



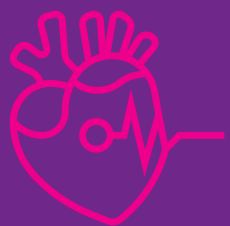
Defending, empowering and caring

Strategic Plan 2025-2028



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Cardiovascular disease

According to the World Health Organization, “cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death globally, taking an estimated 17.9 million lives each year.”

Cardiovascular diseases are a group of disorders that affect the heart and blood vessels. They include heart attacks, strokes, heart failure, congenital heart disease, thrombosis and more.

Not only are cardiovascular diseases the leading cause of death, they also lead to life-changing conditions and disability for those living with heart disease and the effects of stroke, and their loved ones.

However, the good news is that 80% of premature cardiovascular disease is preventable.

In Ireland

Up to
600,000
people are living with a
cardiovascular condition

Approximately
7,500
people suffer from a
stroke each year and
it is estimated that
over 30,000
are living with
some form
of disability
post-stroke

Over
9,500
people die from
cardiovascular
disease each year

Almost
5,000
cardiac arrests
happen each year

An estimated
137,000
people are living with
heart failure

Smoking
leads to up to
4,500
premature deaths
each year



Who we are

**We are the
Irish Heart Foundation,
the national heart
and stroke charity.**



We are a community of people who fight to protect the cardiovascular health of everyone in Ireland.

Serving heart and stroke patients, their loved ones and the public since 1966, our mission is to stop people dying prematurely from heart disease and stroke.

As a registered not-for-profit charity, we are committed to the following main objects, as outlined in our Constitution:

- to eliminate preventable death and disability from cardiovascular disease or any diseases of an allied or similar nature through campaigning and advocacy
- to foster, promote and advance the relief of cardiovascular disease through health promotion, education and prevention activities
- to provide patient support and training services
- to conduct, promote, support and fund research related to the causes, prevention and cure of cardiovascular disease, and into improvements in the management of cardiovascular disease and its complications; and to publish and disseminate the useful results of any such research.

Our work has evolved significantly over the past five decades, but there is still lots to do to eliminate preventable death and disability from heart disease and stroke, and to support and care for those living with these life-changing conditions.

Our vision

A future where no hearts are broken by preventable heart disease and stroke.

Our mission

To eliminate preventable death and disability from heart disease and stroke, and to support and care for those living with these life-changing conditions.



Our values

Within the Irish Heart Foundation, our values are the cornerstone of everything we do. They define who we are, guide our actions and how we relate with the people who use our services, the public, our partners, our key stakeholders and each other.

Our values inspire us to strive for the highest standards in all that we do and help us to remain focused on our vision and mission.



Fairness and equity

We believe that equity of access to heart and stroke services for prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care is a basic human right.



Collaborative and evidence driven

We design our programmes in collaboration with the people who need them and their families, so that they are appropriate, relevant and effective. We base and evaluate our programmes on the best available evidence.

We believe in partnership and collaboration with other organisations rather than going it alone, and we try not to duplicate the work of others.



Transparency and accountability

We are trustworthy and transparent in our work. We are accountable to the public and our many stakeholders.

We always aim for excellence, maximum impact, cost effectiveness and the highest standards of corporate governance.



Compassionate and courageous

We are compassionate in our work, and we are not afraid to stand up and speak out where public policy or vested interests threaten or fail to protect people's health.

We are relentless in our support of people impacted by cardiovascular disease.



Empowering and supportive

We support and enable people to lead healthy lives. We empower people to create healthy environments.

We work with people to understand their needs and to develop information, tools and training to support them to make sustainable changes in their lives.



Our key organisational pillars

DEFEND



We will lead the fight to protect heart health from threats like junk food, tobacco, alcohol, air pollution and gaps in care.

EMPOWER



We will empower patients and the public with the best information and tools to enable them to make healthier choices for their hearts.

CARE



We will support people affected by cardiovascular disease to live their best life possible in their own homes and communities.



Our strategic priorities

Advocacy

We will advocate for change at a national and European level, supporting the implementation of policies that help prevent, treat and care for cardiovascular diseases, the rights of those living with the effects of cardiovascular diseases, and the social and environmental factors that impact health.

Prevention

We will focus on primary and secondary cardiovascular disease prevention policies, addressing the social factors that affect health and raising awareness about the impact of climate change on heart health. We will support health promotion and prevention across policy, advocacy and programmes. We will empower people to look after their heart health and teach life-saving CPR in hospitals, communities and schools across Ireland.

Care and support

We will support those living with the impact of heart disease and stroke.

Health equity

We will focus relentlessly on people living in low income communities where heart disease and stroke rates are highest. We will also address differences in health, focusing on gender, location and age.

Research

We will conduct and fund research, utilise evidence-based approaches and measure our impact through research.

Defending

Our advocacy team is responsible for campaigning for improved patient care and the implementation of policies that prevent premature death and disability from heart conditions and stroke.

The patient voice is a powerful force behind our mission. We are committed to ensuring that the lived experiences of people affected by heart disease and stroke is used to help shape policy, influence services and drive meaningful change.

We work closely with patients and their loved ones, and actively encourage them to share their stories and experiences with us to strengthen our advocacy efforts and help us push for better support and improved care.



Strategic priority 1

Advocacy

We will lead the fight to protect heart health from threats like junk food, tobacco, alcohol, air pollution and gaps in care.

We will champion a more enlightened approach to recovery from heart disease and stroke that addresses the social, practical and financial barriers preventing patients from living their best possible lives.



Strategic objectives

We will advocate for:

- An overarching Cardiovascular Health Policy that delivers world-class health promotion and prevention programmes, hospital services, clinical care and community services, and supports for heart and stroke patients.
- Full implementation of the National Cardiac Services Review and the National Stroke Strategy.
- Full resourcing of cardiac rehabilitation services.
- More research and cardiac services for women's heart health.
- A ban on the targeted online and offline marketing of unhealthy food and drinks, particularly the targeting of children and young people.
- Measures to reduce rates of childhood obesity, including taxes on junk food balanced by subsidies on healthy food, mandatory reformulation programmes, healthier school and community environments and a firmer focus on nutrition in a child's first 1,000 days.
- The legal sale of tobacco to be phased out over time, and for legislation to protect young people from nicotine addiction caused by e-cigarettes.
- Changes to counteract the impact of alcohol on cardiovascular health.
- Changes to combat the negative impact of climate change (particularly air pollution) on cardiovascular health.
- Changes to counteract the commercial determinants of health.
- Improved and ongoing availability of Irish data on cardiovascular status at population level, including nationally representative data of baseline cholesterol or blood pressure levels.



Empowering

Through our health promotion and prevention work, we aim to empower patients and the public by working with them to provide the tools and information they need to lead heart-healthy lifestyles and make informed decisions about their health.

We are committed to raising awareness about the risk factors associated with heart disease and stroke, especially in underserved communities. Through our free health initiatives, we provide vital information and health checks to help people understand their heart health—empowering them to take control.

We also deliver life-saving CPR skills to people of all ages, helping them recognise the signs of cardiac emergencies and respond with confidence. By offering accessible and practical information, we are building a healthier, more informed population and communities of lifesavers across the country.

Strategic priority 2

Prevention

We will empower patients and the public with the best information and tools to enable them to make healthier choices for their hearts and minds.



Strategic objectives

We will:

- Provide CPR training across the country, including Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) in healthcare settings via instructors and the Resuscitation Quality Improvement Programme (RQI), and in communities. We will expand CPR training in schools.
- Deliver health checks to underserved communities and those at greatest risk of cardiovascular disease, including the farming community.
- Develop health promotion programmes supporting school curriculum delivery that place children on the path to healthier lives.
- Raise awareness of cardiovascular health risks through our awareness campaigns.
- Expand our High-Risk Prevention programme in more areas and HSE health regions across Ireland.
- Empower all age groups to better understand health information and to make informed decisions about their heart health. We will be accessible, inclusive and innovative in our approach, working in partnership with patients, the public and medical experts to develop health information that is high-quality and practical.
- Develop the Health Promotion Alliance Ireland to provide a consistent advocacy voice on the primary prevention of chronic diseases.
- Continue to work in partnership with the HSE and other partners to promote heart-healthy behaviours across communities in every HSE region.

Caring

Our national patient support services are designed to meet the significant psychosocial needs of people living with cardiovascular conditions in the community. We aim to provide person-centred support that includes access to information, education, emotional care and peer connection.

These services include counselling, telephone and remote support, nurse-led support and in-person support—all ensuring that individuals can access the help they need in the format that's best for them.

Our dedicated team is here to listen, assist and empower people to better manage their condition and enhance their quality of life.



Strategic priority 3

Care and support

We will support people affected by cardiovascular disease to live the best life possible in their own homes and communities.



Strategic objectives

We will:

- Support those affected by heart disease and stroke, and their loved ones, with our Nurse Support Line. Our Nurse Support Line is a touchpoint for the public to engage with our services and be signposted to their healthcare professional (when appropriate) and our programmes, events and activities.
- Ensure all patient support services and community programmes are tailored to the unique needs of our patient community, focusing on mental and physical health, advocacy, and inclusion.
- Maximise our collaboration with the HSE to deliver life-changing support to growing numbers of heart patients and stroke survivors.
- Increase our impact by developing services in areas such as psychological support and programmes for people with aphasia.
- Develop our service offerings for patients across a broad spectrum of cardiovascular disease.

Strategic priority 4

Health equity

Everyone has the right to a healthy life, regardless of their income, background or geographical location. Unfortunately, this is not the reality for many people living in disadvantaged communities across Ireland. Health equity is a central focus of our work. We are committed to challenging the unfair gaps that exist and ensuring that there is equity of access to good health and good heart health for all. By tackling health inequality, we can help prevent heart disease and stroke where the need is greatest and ensure no one is left behind.



Strategic objectives

We will

- Identify, be inclusive in our approach to reaching the most underserved communities (low-income, geographical locations, gender, ethnicity, immigrants, disability etc.) and most at risk of cardiovascular disease, and work collaboratively to identify sustainable and impactful solutions.

Strategic priority 5

Research

Research provides the foundation for meaningful action — guiding our policies, strengthening patient care and informing our advocacy efforts for people affected by heart disease and stroke. We are committed to supporting high-quality, impactful research with the potential to improve real world outcomes. This ensures our work is grounded in the latest clinical evidence and delivers maximum benefit to the people we serve.



Strategic objectives

We will:

- Partner with other organisations to produce high-quality research on cardiovascular disease prevention and contribute to providing essential data on factors that are detrimental to heart health, such as vaping, e-cigarettes and climate change.
- Support clinical research relating to acute cardiovascular disease treatment and encourage researchers to focus more on evidence relating to living well with heart-related conditions, particularly after stroke.
- Produce, in collaboration with a suitable university, at least one scientific publication adding to the evidence base around prevention and management of cardiovascular disease in an Irish context.
- Conduct and commission research to inform our work, ensuring all our programmes are properly measured and evaluated, and show clear results and impact.



Strategic enablers

Our strategic enablers ensure we have the support, capacity and tools needed to deliver a lasting impact in the fight against heart disease and stroke. They are essential to helping us achieve our vision of a future where no hearts are broken by preventable heart disease and stroke.

People

We will invest in our staff and volunteers, and support them in achieving our collective ambitions by:

- Focusing on employee engagement to develop and retain staff, and using strategic recruitment strategies to attract new employees and volunteers to the Irish Heart Foundation.
- Achieving Investing in Volunteers accreditation.
- Promoting a culture of respect and inclusivity across the organisation.
- Achieving Investors in Diversity (Diversity and Inclusion) accreditation.
- Bringing our values to life in how we work by holding 'values sessions' with staff and volunteers, where they can share and discuss practical examples of our values in action.
- Providing in-house training for staff to help build the skills they need to work effectively and support the goals of the Irish Heart Foundation, using the expertise that exists within the organisation.
- Reviewing our terms and conditions of employment, including benchmarking with other similar organisations in our sector.

Partnerships

We will work with our Irish Heart Foundation Advisory Councils, Alliances, academic institutions, the government, the public and people we serve, funders and the non-statutory and statutory sectors by:

- Continuing to collaborate with our existing partners to fulfil our mission, and exploring new partnerships and collaborative opportunities to implement our strategic priorities.
- Developing a Public and Patient Participation policy and action plan, ensuring that we involve the public and our patients in our work in a meaningful way.

ESG (Environment, Social and Governance)

We will agree how ESG will fit within the implementation of our strategy educate internal stakeholders about ESG and use it in our dealings with external stakeholders by:

- Embedding ESG in our way of working, our corporate engagements and in our risk management and decision-making processes.
- Taking steps to reduce our carbon footprint by promoting environmental and operational sustainability in all our practices, while maintaining high standards.
- Setting up a Senior Management Team (SMT) strategy implementation steering group to measure the impact under each strategic priority at regular intervals during the lifetime of the strategy.

Digital capability

We will harness the recent investments in digital transformation at the Irish Heart Foundation and continue to explore better ways to reach those we serve using new technologies and capabilities by:

- Taking a 'digital first' approach to how we work and communicate both internally and externally, using digital tools, data and analytics to engage with others and work more efficiently and effectively.

Funds

We will continue working to achieve ongoing, sustainable financing for our activities through fundraising, training income, statutory funding and by using our resources wisely by:

- Working with government departments and statutory agencies to secure recurring funding for relevant programmes.
- Seeking innovative ways to sustain our fundraising income.
- Managing our expenditure in line with approved budgets and reserves policy

Implementation and evaluation

The implementation of this Strategy will be monitored and reviewed by the Foundation's Senior Management Team and Board of Directors.

For more information about our Senior Management Team and Board of Directors, see irishheart.ie.

A note from our CEO, Emma Balmaine



As we approach the 60th Anniversary of the Irish Heart Foundation in 2026, this strategy ensures that we will stay true to the ambitions and purpose set out by our founders. While Ireland has changed dramatically in the last five decades and there have been great strides in cardiovascular health, interventions and treatments, the work of the Foundation is as important today as it was in 1966.

The strategic priorities and objectives set out in this strategy for the next four years, will see us concentrate our resources, expertise and energy in ways that will improve cardiovascular health across Ireland, and we will continue the fight to protect the cardiovascular health of everyone in this country.

As the national stroke and heart charity, our mission to eliminate preventable death and disability from heart disease and stroke, and to support and care for those living with these life-changing conditions, continues to guide our work and that is why we undertake lifesaving and life-changing work by innovating and leading in health promotion and heart disease and stroke prevention, building a nation of lifesavers through CPR training, campaigning and advocating for patients, and speaking out and caring for people living with heart disease and stroke.

We will only realise these ambitions with the support of our staff, volunteers, board of directors, advisory councils, partners in the statutory and non-statutory sectors, donors and benefactors. We are excited to see what we can achieve. Let the journey begin!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Balmaine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Emma" being more prominent than the last name "Balmaine".

Emma Balmaine
Chief Executive Officer





Irish Heart Foundation

The National Stroke & Heart Charity

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Charity Registration No.: CHY5507
Charity Regulatory Authority No.: 20008376
Company Registration Office No.: 23434