome  
241 members



Cardiomyopathy  
473 members



ICD  
1,491 members

**18 stroke**  
support  
groups  
with 400 members

**41** work  
places  
received an  
active@work  
**award**

**62** work  
places  
received a  
healthy eating  
**award**

928 farmers received health  
**CHECKS**  
**65%** were advised  
to see their GP

# Surviving Stroke

**Helen Mancini didn't believe her husband when he told her he thought she was having a stroke.**

In August 2015 Helen Mancini had a stroke. She was just 41. "I just thought I was tired. I thought I was too young, I couldn't be having a stroke. When my husband said I think you are having a stroke I said that only happens to old people," Helen recalled.

Unfortunately, Helen's husband was right. The rate of younger stroke in Ireland is rising rapidly; according to the Irish Heart Foundation/HSE National Stroke Audit in 2016 approximately 26% of stroke sufferers were under 65 – that's almost 2,000 people.

**"I was determined that I would not leave the hospital in a wheelchair."**

Helen was rushed to Beaumont Hospital in Dublin where she received thrombolysis treatment to dissolve the clot that was causing the stroke. After several weeks in hospital she was transferred to Blanchardstown Hospital for rehabilitation where she stayed for five months, the first two of which she was completely bed bound.

"I was determined that I would not leave the hospital in a wheelchair. Once I learned how to walk again I saw that as my ticket home and knew I had to build up my stamina," she said. Helen's determination and hard work won out and on the first anniversary of her stroke in August 2016 she successfully completed a five-mile run.

Helen said the help she receives from the Irish Heart Foundation's Stroke Support Group was, and continues to be, central to her recovery.

"The Irish Heart Foundation Stroke' Support Group has been instrumental in my recovery – it has helped me get my life back, to meet other stroke survivors, share our experiences and learn new approaches to recovery. Since attending my local group, my confidence is rebuilding, and I've met some amazing people that I'm proud to call my friends."

Helen said the one piece of advice she would have for anyone is to get their blood pressure checked regularly and to remember that they are not alone.



**"The Irish Heart Foundation Stroke Support Group has been instrumental in my recovery – it has helped me get my life back, to meet other stroke survivors, share our experiences and learn new approaches to recovery."**

# Health Promotion, Information and Training

The Irish Heart Foundation's Health Promotion, Information and Training Department works to promote and support healthier lifestyle choices in the community, schools and workplaces. We also aim to improve survival rates from sudden cardiac arrest in Ireland by strengthening the chain of survival in every community through CPR training.

## CPR

The Irish Heart Foundation co-ordinates a national emergency CPR programme which provides training to healthcare professionals and the public. Over 71,000 people were trained through this programme in 2017.

The Foundation is an International Training Organisation affiliated to the American Heart Association (AHA) and a Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) Recognised Institute.

198 training sites throughout Ireland are affiliated to the Foundation and are contracted to carry out training to AHA standards. The Irish Heart Foundation also sits on the Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy Group.

## Schools

### Post-primary school

Almost 70% of cardiac arrests happen in the home. When a person suffers a cardiac arrest, early CPR can double if not triple their chance of survival.

The innovative CPR 4 Schools programme, sponsored by Bank of Ireland, aims to create a new generation of 360,000 CPR lifesavers in every community in Ireland by the end of 2019. Using a train the trainer model, 415 teachers in 109 schools were trained to teach pupils CPR in 2017. Teachers and students leave the training with the skills and confidence to perform CPR in cardiac emergencies.

The Healthy Eating Award involves working closely with a school's caterer, principal, teachers and students to ensure that heart-healthy food options are provided and promoted to students, staff and visitors. 25 schools received the Healthy Eating Award in 2017.

### Primary school

Action for Life is a health-related physical activity programme supporting primary school teachers to deliver the PE curriculum. It is delivered through Education Centres and on site in schools. In 2017 over 300 teachers were trained in Action for Life.

## Community

The Irish Heart Foundation's Mobile Health Unit offers free blood pressure checks in communities across Ireland. 2017 was the first full year of operation of the unit and over 10,800 health checks were carried out in locations across Ireland.

An independent evaluation carried out in 2017 found that 41% of those screened had high blood pressure, a key indicator (risk factor) of heart disease and stroke. The Mobile Health Unit was kindly supported in 2017 by Bank of Ireland and Medtronic.

Slí na Sláinte encourages people of all ages and abilities to get walking through a network of marked and measured routes in communities, workplaces and schools throughout the country. The Irish Heart Foundation established 34 new Slí walking routes in 2017, including five in schools, bringing the total to 401.

The community walking routes are supported by training of community walking leaders. Over 300 walking leaders were trained in 2017, including two community coaching courses for those who are unemployed.

## Tackling inequalities

Working with disadvantaged groups is integral to our approach and we work with the support of a range of partners including Men's Sheds, Pavee Point and the HSE.

Through our Farmers Have Hearts initiative, in 2017 we provided one-to-one heart health assessments to almost 1,000 farmers at farmers' marts across the country. 65% of the farmers who were seen by our nurses were referred to their GP for investigation or follow-up.

We continued to support three Community Heart Projects in disadvantaged areas to develop a Community Food Initiative with the aim of positively influencing activity, eating habits and heart health in low-income communities. The Projects are run in partnership with Pavee Point in Finglas, Dublin and Family Resource Centres in Monaghan and Wexford.



# Learning to Save Lives

Irene O Mahony is a PE teacher and transition year coordinator at St Kevin's College in Finglas, Dublin. In November 2017 she received Irish Heart Foundation CPR training alongside her colleague Robert Tynan. With Irene and Robert's encouragement, other teachers have since learned how to do CPR and they have also trained transition year students to teach CPR to all the other students in the school.

## Workplaces

Our workplace programme Well at Work provides heart health checks together with healthy eating and physical activity programmes to Irish companies and employees.

In 2017, 41 companies achieved our Active at Work Award and our Healthy Eating Award went to 62 companies, together reaching over 40,000 employees.

Almost 1,500 workplace health checks were carried out.

## Information and awareness

The Irish Heart Foundation provides a wide range of information, leaflets and educational materials on all aspects of heart disease and stroke with over a million units distributed nationwide annually.

The Irish Heart Foundation's annual health promotion awareness campaign Heart Month takes place each year in September. In 2017 the Strike Before Stroke campaign targeted men and women aged 45-60, raising awareness of stroke and its prevention, and calling on people to get their blood pressure checked.

## Funding

The Irish Heart Foundation's health promotion, information and training work is assisted by an annual Health Promotion and Improvement grant from the HSE. The CPR training we provide around the country is supported by an annual grant from the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC). We could not have completed this work without both yearly grants.

Irene says that CPR 4 Schools was very meaningful to their school community and they felt the school could benefit from the training. "In our school we have learned the importance of CPR and how it can benefit families. I liked the concept of it as it was straightforward and could be effective for everyone," Irene explained.

CPR 4 Schools was chosen as the central theme for St Kevin's College's health awareness weeks and with the assistance of other teachers who are also trained in CPR, the transition year students set about training every student in the school from first year right through to sixth year.

**"In our school we have learned the importance of CPR and how it can benefit families."**

"We introduced training for the whole school from first to sixth year every year and the teachers were then able to assist the students who trained their peers."

The Finglas secondary school even has its own AED (Automated External Defibrillator) which was purchased thanks to funds raised by the student council.

With the help of a local sign maker, St Kevin's has also installed a number of signs all around the school with emergency numbers and the location of the AED.

"The vast majority of heart attacks happen in the home so, even if you have a young person that knows how to call the emergency services, start CPR or follow the instructions, they could save a family member's or a close neighbour's life. I think it is important that they understand that," Irene said.

**"If you have a young person that knows how to call the emergency services, start CPR or follow the instructions, they could save a family member's or a close neighbour's life. I think it is important that they understand that."**

# Advocacy and Patient Support

## Advocacy

Influencing national health policy is one of the ways the Irish Heart Foundation delivers on its mission to affect positive change in the lifestyles of Irish people, to achieve better outcomes for those affected by heart disease and stroke and to challenge when the health of our nation is put at risk. In 2017 we were successful in achieving key changes in national health policy which will improve the nation's health. Longstanding campaigns came to fruition with the introduction of plain packaging for tobacco products and the announcement of significant tax rates on sugar sweetened drinks.

After an intensive lobbying campaign following the launch of our Stroke Manifesto, the Irish Heart Foundation gained a commitment from Minister for Health Simon Harris to deliver Ireland's first ever dedicated national stroke strategy. We successfully argued for funding to extend early supported discharge programmes which ensure quicker, better and cheaper recoveries for stroke survivors. We were one of several organisations which sat on a

Department of Finance working group on the issue of VAT and charities, which ultimately led to a scheme to partially compensate charities for non-recoverable VAT. We also worked collaboratively with colleagues in the health and non-profit sector to secure the seventh straight Budget increase in tobacco tax, which has been a crucial factor in our historically low youth smoking rates.

Child obesity continues to be an important battleground for the organisation with State-sponsored research estimating that 85,000 children currently living on the island of Ireland will die prematurely due to being overweight. We launched the ground-breaking Stop Targeting Kids campaign in 2017 which seeks a ban on junk food marketing to children under the age of 16 and in particular highlights the industry's ruthless pursuit of higher consumption by children through online advertising tactics.



## Patient Support

Research shows that the vast majority of stroke survivors feel abandoned after hospital discharge, whilst rehabilitation services are often unavailable unless they can afford to pay for them privately. The Irish Heart Foundation is committed to developing a national network of stroke support groups.

We added nine new groups to our stroke support network in 2017, bringing us to a total of 18 groups. The nine new groups are located in Ballinasloe, Cavan, Dungarvan, Longford, Monaghan, Mullingar, Sligo, Tallaght and Waterford. All the groups meet weekly, are free of charge and in addition to offering a social lifeline to often isolated stroke survivors, they provide group physiotherapy, one-on-one counselling, respite holidays and many other free programmes and services.

Meanwhile our annual National Stroke Survivor Day meeting was held in April in Croke Park and attracted more than 400 attendees. According to the Stroke Alliance for Europe, this was the largest single gathering of stroke survivors throughout the continent during 2017.

The rate of younger stroke in Ireland is rising rapidly, with people of working age now accounting for approximately 2,000 stroke cases each year. In 2017 we launched a Young Stroke Survivors' Network called Life After Stroke. The private forum is a space for younger stroke survivors to talk to each other and share their experiences with the many common challenges post stroke, such as relationships, returning to work, positive mental health, anxiety and depression, fatigue and communication difficulties.

In addition to further stroke groups, the Irish Heart Foundation is also committed to developing new groups to support people living with heart failure, after research we carried out with the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland revealed high levels of isolation and lack of support among the estimated 90,000 people living with the condition in Ireland.

Meanwhile our sudden cardiac death, Long QT syndrome and cardiomyopathy support groups also continued to provide information and peer support throughout the year to a combined membership of over 2,300 people.

# Medical Review

## Research

Research creates an evidence base and underpins the work we do, the information and advice we provide, and our advocacy campaigns.

In the Irish Heart Foundation, we support research by funding researchers and collaborating with other groups. We also part fund the Stroke Clinical Trials Network.

## Medical councils

The Irish Heart Foundation has several active medical councils, including a stroke council, a sudden cardiac death council, a cardiovascular disease prevention council, a nutrition council, a heart failure council and a hypertension council. These councils provide the organisation with specialist expertise and information to guide our advocacy, information and awareness campaigns. The councils also help us run research and information meetings including an annual stroke meeting, and a sudden cardiac death meeting.

## Atrial fibrillation public awareness campaign

Atrial fibrillation is a kind of irregular heartbeat. With atrial fibrillation, the heart beats in a disorganized and irregular way which can lead to a range of symptoms and potential complications. People with atrial fibrillation are five times more likely to suffer a stroke, but it can be detected by regular pulse checks.

More than 40,000 people over the age of 50 in Ireland suffer from atrial fibrillation, however, 39% of people are undiagnosed. In addition, just 26% of the Irish population has heard of the condition. In October 2017, we ran a public awareness campaign through radio, video, social media and advertising channels to raise awareness of this condition.

Our campaign video was watched over 95,000 times and more than 1,000 people visited our campaign web page. Our Heart and Stroke Helpline received over 150 queries during the campaign. Research conducted after the campaign found that awareness of atrial fibrillation increased to 37% among our target audience of men aged 50 and over.

# The Importance of Getting Checked

**A chance encounter with the Irish Heart Foundation's mobile health unit uncovered Bobby Mulvaney's undiagnosed health problems.**

**W**hen Bobby Mulvaney (60) began to get headaches, he put them down to stress and like most Irish men decided not to bother the doctor about it.

However, when he availed of a free blood pressure check provided by the nurse in the mobile health unit was a lifesaver. He was referred to his GP for further tests and was put on blood pressure medication.

**“Normal blood pressure is 120/80 and for Bobby the fact that his high blood pressure was picked up by the nurse in the mobile health unit was a lifesaver.”**

Bobby is the co-founder of the Men's Sheds in Sallins, Co Kildare and he had heard about the dangers of high blood pressure and heart disease. However, it was only when the Irish Heart Foundation's Mobile Health Unit visited a Men's Shed meeting in Kildare that he decided to get his own blood pressure checked.

“We had a cluster meeting in the Men's Shed in Sallins and the Irish Heart Foundation's van was outside,” Bobby explained.

Normal blood pressure is 120/80 and for Bobby the fact that his high blood pressure was picked up by the nurse in the mobile health unit was a lifesaver. He was referred to his GP for further tests and was put on blood pressure medication.

Sometime later Bobby developed “terrible cramps” in his legs and was admitted to hospital where he received five stents.

Bobby describes the treatment as life-changing and he credited the Irish Heart Foundation's mobile health unit for identifying the problem in the first place.

He says the greatest thing he got from the test and the procedure that followed was “peace of mind”.



**“We had a cluster meeting in the Men's Shed in Sallins and the Irish Heart Foundation's van was outside. It was only because of the talk on blood pressure in the Men's Shed that I decided to get my blood pressure checked. I found out that it was 175/80.”**

# Fundraising, Marketing and Communications

## Fundraising

The Irish Heart Foundation is almost wholly reliant on the generosity of the public to support the work we do, with 90% of our income coming from donations, sponsorship and fundraising activities.

Every year we are heartened by the support we receive from people right across the country who donate their time, energy and money to support our work to prevent premature death from heart disease and stroke.

People choose to help us in many different ways – some volunteer to give their time to help out in our offices or services, others come out and shake a bucket for us on our national collection day, some host events or do fundraisers, many run or take on an active challenge to remember loved ones or celebrate their own heart health. Thousands respond to our fundraising appeals or commit to supporting us with a monthly donation. Many more nominate the Irish Heart Foundation as a charity beneficiary in their workplace and others work with us as charity partner.

However you support the Irish Heart Foundation, we want to take this opportunity to say “Thank You”. Without your ongoing support we could not do the work we do. And in 2017 that support enabled us to:

- Train 71,628 people in CPR
- Deliver heart health checks to 10,810 people in our mobile health unit
- Support stroke survivors through 18 active stroke support groups across Ireland

## Happy Hearts Appeal

The Irish Heart Foundation's annual Happy Hearts appeal took place on 12th May 2017. The appeal was launched by Kathryn Thomas and was supported by celebrities including comedian Fred Cooke and RTÉ broadcaster Michael Lyster. Over 2,000 volunteers took to the streets in villages, towns and cities across the country to raise €297,000 to support the Irish Heart Foundation's programmes.



## Marketing and Communications

In 2017 the Irish Heart Foundation's communications team supported the organisation in communications with all our stakeholders, both internal and external. The communications team provides a full press office and works with all teams to support campaigns and maximise the impact of all activities.

Through media and digital activity we have continued to reach even more people. The stories told through Irish Heart Foundation campaigns, website, publications and social media are real stories about the very real challenges facing people in Ireland.

In 2017, the Irish Heart Foundation launched a new website at [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie). The new website has several features including an A-Z index of heart conditions, directories of local events and rolling news about heart health and is an invaluable source of information on all heart health matters.

# Our People Finance

The people who work in the Irish Heart Foundation make the organisation what it is. Their passion for and commitment to helping the Irish Heart Foundation achieve its goals cannot be understated. The number of employees working in the Irish Heart Foundation was 54 at the end of 2017.

Our volunteers are hugely important also; they help us each and every day to achieve what we do. Every May for the last 29 years thousands of people across Ireland have volunteered to support our national collection day, the Happy Hearts appeal, and as a result we have raised millions in much needed funds. We couldn't have done it without you! Volunteers also help us regularly in our day to day work – volunteering in the office or organising events to raise awareness and funds.

As an independent charity, the majority of the Irish Heart Foundation's activities are funded from our own fundraising initiatives and revenue-generating activities. Each year we must generate enough revenue to ensure that we can continue to lead the fight against heart disease and stroke.

We take very seriously our obligation to ensure that all income is used effectively and efficiently in support of our mission and goals. We are governed by a Board of voluntary non-executive Directors who do not receive any remuneration or compensation for this role. We adhere to the highest standards of governance and accountability. We are fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising. We are in the process of changing our accounting system over to the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP). We are audited by KPMG and publish our full accounts online on our website [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie). We file our accounts with the Companies Registration Office and we are registered with the Irish Charities Regulator.

In 2017, we generated 90% of our income from donations, sponsorship and fundraising activities. 3% was funding received in State grants. Our total income for 2017 was €11.6 million, which included a significant legacy donation of €6 million from the late Mrs Elizabeth O'Kelly, which has been designated to fund a specific long-term initiative in the area of childhood obesity. The Irish Heart Foundation is very grateful to the late Mrs O'Kelly for her generous donation.



## INCOME 2017

	€
Fundraising	10,508,886
Investment income	224,750
Charitable activities	897,657
	<b>11,631,293</b>

## EXPENDITURE 2017

	€
Health promotion programmes	1,191,118
Resuscitation programmes	537,975
Advocacy	434,209
Patient support	1,046,939
Research	167,578
Support services	1,352,240
Programme operating costs	2,675,867
	<b>7,405,926</b>

# Notes

