



COPE Galway

Let's help together

Strategy 2020–2025

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Empowering
People

Creating
Change

Strengthening
Communities

Bine ati venit
Bienvenue

Welcome

Witamy

Sveiki

Fáilte

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Our Vision

A community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

Our Mission

Making a difference by empowering people, creating change and strengthening communities.

Our Values



Our Strategic Priorities 2020–2025



1

**Prevention
and Early Engagement**



2

Responsiveness



3

Our People



4

Advocacy



5

Impact



6

**Sustainable
Funding Model**



**Over the past five decades,
we have grown and developed
our capacity to positively
impact on people's lives.**

Who We Are

COPE Galway has been providing essential services in Galway since the 1970s to support the men, women, children and young people of our city and county at their time of greatest need.

The development of our new strategy has given us an opportunity to take stock, to reflect on our successes to date, to challenge ourselves as to how we can improve, and to think about the kind of community and society we want to create and in which we want to participate.

A community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

We understand, respect and respond to the needs of those who struggle with the challenges of homelessness and domestic abuse and we support older people towards healthy and active ageing. This combination of services is unique and gives us a depth and breadth of experience and knowledge that is unparalleled.

Over the past five decades, we have grown and developed our capacity to positively impact on people's lives, and in doing so we have earned the trust and the support of the Galway community.

While we continue to provide essential social services in response to crises and emergency situations, we believe it is also vital to empower and support people to build their capacity and resilience to live full, dignified lives.

We do this by developing the knowledge and skills of individual people and communities, so they have a greater say in determining the decisions that affect their lives, at every stage of life, and by promoting social justice, rights and equality.

We advocate for systemic change, nationally and locally, to eliminate chronic cycles of disadvantage and other underlying causes of the problems that challenge so many people in our community.

We deliver our work thanks to a voluntary board of management, a professional team of employees and over 200 volunteers, with the generous support of the Galway community and a blend of public and private income sources.

We now look forward to delivering our strategy with sincere gratitude to all who are part of COPE Galway and all who trust us to make a positive difference by empowering people, creating change, and strengthening communities.



New Strategy 2020–2025

We undertook development work on this 2020 – 2025 strategy throughout 2019. Its completion coincided with the emergence early in 2020 of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The impact of the pandemic has been profound and tragic across the planet, bringing fundamental changes to the ways that people behave and interact for the foreseeable future. Our social, cultural, political, and economic systems will continue to adapt, often at great speed and in unexpected ways. While this brings even more uncertainty and unpredictability to our operating environment, we must plan and manage our path forward.

In moving ahead with our new strategy for 2020–2025, we need to plan with two complex contexts in mind and within the conditions created globally by the COVID-19 pandemic.

These contexts are:

- 1 The need to remain effective in providing person-centred, demand-led services in emergency and crisis situations
- 2 The need to plan for a changed social and economic landscape over the next 5–10 years, where we will need to invest more in prevention and early engagement work to increase people's capacity and resilience to cope with challenges.

This thinking underpins our strategic focus on **Prevention and Early Engagement** and on **Responsiveness**. Our commitment to support the wellbeing and development of **Our People** will drive the effectiveness and high quality of our work. Our **Advocacy** agenda will help inform and shape the ways that we describe, measure, and communicate our **Impact**. This in turn will help drive the development of a more realistic and **Sustainable Funding Model** that supports the delivery of this strategy in 2020–2025.

While our strategic focus is clear, we acknowledge the continuation of many challenges and difficulties. We must now plan on the assumption that we are facing another deep economic recession and the prospect of social distancing for the foreseeable future, arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Our implementation plan for this strategy will reflect the reality and practicalities of these circumstances.

Our commitment to support the wellbeing and development of Our People will drive the effectiveness and high quality of our work.



The COPE Galway Approach

Everything we do is guided by the COPE Galway Approach to help us achieve our vision of a community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life.

This assets-based and person-centred approach recognises that each person has attributes and strengths that can make positive differences in their own lives. We achieve results for the people we work with because of our Approach.

The COPE Galway Approach is built on:

Understanding

Deep listening, storytelling, learning, developing, openness, connections

Respect

Valuing the whole person, empowering, trusting, believing in the potential of others, drawing on strengths and abilities

Response

Quality, professionalism, making an impact, challenging ourselves, continuous improvement

Strong human relationships form the basis for the COPE Galway Approach. These relationships are established on how we **understand** and **respect** those we work with and how we **respond** so that we positively impact people's lives.

We are a **learning organisation**. We value the learnings we acquire from our clients' experiences as well as the expertise and specialist knowledge that our staff and volunteers bring to our work in tackling daily complex challenges. Our approach allows us to embed developmental thinking across all areas of our work, and to grow and learn as an organisation.

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In our daily work, we focus **without judgement** and **with hope** on our clients' strengths, needs, aspirations and ambitions. We aim to **empower people** with information, guidance and other supports, so they can exercise their right to **self-determination** of their own future and prospects. We **persevere** with our clients as they work to find new opportunities and ways forward. We do this by developing the knowledge and skills of people and communities to live full and dignified lives, and by promoting social justice and equality.

We aim for **high standards of quality** in everything that we do, from providing essential services to preventative work, from governance and fundraising to advocacy and social enterprise.

We believe that maintaining high standards creates an organisation that values our clients and in turn supports the wellbeing, development and training needs of everyone who works or volunteers with us.

We want to be part of a better version of Galway where each person we work with is empowered to have a real and meaningful say in the decisions that affect them, and where they are able to live a dignified life, as independently or as supported as needed.

Our Approach is strategic and takes a long-term view. We are looking and planning beyond the current crises and are ready to play our part in changing Galway's social and economic landscape in the coming decades.





Six Strategic Priorities 2020–2025

Our Strategy 2020 –2025 focuses on six key priorities, which are supported by objectives outlined at an organisational level and further developed across our service areas.

Prevention and Early Engagement

Increasing our capacity to develop and deliver effective approaches and programmes that empower people, at all life stages, to make decisions and choices that reduce risk and create positive new opportunities and prospects.

Responsiveness

Maintaining our capacity to deliver appropriate, high-quality and effective services to the people we work with in accordance with the COPE Galway Approach.

Our People

Prioritising the wellbeing and development of our staff and volunteers by ensuring they have access to the supports, opportunities and training that they need to maintain and improve the quality of our services within recognised quality standards frameworks.

Advocacy

Working in solidarity with individuals and families, advocating at local, regional, and national level for systemic change to challenge chronic cycles of disadvantage; advocating for greater empowerment of each person to determine decisions that affect their lives.

Impact

Making a positive difference to the lives and hopes of each person we work with; demonstrating this impact to secure support for ongoing progress.

Sustainable Funding Model

Achieving a more sustainable funding model that is fit for purpose and adequately resourced by the State to ensure continuity of delivery of our essential social services as a fundamental element in the delivery of our strategy.



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**Sustainable
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Our Values and Beliefs

Our values and beliefs are the cornerstone of the COPE Galway Approach.

Our values guide our actions and offer clarity of approach to our interactions with clients, colleagues, and others in the community. We expect people to be guided by similar values and beliefs when interacting with us and with our clients. Our people embody and uphold our values. COPE Galway supports the wellbeing and development of our team so that, as an organisation, we attain the values to which we aspire. We are fully committed to working with our team members to provide a good and safe working environment, ongoing learning and career development opportunities and a workplace that supports employee wellbeing.

Rights

We take a rights-based approach to achieving social justice and equality and to supporting clients in the vindication of their rights.

Respect

Our way of working is non-judgmental and grounded in compassion, understanding and empathy because we respect the dignity and humanity of each person with whom we engage. We respect and support the right of each person to self-determination; to use their voice and make choices within a system that has limitations. We work from an assets-based and person-centred approach, recognising that each person has attributes and strengths that make positive differences in their lives.

Hope

We value hope's motivating energy and ambition. Hope inspires us to work for a better version of Galway and of Irish society. Hope motivates our determination and tenacity in advocating for rights and systemic change and in providing effective services and supports for our clients.

Community

We value the involvement and support of our community and the trust the community places in COPE Galway to respond effectively and with empathy to the needs of vulnerable people.

Safety

We value the right of each person – our clients, our staff, our volunteers, our community – to safety and security. This determines how we support and equip our clients to make effective choices that focus on creating safe spaces and conditions for living within the community in Galway and to maintain safe working environments for our staff and volunteers.

Professionalism

We value professional practice that is grounded in empowerment, ethics, competence, honesty, integrity, and compassion. We value the clarity and effectiveness that professionalism brings to our diverse and complex relationships. We value the role that our professionalism plays in helping us maintain good governance, compliance, and accountability. Professionalism supports us in achieving, maintaining, and improving the quality of our services and supports for our clients and community.

Our Values





Consultation Process

We designed the consultation process for our new strategy to be as open and inclusive as possible. Our strategic plan has benefitted from the contributions and insights of a diverse set of external stakeholders and from structured consultation and focus groups internally with Our People.

External Consultation

We consulted externally with funders, policy makers, state agencies and public bodies, organisations providing health and social care in diverse settings at national and local level, sponsors, donors, supporters, local businesses, and media. We gathered insights and views from stakeholders on strategic issues that will affect:

- ♥ the people we work with every day
- ♥ the people and organisations who support us
- ♥ the policy environment
- ♥ the allocation of resources
- ♥ the relationship between organisations like ours and the public



We designed the first phase of this internal consultation to explore and identify relevant service-specific and cross-organisational opportunities, challenges and issues.

The outputs from the external consultation helped inform our approach to long-range thinking and planning and to reimagine what services and supports people and communities are going to need when the current housing crisis eases.

We considered how we might need to rearrange our priorities and focus to meet changed circumstances in the short to medium-term, as public policy initiatives, such as *Sláintecare* and the *Housing First* approach, begin to take effect.

This strand of consultation also inspired us to rethink how we manage our relationships with other organisations, how we position COPE Galway and how we leverage our expertise within the network of support organisations in our region and nationally.

Internal Consultation

We held structured sessions with our board, management, staff, and volunteers from each of our services and departments. Input from clients availing of COPE Galway's services was also an essential strand in the process. We designed the first phase of this internal consultation to explore and identify relevant *service-specific* and *cross-organisational* opportunities, challenges and issues. The second phase focused on organisation-wide topics that emerged during the previous sessions.

This strand of consultation was structured as a series of focus groups from across the organisation. The outputs from the internal consultation have helped us to refine and sharpen our thinking and have contributed significantly to setting out our new strategy for the next phase of our work.



Building on our Previous Strategy 2013–2018

COPE Galway's previous strategy, *Working Together Towards Home and Community 2013 – 2018*, guided our work during the past decade of economic recession.

This period was characterised by a sharp growth in social and economic inequality and exclusion and associated issues. These issues and inequalities continue to be driven by policy decisions that, since 2008, have drastically reduced the amount of resources available for essential human, social and community services.

In the period 2013–2018 our strategy guided our response to these emerging needs. Despite the impacts of austerity, COPE Galway was able to grow and develop its services. Our strategy proved to be robust and effective in helping us deal with this difficult crisis-driven environment.

However, continuing challenges and obstacles remain in place, and we are committed to applying our understanding, expertise and influence to address these over the coming years in collaboration with our many and diverse partners.



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Our Work in the Community

Highlights 2013–2018

Response to Housing and Homelessness Crisis

- ♥ Acquired and supported additional shared transitional and community housing as a move-on option from emergency accommodation for single people.
- ♥ Supported a growing number of families with emergency accommodation.
- ♥ Lobbied for “own door” emergency accommodation provision for families.
- ♥ Set up a family hub in association with Galway City Council.
- ♥ Joined with State and voluntary agencies to introduce a Housing First model to Galway.
- ♥ Acted on growing levels of rough sleeping in Galway.

Response to Increasing Levels of Domestic Abuse

- ♥ Progressed a major capital project with the development of a new facility for women and children, Modh Eile House.
- ♥ Secured funding from Tusla and philanthropic entities to develop our countywide reach and our capacity to respond effectively to women and their children experiencing the trauma and effects of domestic abuse.

Support for Healthy and Active Ageing

- ♥ Developed a new social enterprise that responds to the dietary requirements of older people and others with chronic medical conditions.
- ♥ Supported the development of lunch clubs.
- ♥ Built social connections and networks with older people through our Community Support Programme.

Development of New Revenue Channels

- ♥ Developed a new charity shop.
- ♥ Increased our earned income to compensate for decreasing State funding and to support service developments.

Advocating for Change

- ♥ Continued to advocate with and on behalf of people experiencing social disadvantage in pursuit of their rights and entitlements.

Developing our Organisation

- ♥ Our professional staff and volunteers continued to work closely with our community of supporters in delivering our mission.





Responding to Challenges 2020–2025

At this time (2020) the community in Galway faces significant challenges that get in the way of individuals and families living their lives to the full, and that hinder them in creating new prospects and cycles of opportunity.

Some of these challenges are relatively predictable, such as the growing demographic of older people in our community and the need to create and support opportunities to live as independent and as dignified a life as possible as we age.

Similarly, we know that many people could avail of more and better opportunities for health promotion, particularly in areas such as nutrition and diet, and we plan to increase our work in this area.

Other challenges are much more complex and demanding, such as the levels of domestic abuse faced by the women and children that we support, or the crisis levels of homelessness that we have seen in Galway since early 2015. Now, the new reality of the COVID-19 pandemic brings tremendous uncertainty, instability, risks, and complexities that were heretofore unimaginable. We know that the impact of this pandemic means that demands on our services are likely to increase and change in ways that will be difficult to predict.



We aim to achieve an effective and sustainable balance between:

- a** Delivering and raising funds for services and developing staff, volunteers, donors and other supporters.
- b** Ensuring that we have a sustainable and robust organisation that is underpinned by a positive organisational culture and inspired by a strategy that places our clients and our community at its heart.

The current imperfect system for State funding for the human, social and community services that we, and others provide, consistently under-funds the real costs associated with the delivery of services. The public policy and funding environment moves at a pace that lags behind immediate needs. Systemic change is slow, yet the problems and challenges that our clients face usually need urgent attention backed up by transitional arrangements that will pave the way to longer-term solutions. This creates heavy burdens on us, on our supporters, donors, staff, volunteers, and on the public. It creates uncertainty and instability where clarity, consistency, and timeliness is crucial.

We need to avoid creating or sustaining conditions where the emergency and the abnormal become a 'new normal' although current public policy and resource constraints make this ambition difficult to achieve. In addition to securing adequate resources to provide direct services, we also need to build our capacity to influence and direct change at all levels in the system through advocacy, influence, and cooperation. We must focus within our community on prevention and early engagement, and on charting a strategic path to creating long-term systemic change and impact. We recognise, however, that the system is more inclined to respond to emergency and crisis, which creates additional complexity and challenge.

In these circumstances, our challenge is to maintain a sustainable funding model. Our focus will be on growing our overall funding model, specifically on securing adequate additional State funding to cover the full cost of delivering the essential services that we provide on behalf of the State.

We will continue fundraising for projects designed to improve quality of life for our target groups in Galway city and county.

We will continue to invest in social enterprise projects and in developing other sources of revenue that can generate new income streams for COPE Galway, bearing in mind the new reality of the economic recession arising from the effects of COVID-19.

COPE Galway's strategic priorities will reflect our ambition to look beyond the current crises, while we remain committed to maintaining our frontline, emergency and other services for each person and family who needs our support. This means a planned and phased rebalancing of priorities and resources between our operational responsiveness in providing high-quality emergency services and our strategic, long-term work in prevention and early engagement.



COPE Galway

Let's help together

"During the preparation of this plan, people gave generously of their time and knowledge to help us chart a path ahead at these times of great uncertainty."

As we move into this next phase of our work in 2020–2025 we do so with the confidence that comes from our strong relationships with the community in Galway, with funders, donors and supporters, with policymakers and with our clients, staff and volunteers.



"We thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this strategy and we look forward to continuing our work to make Galway a community where every person is valued, cared for and supported at every stage of life."





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