

**Strategic Business and Development Plan  
September 2022 to September 2027**



**The Irish  
Elderly Advice  
Network**

Registered Charity No. 1115711 Company No.564251

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# Introduction

The Irish Elderly Advice Network is a charity that supports, empowers and celebrates older Irish people. We do this through **welfare, social and cultural projects**. In the last 5 years, our services and programmes have grown in their size and scope, and we had a period of intense and innovative activity supporting older Irish people during the Covid period. We have more staff, more projects and more financial resilience than ever before, however our overarching mission remains the same as it always has been:

**To alleviate poverty, isolation and distress amongst the older Irish population of London and the surrounding areas, through the provision of welfare, culture and educational opportunities.**

We know that if we are to continue to meet this bold ambition over the next 5 years, and to sustain the charity in its current size and scope, we need to have a strategic business and development plan which:

- recognises the changing needs of our clients
- keeps pace with rapid technological advances
- fully understands the reasons for, and complies with, all legal requirements around data protection, governance, and all other policies and procedures which protect and enhance the professional functioning of the charity.
- Stays ahead in an increasingly competitive funding environment.

## Key Achievements 2019 to 2022

- Achieving over £2million per year in income gains for older Irish people
- Supporting between 4000 and 6000 older Irish people each year in a variety of different ways
- Increasing funding sources and growing the organisation's income from £134,000 in 2019 to £261,000 in 2022 and to £344,000 in 2023.
- Increasing staff number from 5 in 2019 to 12 in 2023 ensuring we can provide more welfare, social and cultural projects
- Successfully supporting over 6000 older Irish people during the covid period, including a rapid and complete overhaul of services to comply with lockdown rules and public safety especially for a vulnerable client base
- Successfully transforming from a face-to-face service to remote service offer during Covid-19 lockdown
- Having a fully operational Phone Helpline for advice and support available during lockdown with no disruption to clients
- Resumption of face to face appointments in 2021 and a commitment to a face to face service to be available in two locations from Monday to Friday, as well as outreach services in multiple London locations
- Achieving 5-year funding from City Bridge – enabling continuity for the charity
- Creating a weekly lunch club for older Irish people
- Founding Irish Elders Theatre and being supported by a new patron, Fiona Shaw, world renowned Irish actor.
- Growth of cultural and social activities
- Supporting a number of partner organisations to secure funding and/or deliver services, activities or support to older Irish people including the Irish Pensioners Forum of East London, the Irish Pensioners Choir and St Thomas More Parish
- Building resilience into the organisation through additional staff with responsibility for building financial, systems and compliance resilience for the charity.

# Strategic Aims of the Organisation

Client Focussed
A culturally sensitive charity, rooted in Irish culture and traditions
Sustainable and resilient organisation, including a 5 year financial plan
An enriching, positive and inclusive place to work and volunteer
Innovative and creative in both welfare and culture
High quality advice services
Strong, effective and informed governance
Excellent recording of our work in order to demonstrate what we do, who we support, and why we are needed

## Strategic aims – in focus

1. We will create a five-year financial plan to give stability and sustainability
2. We will provide high quality welfare and housing services for the older Irish community
3. We will provide high quality cultural and social projects for the older Irish community
4. We will develop work which tackles isolation in the older Irish community
5. We will ensure our work is recorded, and that client details are recorded in detail and stored in a highly secure way in our database and cloud service
6. We will ensure all our paperwork is digitised and stored in a safe and secure way

7. We will have a staff structure which ensures support for all staff, diversity of skills and experience, and increases the resilience, effectiveness and sustainability of the charity
8. We will increase the development opportunities for staff, volunteers and trustees and in doing so increase the resilience of the organisation to deal with changes and challenges
9. We will develop partnerships and pursue funding/projects with relevant stakeholders where this will *increase efficiency of the organisation and attract resources*
10. We will seek to further develop partnerships with local councils in the 32 boroughs in which we support older Irish people
11. We will represent the concerns of older Irish people in the media and to policy makers wherever possible
12. We will ensure that projects achieve their stated outcomes and contribute to helping the older Irish community in line with our charity aims and objectives
13. Clearly demonstrate the benefit that our service provides through providing clear evidence of outcomes for clients, volunteers and the wider community.
14. We will develop a clear publicity strategy to ensure the charity remains a well-known, accessible and trusted organisation for the whole Irish community in London
15. All eligible staff to be in the Smart Pension fund
16. Exploring staff wellbeing benefits e.g. counselling services and “bike to work” schemes
17. Ensuring regular team meetings and one to one meetings for staff
18. Ensuring all staff have a Key Point of Contact on the senior team to ensure their concerns can be heard and dealt with appropriately
19. Ensuring all our policies and procedures are up to date and compliant
20. Ensuring the trustee board is the most effective it can be through reviewing the size, skills and scope including looking at possible conflicts of interest, recruitment to the board and a skills audit.
21. Building the digital capacity of the organisation including booking tickets via the website, paying by card machine (as well as cash) at events, being able to sign up for classes online.

# A Welfare Service for the older Irish community

We will ensure that our advice services are accessible by prioritising:

1. Providing drop-in and appointments at our two offices—Irish Elders Cultural Centre (Hackney) and the London Irish Centre (Camden)—Monday to Friday
2. Providing a Phone Helpline that is staffed effectively from Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm
3. Providing Outreach services in Kilburn (weekly) and East London (monthly)
4. Providing up to date information about our advice services on our website—including the phone number and email addresses.
5. Providing a twice-yearly newsletter to all clients—sent by post to ensure the majority who are not online can access the information about welfare, culture and social support available from the charity.
6. We will proactively promote our services at a time of anticipated change in welfare entitlements in places and ways that target the older Irish community effectively

We will ensure a high-quality, safe and accountable service by prioritising:

1. Communicating expectations to all advice staff and ensuring they are supported to provide high quality advice and casework support
2. Recording all casework in our in-house database system
3. Work to develop an effective case management system on the in-house database system
4. Regular assessment of casework requests to give management an essential overview of the type and quantity of need in the older Irish community
5. Monitoring by management in order to ensure they are aware of the work being undertaken by individual staff members and can identify challenges
6. Work towards achieving a sector-based quality mark in advice work
7. Ensure training and development is available on an ongoing basis for all staff
8. Advice provided in venues which ensure privacy when discussing sensitive and personal information
9. Ensuring staff have access to administrative support when required

## **Welfare Service Priorities**

### **Welfare Rights Advice - To support older Irish people access pensions, benefits and all other entitlements**

- Ensure all casework staff have excellent knowledge of the financial support is available to older Irish people including
  1. All health-related benefits, and the knock on effect of getting a health benefit on other means tested benefits
  2. Means tested and non means tested benefits.
  3. UK and Irish Pensions
  4. Blue Badges and other non-financial benefits which have a significant impact on their lives
  5. Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Carers Allowance and other health related benefits.

## **Housing Service**

**To support older Irish people to access safe, secure and life-long sheltered housing.**  
We will do this by:

- Having a dedicated Housing Service with a senior member of staff as the Head of Housing
- Developing partnerships with housing associations across London, including through Service Level Agreements
- Securing nomination rights for the charity for the benefit of older Irish people in need of housing
- Communicating the availability of housing to as many older Irish people, including hard to reach people who are not online, via our popular newsletter posted to people's homes, on our website, posters and leaflets at events and projects and in the Irish community media
- Staff to actively build links with other advice services within the sector to ensure mutual support and advice around ad hoc issues which arise for older Irish people
- Staff to have responsibility for identifying relevant training and to be supported by management to pursue continuous professional development
- Ensure we have strategic links with services working with older people



**Cost of Living - To support older Irish people to deal with the cost-of-living crisis including the rise in energy prices since April 2022. We will do this by:**

- Supporting older Irish people to maximise income through ensuring that all relevant benefits, pensions and disability support is claimed
- Supporting older Irish people to access Cost of Living funds available from local and national government, and hardship and reduction funds from the utilities companies
- Having a designated caseworker for the Cost of Living crisis so we have one point of contact for such enquiries
- Regular research into the available funds helping to support people through the Cost of Living crisis
- Communicating the available funds to as many older Irish people, including hard to reach people who are not online, via our popular newsletter posted to people's homes, on our website, posters and leaflets at events and projects and in the Irish community media.

### **Advice Channels**

- We will support older Irish people to access advice through the most appropriate channels for them taking into account access and equalities issues.
- We will ensure all requests for advice are entered into our database system and are handled in the same high-quality way regardless of how the request come in
- We will look at the possibility of developing a centralised advice triage/reception system to ensure cases can be fairly allocated to staff
- We will ensure that work is effectively and supportively monitored by management in the best interests of clients

We will do this by:

- Having face to face advice services available in multiple locations – Camden, Hackney, Kilburn and East London
- Having an open and accessible office from Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm
- Having a Phone Helpline open from Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm

- Having our contact details clearly available on our website – [www.irisheldersadvice.org.uk](http://www.irisheldersadvice.org.uk)
- Having regular updates on our facebook page
- Keeping our commitment to posting the twice yearly welfare and culture newsletter to all Irish Elderly Advice network clients – currently over 5000 people
- Ensuring advice workers are available alongside regular social projects, e.g. the weekly lunch club
- Ensuring advice workers work closely with our Befriending Team and cultural staff to ensure concerns about individuals are picked up and acted upon by the advice team

## Cultural Projects for the older Irish community

We will ensure that our cultural projects use Irish culture, music and song to enrich, empower and improve the lives of older Irish people. We will do this by prioritising:

1. Twice yearly communication by post to all clients, to ensure even the most hard to reach and those not online, are included by being kept informed via stories, photos, and information about how to be involved in our cultural projects
2. Irish Elders Theatre
3. Irish music concerts for and by older Irish and other musicians
4. Trips and visits to places of cultural and historic importance
5. Documenting in film and photography the lives of older Irish people
6. Producing Irish cultural events which place older Irish people at the heart and which are enjoyed by the whole Irish community, e.g. a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration concert in 2024.
7. Develop the facility to book onto activities, and events, and make payments in advance via our website and to make payments by card via a card machine linked to the charity bank account

We will ensure a high-quality, enriching and safe Irish elders social projects by prioritising:

10. Communicating expectations to all staff and ensuring they are supported to provide high quality cultural projects for the older Irish community

11. Asking staff to seek out training in their areas of development, and where they need assistance with this, ensure the HR manager works with them to facilitate personal development training at least twice per year
12. Recording all attendance data in our in-house database system to ensure we understand the demographic nature of attendees
13. Be creative, innovative and ambitious in the cultural work we undertake – e.g. film making and professional recordings, theatre and drama groups, and support for the Irish Pensioners Choir

## **Cultural Projects Priorities**

### **Irish Elders Theatre**

- working with professional actors and theatre professionals to support and encourage older Irish people to learn the joy of acting in a theatre
- planning a community wide tour of a play by Irish Elders Theatre
- a performance in a professional theatre in London in front of a sold-out audience
- working on old and new plays by Irish playwrights
- taking part in research and development of plays
- encouragement to write plays of their own, with the support of professional playwrights

### **A cultural programme to enrich and celebrate the lives of older Irish people**

- based at the Irish Elders Cultural Centre
- film making
- photography exhibitions
- musical events and fundraisers
- visits to places of cultural and historic interest
- An ambitious, rich and diverse cultural programme celebrating older Irish people, past and present
- Supporting partner groups including Irish Pensioners Choir and the Irish Pensioners Forum of East London (Irish cultural dance)

# Social Projects for the older Irish community

We will ensure that our social services are enriching, comforting and accessible by prioritising:

1. Twice yearly communication by post to all clients, to ensure even the most hard to reach and those not online, are included by being kept informed and given information about how to contact us and connect with our social activities and services
2. Regular opportunities for social gatherings for the older Irish community, helping to build community and friendship through consistency, at the Irish Elders Cultural Centre in Hackney
3. Rooting social activities in Irish culture, music and song – for example a monthly “bacon and cabbage” lunch and Traditional Irish music afternoon.
4. A Befriending service supporting isolated older Irish people with regular phone calls and in person at our activities
5. A weekly lunch club for older Irish people, which is attended by the Befrienders in order to ensure a good welcome for anyone who is nervous or on their own
6. Supporting older Irish groups to become self-sufficient and empowered to run their activities
7. Trips and visits to places of interest and to build communicatee and tackle loneliness
8. Providing up to date information about our activities on our website
9. Develop the facility to book onto activities, and events, and make payments in advance via our website and to make payments by card via a card machine linked to the charity bank account

We will ensure a high-quality, enriching and safe Irish elders social projects by prioritising:

14. Communicating expectations to all staff and ensuring they are supported to provide high quality social projects for the older Irish community
15. Asking staff to seek out training in their areas of development, and where they need assistance with this, ensure the HR manager works with them to facilitate personal development training at least twice per year
16. Recording all attendance data in our in-house database system to ensure we understand the demographic nature of attendees
17. Social project staff and volunteers will work in partnership with our caseworkers to ensure smooth and easy referrals where there are concerns or where people have asked for help
18. Support through applying for funding, providing governance advice for setting up a committee, and ongoing advice where needed to help smaller older Irish

groups to create their own independent projects, usually close to where they live.

19. Ensure comfortable, clean and safe facilities for social projects

## **Social Projects Priorities**

### **Newsletter**

- Sent by post to all Irish Elderly Advice Network clients
- Keeping in touch with the hardest to reach
- Ensuring people with no online abilities or facilities are not excluded from the modern life of the older Irish community but are instead deliberately included
- Sent twice per year

### **Befriending scheme – phone and face to face**

- A scheme which has the capacity to support 60 older Irish people
- A scheme which has three paid befrienders working 10 hours per week each
- Ensure people can sign up for the befriending scheme via our website
- Ensure befrienders have a key point of contact within the senior staff of the charity through which to raise any concerns about individuals or to ask for support from the casework service
- Ensure the befrienders have phones that are work phones so the befriending is kept separate from their personal phones
- Ensure safeguarding, data protection and mental health support training for befrienders
- Ensure befrienders have administrative support to enter their work into the database

### **Community Lunch club**

- Tackling isolation and loneliness – in partnership with befriending scheme
- Providing a homecooked meal for people at least once per week
- Training for all volunteers at the lunch club
- monthly Irish lunch and traditional Irish music session
- After-lunch information sessions with organisation of relevance – e.g. the Irish In Britain dementia project, Safe Home Ireland, ICAP, music for wellbeing and others.

# Building Organisational Resilience

## Digitalisation of records and procedures

- Improve the flexibility, security, and accountability of our work by ensuring it takes place within secure, audited cloud-based systems.
- Ensure we have a clear and comprehensive record of what data we are storing for clients and that this can be rapidly accessed as necessary.
- Ensure security of data processing by reducing use and storage of paper records and eliminating digital processing of data outside of work-controlled systems.
- Maintain the resilience and continuity of the organisation as the information necessary to its functioning is not limited to a particular location or individual.

## Service rationalisation

- Review and consolidate the third-party services on which we rely for activities such as email and website hosting, document processing and communication.
- Simplify our administrative and support requirements by replacing multiple single service subscriptions with package solutions where possible.

## Key Tasks

In order to deliver the welfare service priorities, we will undertake a number of key tasks in 2022 -2024. We will focus on the following areas:

- **Deliver a sustainable service** - Prioritise fundraising for the advice services around welfare rights advice, housing, Cost of Living, increasing accessibility for older Irish people, befriending scheme, community lunch club, newsletter, Irish Elders Theatre, a cultural programme for older Irish people and building organisational resilience.
- **Build key partnerships** - with key Irish and non-Irish voluntary and community organisations working in these areas, further our strategic links with local authorities and other key stakeholders around key areas including the advice, housing, cost of living crisis, and accessibility to services.
- **Reach More People** - Develop multiple advice channels to enable clients to access the service they need in the most appropriate way
- **Ensure effective recording and monitoring of work** – a database system fit for a large and busy welfare service.

# Resilience

In addition to the service and project priorities, we also want to focus on building the resilience, skills and stability of the organisation. This will involve a review of the governance capacity and the staffing structure.

## Measuring Success

Year 1 - We will know we have been successful in Year 1 of the Strategic Business and Development Plan in welfare if the Irish Elderly Advice Network achieves the following by September 2023:

- We have secured funding from 4 different funding bodies (not including donations and fundraising)
- We have applied for funding from at least 6 different funding bodies
- We have secured funding specifically dedicated to our core areas – welfare rights advice, housing, cost of living, accessibility, lunch club, befriending scheme, newsletter, Irish Elders Theatre and cultural programme for older Irish people and building organisational resilience.
- We have fully open face to face services from Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm in two offices
- We have started the journey to achieving a quality mark in advice services
- We have housing partnerships in place with ten Housing Associations
- We have access to housing for older Irish people in 10 boroughs in London
- All staff have attended at least two training sessions in a year
- We have two partnerships with local councils to support the older Irish communities within their boroughs
- We have a lunch club attended by 20 to 30 people per week, where at least 50% book in advance
- We are supporting 60 older Irish people via a befriending scheme
- We have carried out a review of our governance capacity and staffing structure and made any necessary changes and improvements that come out of this review.

In years two and three of our Strategic Business Plan we anticipate delivering the additional tasks over a longer period 2023-2025 including:

- Delivering partnerships with 10 local councils, including accessing funding to support older Irish populations in each of these boroughs
- Focusing on multi-year funding for our core projects
- Focusing on the development of relationships with key strategic partners in the Irish and non-Irish voluntary sector for older people
- Having an annual review of all key projects to ensure they remain the most appropriate

## Our Resources

- The key resources that we have to deliver this strategy over the next three years are our staff, volunteers and trustees.
- We are committed to an approach which values individuals' development and opportunity.
- Our staff, volunteers and trustees will be supported to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to undertake their current and future roles to the best of their ability.
- We are committed to exploring different ways we can support staff wellbeing and this is a key priority of our HR manager

## Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental to what we do and how we do it at the Irish Elderly Advice Network. By this we mean that all people are equal and everyone deserves to be treated with respect, kindness and inclusion as a starting point of the provision of services. We recognise that people face discrimination in society relating to age, disability, race, religion, gender identity and sexual orientation, and this is not something that will ever be tolerated at the charity. We value and embrace the diversity of our clients, staff, trustees and volunteers.

Our advice is for everyone but we design our services so they are proportionate to need of our target group – older people, which often includes people with disabilities. We are here to empower our clients and we always treat clients, staff and volunteers with respect and dignity.

### **Principles of our work to tackle Discrimination**

- We recognise that age discrimination is highly prevalent in society and that many of our clients may have experienced discrimination.



- We recognise that inequality can come in many forms, including
- We are committed to tackling discrimination by the way we organise and provide our services – for example through ensuring maximum accessibility for clients.
- We will design our services in partnership with the older Irish community
- Our staff and volunteer team will be reflective of the community in which we work.
- We will promote through visual posters an anti-discrimination message in all our work

## Current Context – National and Local

The Irish Elderly Advice Network provides its services in changing, and currently worsening, economic climate. The cost of living crisis continues to impact on older Irish people in London. Rising inflation, reduced benefits and stagnating wages have contributed to an increase in people accessing welfare rights advice, needing housing, food bank provision and welfare benefits. The significant rise in energy prices since April 2022 has exacerbated the serious challenges for older Irish people.

## Key Demographics of the Irish community in Britain

According to the UK census 2021, as analysed by the Irish in Britain:

As highlighted by the Irish in Britain, it is important to note that Office of National Statistics' ethnicity figures do not capture the diversity of the Irish community in Britain today. Conflating 'Irishness' with 'Whiteness' is inaccurate and problematic. We support the Irish in Britain's recommendations to the ONS to address this omission and better capture diversity in the UK. However, on the data that is available, the following key points emerge

- In 2021, nearly a third (32.1 percent) of the 507,465 White Irish residents were aged 65 years and over;
- this compares with less than a fifth (18.6 percent) among the overall population of England and Wales.
- The White Irish had one of the oldest average ages across all ethnic groups

- Since 2011, the percentage of over 65s changed by +1.4 percent for the White Irish, +3.7 percent for White British and +2.2 percent for all ethnic groups in England and Wales.
- Though the White Irish are ageing, it is generally on trend with other ethnic groups.
- Again, this marks only a slight increase from the 2011 Census, but it is more significant when compared to the 2001 data, when 25 percent of the White Irish were aged 65 or more.
- Notably, a higher proportion of White Irish females were aged 65 years and over (35.4 percent) than males (28.7 percent).

**The key conclusion for the Irish Elderly Advice Network is that the older Irish are a major part of the Irish community in Britain and it is a population that is aging still. It is essential that dedicated services such as our charity continue to exist and work for our own resilience, strength and up-to-date knowledge of how we can support our community into the future.**

## Resourcing the strategy

### **Budget 2022-2023**

Attached overleaf

### **Resourcing the Strategy 2022 to 2027**

It is the aim of the Irish Elderly Advice Network to produce a five year financial plan.

It is the aim of the Irish Elderly Advice network to produce a balanced budget for the financial years 23/24 and 24-2029

To achieve this balance, there must be a constant monitoring of:

1. Expenditure
2. Projected expenditure
3. Income
4. Target income

## Financial Capacity and Skills

It is important to note that the Irish Elderly Advice Network has grown radically in the last 5 years. Our aim now is to focus on sustainability and stability – ensuring everything we do has sufficient and sustainable funding and that we do not overstretch and inadvertently jeopardise the stability of the charity. *To do this, we will create a 1 year and 5 year financial plan.*

- To draw up these plans, the charity must have the skills and capacity within the organisation.
- It is therefore a key aim of the charity that we recruit a senior member of staff with responsibility for finance.
- This person should ideally bring skills into the organisation, including qualified accountancy skills (if possible), experience in fundraising at a senior level, and experience of high quality financial management and recording.
- We would aim to recruit this person in early 2023, funding permitting.
- This role should be Assistant CEO level of seniority in order to attract a highly skilled professional.
- On balance, the charity believes the risk of a senior salary is outweighed by the short, medium and long term financial benefit which such a role would bring to the Irish Elderly Advice Network.

With this timeframe in mind, we aim to have the following (following the financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March):

2023-2024 Financial Plan ready on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023

2025-2028 Financial Plan ready by 1<sup>st</sup> March 2025

<b>Irish Elderly Advice Network</b>	<b>Overall</b>
<b>Budgeted Forecast 1st Apr '24 to 31st Mar 2025</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Income:</b>	<b>£</b>
Grant -Ireland Fund Great Britain	4,000.00
Grant - Lottery Awards for All	20,000.00
Grant - Caritas STM Lunchclub	8,600.00
Grant - ESB	5,000.00
Grant - ESP 24/25	158,000.00
Grant - City of London Grant	7,500.00
Grants Other -Camden/Hackney/Haringay	95,000.00
Sponsorship -C-Field Construction Advice Services	20,000.00
Lunch Club Income	6,500.00
Raffle & Event Income	2,200.00
Donations - Clients	2,760.00
Donations - Corporate	25,000.00
Sundry Income	600.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>355,160</b>
	-
<b>Expenditure:</b>	<b>£</b>
Staff Salaries	237,121.00
Smart Pensions	13,686.00
Freelance Staff	19,010.06
Staff/Volunteer/Trustees Training	500.00
Subscriptions	1,200.00
Rent LIC Camden	9,684.00
Rent Manor House	10,200.00
Utilities Manor House	3,600.00
HR Payments	2,601.00
Printing STM/Camden	6,300.00
Postage	2,004.00
Stationery	1,000.00
Newsletter	14,000.00
Telecom/Blueface/Radius	2,880.00
Audit Fee	3,013.00
Lamplight Database	540.00
IT	600.00
Iris Payroll	1,858.08
Driver & Delivery Costs	1,450.00
Chef & Food Costs	10,900.00
Insurance	798.00
Website Costs - Wix	316.00
Music For Lunch Clubs	1,800.00
Bank Charges	180.00
Cleaning Camden	1,200.00
Cleaning STM	2,400.00
DBS Checks	613.70
Lottery Expenditure - Hardware/Kitchen	3,500.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>352,955</b>
<b>Surplus/Deficit</b>	<b>2,205</b>
<b>Opening Bank Balance as at 01/04/24</b>	<b>154,645</b>