



# Moving Forward

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## MS Ireland's Strategic Plan

2012 – 2014

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# Foreword by the Chairman and Chief Executive

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In 2011, Multiple Sclerosis Ireland celebrated 50 years of services to the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) community. Since 1961, MS Ireland has been the only national organisation providing information, support and advocacy services to people with MS, their families, carers and others. We are proud to have been at the forefront of helping people with MS and their families address the challenges MS may bring into their lives. We look forward to continuing this input over the lifetime of this strategic plan.

Our last strategic plan, 'Making It Happen' ran from 2008 to 2011. In that timeframe, we have had many achievements:

- Our individual and group supports assist over 4,000 people a year to find out more about MS, manage its effects, navigate services and meet other people affected by MS
- Our Getting The Balance Right programme has delivered over 3,000 tailored exercise and physiotherapy interventions to people with MS
- The MS Care Centre, Ireland's only respite and therapy centre received international accreditation from CHKS
- Our voluntary Branch network provided thousands of social events, services and welfare opportunities
- Our new website, [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie) was launched and new technologies introduced to improve information and communications
- Our profile was raised as we developed our work with spokespeople with MS, launched fundraising campaigns and worked with more personalities
- Our advocacy work (through The Neurological Alliance of Ireland) has seen the number of neurologists increase, developments in neurorehabilitation and a greater awareness of MS publically
- Ongoing campaigns have continued to be successful (MS READaTHON and Treks for example) and new ventures have proved fruitful (annual raffles and Friends of the MS Care Centre)

All our successes are as a result of the hard work, commitment and passion of our staff, volunteers and supporters.

The last four years have not been without their challenges. We operate in an ever changing health-care system and changes in policy and services have impacted our work e.g. the transformation of the HSE, the introduction of Primary Care Teams and diminished access to home supports. Changes in legislation have also impacted our work e.g. the Disability Act and the Charities Act. However, the recession is the biggest threat to MS Ireland's sustainability.

Over the last four years, MS Ireland has received an 11% cut in statutory income and a 30% reduction in fundraised income. In those years, we achieved many significant savings by renegotiating many financial arrangements, reducing our expenditure in many areas (including our fundraising campaigns), creatively using the resources at our disposal and streamlining services and

operations. We also had to reduce some administrative input into a few of our activities. We forecast that further cuts and reductions will be an ongoing concern.

Our financial situation now requires significant attention. We can no longer afford the level of activity we have developed over the years. We need to prioritise our work and deliver the best outcomes for people with MS, based on our resources.

In June 2011, the Board of MS Ireland commissioned an internal organisational review to find ways to prioritise the activity of the organisation in light of diminished statutory and fundraised income. Consultation was a major factor in the review. The needs of people with MS always need to guide our work. All our members, people who use our services, staff, voluntary Branches and key people with the HSE were invited to contribute. Nine hundred and thirty people took part in online and offline surveys. Focus groups were also carried out.

The results of the review show that people value and respect the services we provide. Many services scored highly in terms of knowledge about the service and quality of that service. We asked people with MS to rate all services they use (or have used) in terms of importance. The top 10 services were, in order:

1. Written information about MS
2. Getting the Balance Right
3. Online information
4. Newly diagnosed programmes
5. Symptom management programmes
6. MS Information Line
7. Local MS voluntary Branch welfare services
8. MS community workers
9. Local MS voluntary Branch programmes and classes
10. Information days for people with MS

These services are currently delivered by a cross section of the organisation:

<b>Service:</b>	<b>Delivered By:</b>
Written information about MS	National Office and Regional Offices
Getting the Balance Right	Regional Offices
Online information	National Office, Regional Offices and voluntary Branches
Newly diagnosed programmes	Regional Offices
Symptom management programmes	Regional Offices
MS Information Line	National Office
Local MS voluntary Branch welfare services	Voluntary Branches
MS community workers	Regional Offices
Local MS voluntary Branch programmes and classes	Voluntary Branches
Information days for people with MS	Regional Offices and voluntary Branches

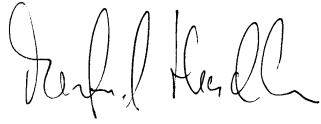
The research also asked participants to identify key themes that MS Ireland should consider going forward. These themes emerged as key priorities for MS Ireland from all groups consulted:

- Working in a more integrated way throughout the organisation
- Prioritising our work
- Using our resources as efficiently and effectively as possible

Integrating our services and all the resources of MS Ireland will be a key priority going forward. Harnessing the talents, skills and input from staff and volunteers, particularly in our regions, will be paramount to offering a cohesive, fair and sustainable service to everyone using our services. Integration across the organisation will be key feature of our work going forward. Furthermore, it will be a key strategic objective within our service provision work.

Our research has enabled MS Ireland to plot a way forward in developing the organisation. We now have a clear mandate on what people who use our services want and it is the Society's responsibility to deliver those services in an appropriate and cost effective manner. This will involve lots of change and development in key areas. It will involve smarter ways of working and better use of resources. It will involve innovation, commitment and passion. It will involve all our staff, volunteers and supporters who will make a difference.

This Strategic Plan is our way to move forward. We believe as a strong, dynamic and cohesive organisation we can achieve the objectives in this plan and remain at the centre of the MS community. Please join us as we move forward together.



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**Manfred Huschka**  
**Chairman**



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**Ava Battles**  
**Chief Executive**

# MS Ireland's Philosophy

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## Mission Statement

To enable and empower people affected by Multiple Sclerosis to live the life of their choice to their fullest potential

## Vision

MS Ireland has a vision of Irish society where all people affected by MS live positive and active lives in the community

## Aims

- to facilitate people with MS to control their lives and environment, to live with dignity and participate in the community
- to provide support for the families and carers of people with MS
- to co-operate with the medical, scientific, social and caring professions to promote scientific research into the cause of, cure for and management of MS, and the alleviation of medical and social symptoms
- to exchange and disseminate information relating to MS
- to provide an identifiable focal point by developing an efficient, effective and caring organisation to serve the needs of people affected by MS

## Commitment to those who access MS Ireland's services:

Through all activities, MS Ireland endeavours to ensure that people who use our services will:

- have easy and equal access to information, services and treatments needed to improve quality of life;
- have access to age-appropriate respite and long-term care services;
- see better treatments and progress toward a cure (prevention, arrest and repair);
- have access to specialist MS medical care (neurologist, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, paid personal assistants etc);
- exert influence over government decisions affecting their welfare;
- have opportunities for meaningful work (paid or unpaid);
- be understood by family, friends, the public and health professionals and get the emotional support they need;

- be informed and able to access social and recreational opportunities and participate fully in Irish society.

**Through its work, MS Ireland will be recognised:**

- for knowledge and expertise in all aspects of living with MS
- for promoting and assisting research into prevention, treatment, management and cure of MS
- for providing qualitative, innovative and appropriate responses and supports for people affected by MS
- for influencing Government policy and public opinion
- for promotion of equitable and accessible quality treatments and services
- for being open and transparent in all its dealings
- for using all income in a responsible and ethical manner in line with all relevant legal and policy frameworks.

**MS Ireland will be fair, open, transparent and responsible to the people it works with, serves and employs.**



# Services, Supports & Work

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MS Ireland's services have developed over the years in response to the needs of people with MS, their families and other people who use our services users. Most of our direct support services are delivered through our regional structure. Ten Regional Offices coordinate services in defined areas, these services are complemented by those of our 39 voluntary Branches. In addition, a number of services are operated from our National Office.

People who use our services are encouraged to become members of the Society, but access to services is open to all regardless of membership.

## Our Core Services Include:

### Individual and Family Support

Through our case work service, our teams of professional regional community workers support the person with MS through the transitional changes that MS, as a disease, presents. Support is also available to the family members in dealing with the challenges they may face as a family unit.

### Living with MS programmes

A range of living with MS programmes, workshops and activities are organised throughout the country that are targeted at various groups such as those newly diagnosed, carers, children of parents with MS and health professionals. Programmes include symptom management, personal development, information/education seminars and Getting The Balance Right, which offers a range of physiotherapy and exercise courses.

### MS Information Line 1850 233 233

Our confidential Information Line provides immediate information and support to those affected by MS. The Information Line is open from Monday to Friday 10am– 2pm.

### Information

Our information tools include a variety of booklets and information sheets, our website [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie), our MSnews magazine, conferences, seminars and the valuable knowledge and experience of our staff.

### The MS Care Centre

The MS Care Centre is Ireland's only respite and therapy centre for people with MS. It offers short-time respite care, therapeutic services, neurological assessments and many social activities in a homely environment in the suburbs of Dublin.

### Counselling

Trained counsellors are available to people with MS and their families to explore the issues that arise from living with MS.

### **Voluntary Branches**

Our voluntary branches are a support network for people and families living with MS in local communities. They provide a welfare service, access to various therapies and organise a mixture of social gatherings. These are funded through a variety of fundraising activities.

### **Research**

Our dedicated research fund annually finances a number of medical and social research projects and we regularly update worldwide research information on our website and publications.

### **Representation**

MS Ireland advocates on an individual and collective platform for the improvement in services, resources and policies affecting people with MS.

## **Activities to Support Our Services**

The National Office of MS Ireland provides a range of supplementary services and activities that support the direct services we provide to people with MS and their families. In addition to overall governance, leadership, management, finance and human resources, the Society also supports the organisation in the areas of communications, volunteer support and fundraising. All national fundraising campaigns are run from National Office but supported by all sections of the Society e.g. MS READaTHON, Treks and Adventures and World MS Day.

To learn more about our services or to make contact with services in your area, call us on 01 678 1600 or visit [www.ms-society.ie](http://www.ms-society.ie).

# Strategic Goals

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Analysis of the results of the organisational review gave a clear indication of the primary services MS Ireland should provide – support services (individual, group, respite etc), information, research and advocacy. These now form the basis of our strategic goals. To deliver these, the capacity, structure, profile and financing of the organisation were also identified as important aspects and integral to the strategic plan.

MS Ireland's vision for the next three years will be pursued through the following six strategic goals:

## **1. Support and Service Provision**

To provide appropriate, quality, nationwide services based on individual and family needs.

## **2. Information and Education**

To provide timely, accurate, sensitive and accessible information to people who use our services and educational activities for health professionals.

## **3. Research**

To fund research and dissemination of national and international research developments in an accessible format.

## **4. Advocacy**

To represent the views and concerns of people who use our services at a local, national and international level.

## **5. Strengthening Organisational Capacity**

To continue developing an efficient and effective organisation that supports our services, staff and volunteers within available resources.

## **6. Funding the Strategy**

To source, fundraise and effectively manage our financial resources to fund the services and activities of the organisation.

# **Goal 1: Support and Service Provision**

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To provide appropriate, quality, nationwide services based on individual and family needs

## **Key Priorities:**

1. Develop an integrated nationwide model of service delivery that uses the combined resources, skills and input of volunteers and staff and effectively uses all the financial resources available to the Society.
2. Assess the need and availability of respite care and the role MS Ireland's plays in providing respite to people with MS and other neurological conditions.

## **Core Objectives:**

1. Define a clear suite of services available in each region which will include individual and family support, living with MS programmes and counselling. Services will be provided as equitably as possible within available resources.
2. Create systems to monitor and evaluate the impact services have on those who use them.
3. Create an annual activity plan for each region that details all services, events, fundraising activities, training sessions, coordinating meetings and all the other work of the region.
4. Fund annual regional plans using all the resources available, including statutory income and all fundraised money.
5. Redefine roles and responsibilities of volunteers and staff in each region to maximise their input and value.
6. Develop a volunteer development plan to help recruit, train, support, monitor and retain volunteers.
7. Revise the welfare guidelines and implement nationwide to improve equity of access within available resources.
8. Carry out an audit of respite services in Ireland.
9. Review the sustainability of the MS Care Centre.
10. Explore opportunities within the MS Care Centre for developments under the incoming neurorehabilitation strategy.

## **Outcomes:**

- The impact of services are measured to ensure the needs of people affected by MS guide our services (Objectives 1 and 2).
- Coordinated community services to people with MS, delivered by staff and volunteers based on the needs of people affected by MS and provided through all available resources (Priority 1, Objectives 1, 3, 4 and 5).
- Staff and volunteers are appropriately trained and supported in their roles and are valued for their input (Objectives 5 and 6).
- Welfare regulations are implemented throughout the country (Objective 7).
- A clear plan of action for the provision or coordination of respite and the role of MS Care Centre is ready to be implemented (Priority 2 and Objectives 8, 9 and 10).

## **Goal 2: Information and Education**

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To provide timely, accurate, sensitive and accessible information to people who use our services and educational activities for health professionals.

### **Key Priorities:**

1. Appoint an Information and Education lead from the existing staff group who will be responsible for the creation, collation and dissemination of information and research and who will manage our overall work in this area.
2. Continue the development of online solutions (website, email and social media) as a primary source of information, particularly for those with MS and health professionals.

### **Core Objectives:**

1. Increase the range and depth of information provided to people who use our services through all channels.
2. Ensure information provided by MS Ireland is of a high standard, accurate and appropriately reviewed and referenced.
3. Audit all current publications and information resources.
4. Provide more opportunities for people who use our services to interact with each other e.g. social media, forum, blogs, telephone support etc.
5. Ensure staff and volunteers are kept up to date with developments enabling them to support and inform their clients.
6. Explore the use of telephone support as a complement to our MS Information Line.
7. Establish a health professionals section on the website and develop it as a resource of all MS related materials for those working with people with MS.
8. Provide opportunities for health professionals to learn more about various aspects of MS and MS Ireland.
9. Form strategic alliances with various groups, bodies and individuals who can assist in the creation of information resources.

## Outcomes:

- The provision of information is managed and delivered efficiently (Priority 1).
- Traffic to the MS Ireland website increased by 30%; segmented and targeted email distributed increased by 30%; and social media engagement increased by 40% (Priority 2 and Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9).
- Comprehensive yet accessible information sheets are available on all key aspects of living with MS (Objectives 1, 2 and 9).
- An online community of people affected by MS will be in operation (Objective 4).
- A redeveloped MS Information Line provides quality and immediate support to users (Objective 6).
- All MS Ireland publications in use are revised and up-to-date (Objective 3).
- MS Ireland is the central source of information and educational support on all matters relating to MS (Objectives 7 and 8).

## Goal 3: Research

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To fund research and disseminate national and international research developments in an accessible format.

### Key Priorities:

1. Appoint a research lead from the existing staff group who will be responsible for the creation, collation and dissemination of research information and who will manage our overall work in this area.
2. Continue to develop the Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Limerick which will increase the level and depth of research in various areas of MS<sup>1</sup>.
3. Disseminate research information to ensure people who use the service are up to date with developments in MS treatments, management techniques, services and other developments.

### Core Objectives:

1. Fund a limited number of research projects that have been appropriately reviewed and relate to MS Ireland's research agenda.
2. Increase the range of depth of research information available to people who use our services.
3. Ensure research information provided by MS Ireland is of a high standard, accurate and appropriately reviewed and referenced.
4. Form strategic alliances with various groups, bodies and individuals who can assist in the creation of information resources.
5. Appoint a team of medical and health care advisors that can guide our work in this area.
6. Create a project plan and source funding to collect relevant and appropriate data on people with MS to aid service planning and increase the knowledge base of MS and its impact in Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> The Memorandum of Understanding was established with the University of Limerick in 2011. Various academic departments will use an MS cohort in their research projects. These may range from physiotherapy, engineering, nursing and technology.



## **Outcomes:**

- The provision of research information is managed and delivered efficiently (Priority 1, Objective 3).
- Through the University of Limerick, a number of research projects will be completed and available through our communication tools (Priority 2).
- 20% increase in the range of accurate, up-to-date research information available through our communications tools (Priority 3, objective 2, 3, 4 and 5).
- At least one funded research project completed (Objective 1).
- Experts feed into and guide our research work (Objectives 4 and 5).
- An MS data project will be collecting information on various aspects of MS (Objective 6).

## **Goal 4:      Advocacy**

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To represent the views and concerns of people who use our services at a local, national and international level.

### **Key Priorities:**

1. Define MS Ireland's national advocacy agenda to include areas of greatest concern to people who use our services
2. Strengthen current advocacy alliances and develop new links to harness the strength of shared visions.

### **Core Objectives:**

1. Increase the range and depth of MS Ireland's position papers to outline the Society's stance on particular issues.
2. Collect evidence and data to support advocacy work.
3. Advocate on MS specific issues to improve the health, welfare and quality of life for people with MS.
4. Support regional teams to advocate on a personal level with individual clients.
5. Establish systems and campaigns that allow people who use our services to become involved in advocacy work.
6. Up skill those on the spokespersons database to advocate in their own communities in line with national work and campaigns.
7. Make submissions and representations to various government bodies and statutory organisations to raise awareness and change policy, where necessary.
8. Use World MS Day as a mechanism to raise awareness of MS and the issues affecting people who use our services.
9. Establish appropriate relationships with relevant government bodies and statutory organisations to establish MS Ireland as an authority on MS related issues.

## **Outcomes:**

- A clear advocacy agenda will guide our work (Priority 1, Objectives 1, 3 and 7).
- Staff, volunteers and advocates are supported to advocate on issues (Objectives 4, 5 and 6).
- In-depth knowledge of the political, health and welfare systems and appropriate relationships with their relevant structures and people within (Objective 9).
- Clear and useful data that provides evidence of issues and concerns (Objective 2).
- 100% of staff and voluntary Branches will be involved in World MS Day (Objective 8).

## **Goal 5:        Organisational Capacity & Profile**

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To continue developing an efficient and effective organisation that supports our services, staff and volunteers within available resources.

### **Key Priorities:**

1. Realign the human, financial and physical resources available to MS Ireland to maximise the contribution they make to the work of MS Ireland.
2. Develop strategies, plans and systems to adequately communicate the work of the organisation to internal and external audiences.

### **Core Objectives:**

1. Maximise the input of volunteers throughout the organisation and ensure they are appropriately trained, supported and valued.
2. Enhance the working relationships with staff and volunteers to ensure roles and responsibilities are understood and everyone's contribution is valued.
3. Revise and implement a comprehensive set of policies to guide and support staff and volunteers.
4. Implement the performance management system to assist staff align their work to the new integrated model and other work practices.
5. Develop a communications strategy that clearly defines MS Ireland, our objectives, work and services.
6. Develop an annual communications plan to outline all the internal and external work of the organisation using the tools and people available.
7. Enhance the financial planning and reporting mechanisms of the organisation to ensure we remain transparent, accountable and ultimately sustainable.
8. Develop one database for all contacts to improve data collection, communications and engagement with people who use our services, fundraisers and all contacts.
9. Revise membership as a fundraising stream and engagement platform.
10. Explore the use of Community Employment Schemes and internships.
11. Sell the premises at 80 Northumberland Road at an opportune time.
12. Review the information and communications technology (ICT) systems in use to ensure they are fit for purpose in the changing environment.

13. Ensure value for money is a key concept employed by all staff when providing services and resources.

## **Outcomes:**

- Financial stability, cost effectiveness and value for money in all we do (Priority 1 and Objective 13).
- Better collaboration between staff and volunteers (Priority 1, Objectives 1 and 2).
- Staff and volunteers will be better supported in their roles (Objectives 3 and 4).
- Improved frequency and quality of communications with those who provide and use our services (Objectives 5, 6 and 7).
- 10% increase of public awareness of MS (Objective 6).
- A more informed and engaged staff, volunteer and supporters base (Objective 5, 6 and 8).
- A central database that manages all relationships with volunteers, members, donors, collaborators and other people who use or support our services (Objective 8).
- Membership is an attractive option for supporters and enables meaningful engagement (Objective 9).
- Increase membership numbers by 10% (Objective 9).
- Appropriate employment programmes support the core work of the Society (Objective 10).
- If financially sensible, national office will be located in a more accessible and cost effective location (Objective 11).
- ICT is appropriate to support the work of the Society (Objective 12).

## **Goal 6:       Funding the Strategy**

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To source, fundraise and effectively manage our financial resources to fund the services and activities of the organisation.

### **Key Priorities:**

1. Develop a fundraising strategy that includes national and regional events, activities and opportunities.
2. Develop community fundraising within the new integrated model of regional services, which supports staff and volunteers to fundraise locally.

### **Core Objectives:**

1. Enhance the financial planning and reporting mechanisms of the organisation.
2. Fund the regional services through statutory income, national and regional fundraising activities, and grant applications.
3. Develop a fundraising strategy that includes national and regional events, activities and opportunities.
4. Develop a scheme to support volunteer-led fundraising.
5. Record and analyse all donor giving/fundraising to better understand trends and motivations.
6. Maintain and develop the highest standards of accountability, transparency and value for money in all activities.
7. Monitor the performance of fundraising projects through formal evaluations, feedback and value for money exercises to ensure the cost of fundraising will be as low as possible.
8. Ensure value for money is a key concept employed by all staff when buying services and resources.

## Outcomes:

- Adequate financial resources to provide services to people affected by MS (Priority 1 and 2, Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).
- Financial stability, cost effectiveness and value for money in all we do (Priority 1 and Objectives 1, 2, 3, 6 and 8).
- Fundraising campaigns and activities that maximise return on investment are sustainable, adaptable locally and offer positive experiences for fundraisers/donors (Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8).
- Community fundraisers are a key resource in organising and supporting relevant fundraising campaigns in their communities (Priority 2 and objective 4).
- Fundraising campaigns and activities are executed based on good research, financial planning and project planning (Objective 5, 7 and 8).

# Implementation and Evaluation

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This Strategic Plan runs from 2012 to 2014. Each year we will create an annual plan which sets out the work we will achieve under each objective and the associated budgets. The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team will be responsible for creating the plan with their respective teams. The Annual Plan will be made available to each staff member and voluntary Branch and each person will see their role within the plan.

The Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team will monitor the annual plans based on the series of outcome measures outlined. This process will ensure work progresses appropriately within the year.

The Strategy and Policy Committee of the Board will monitor the progress of the Strategic Plan and will meet with the Chief Executive and Senior Management team to discuss the outcomes.

## Acknowledgements

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MS Ireland would like to thank all those who use our services, volunteers, supporters, funders and staff who inputted into the Organisational Review, which this Strategic Plan is based upon.

MS Ireland would also like to thank the Strategy and Policy Committee of the Board, the Organisational Review Sub-Committee and the Senior Management Team who were instrumental in completing the organisational review and developing the strategic plan.

### **Senior Management Team:**

Chief Executive:	Ms Anne Winslow <sup>2</sup> Ms Ava Battles <sup>3</sup>
Financial Accountant:	Ms Memory Chipere
Services Manager:	Ms Olga Estridge
Services Development Manager:	Mr Aidan Larkin
Corporate Services Manager:	Mr David Allen
Communications Manager:	Ms Taragh Donohoe

### **Organisational Review Sub-Committee**

Brain Farrell (Chair), Sean Murphy, Mark Mitchell, Emma Rogan and all the members of the Senior Management Team

### **Strategy and Policy Committee (2010-2011)**

Brain Farrell (Chair), Brian Barrett, Kilian Smith, Margaret Burke, Joe Cahill, Gemma Donnelly-Cox, Paul Hogan, Emma Rogan and Allen O'Connor.

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<sup>2</sup> Chief Executive until October 2011

<sup>3</sup> Chief Executive from October 2011