

# Strategic Plan

Community Response

2022-2026



**Community**  
Response



## Chairwoman's Foreword


**For more than 30 years, Community Response has been providing free and confidential advice and support to anyone concerned about their alcohol use or liver health in Ireland. Our services are effective, evidence-based and driven by the needs of the communities we serve.**

Despite the unprecedented challenges of the Covid-19 global pandemic, we managed to deliver on the goals of our last strategy, thanks to the dedication, expertise, compassion and resilience of the Community Response team. This latest strategy places staff development, wellbeing and retention at the heart of how we deliver our service.

Ambitious but grounded in reality, this strategy will build on our significant achievements over the past five years. Collaboration and partnership will remain central to our work, with a new focus on documenting our methods and ways of working with clients in order to benefit as many people as possible.

Inclusivity and access to services will remain at the forefront of what we do, with a new focus on the part that Community Response can and should play in changing the landscape of addiction and addiction services in Ireland to best serve our clients, future clients and broader society.

And while it remains the case that we could not provide these vital services without the generous support of our existing funders – the HSE Addiction Services CH07 and the South Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force – this new strategy recognises the need to reduce Community Response's reliance on restricted funds by securing funds from non-state sources to achieve our goals.



As a member of the board for the past five years, I have watched Community Response go from strength to strength in terms of the quality, integrity and innovation of the services it provides for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. This new strategy is built on the foundations of three decades of expertise, in consultation with our inspiring clients, our exceptional team, our dedicated board, our generous funders, and our community partners.

**Thank you all sincerely for your valuable contributions and for your continued support as we embark on this next phase of Community Response.**

Yours,  
**Emma Somers**  
Chairwoman of the Board

## A Message from the Service Manager

Community Response Ltd is a Primary Alcohol and Liver Health/Hepatitis C service. We were established in 1990 and are based in the Liberties area of Dublin's South Inner City. Harm reduction underpins all service provision and collaborative approaches are utilised in relation to both service development and implementation. The organisation also has a dedicated family support service for those impacted by other people's drinking and our free and confidential service is available to anyone located in Dublin.

Community Response has produced a programme that offers services along a continuum of care, from those actively drinking to those who are abstinent. Extending this continuum, it was during the lifetime of the previous Strategic Plan (2018-2021) and through funding from the Drug Programme Unit that we achieved the implementation of a Community Alcohol Detox programme. The initiative represents the essence of the core approach of the service, namely: working in partnership. It bridges four drug task force areas – South Inner City, Canal Communities, D12 and Ballyfermot – and has included interagency collaboration and ongoing service user involvement. In addition to this we achieved over 90% of the aims of the previous plan, despite the significant challenges presented by COVID-19.

No one was left untouched by the impact of the pandemic, and this of course included those living with addiction both directly and indirectly. It was our experience that the challenges during this time exacerbated problems with alcohol, with social isolation, depression, loss of income and anxiety all either adding to existing problems or triggering them. I'm very proud to say that during this difficult time the existing service value of "Consistency" was upheld, and both the team and management responded and adapted to make sure that we were there when we were needed.

As we progress to this new plan (2022-2026) we have taken on some key learnings gleaned from our experiences over the past two years. For example, we are now able with the use of IT to provide services and support to a wider geographical area, and benefitting service users who are constrained by circumstances such as mobility or time. Inclusion is essential, and the service takes its responsibility seriously to consider

equality, diversity, and human rights both during the development of this plan and in its ongoing programmes. In 2020 we were awarded a grant from the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to research and devise a manual to assist addiction service providers implement standards for migrant communities. This has extended our work into exploring the way that peer involvement is handled in drug and alcohol services, and we look forward to sharing these insights in the coming year.

We are currently amid Ireland's most recent substance use strategy *Reducing, Harm Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025*. Cognisant of this comprehensive strategy we welcome the commitment made to minimise the harm caused by problematic substance use, and promotion of rehabilitation and recovery. We intend to continue to play our part in expanding the availability of relevant quality drug and alcohol services.

During the development of this plan we consulted with service users, employees, funders and other partners and stakeholders. The board of management carefully considered the feedback to produce a realistic, but still challenging, set of goals for the next four years. As has long been the case with Community Response, the plans are rooted in the community, based on identified need and led by best practice. Our services aim to provide a meaningful and intelligent response to problems with alcohol misuse. If the goals and actions in this plan are achieved, by 2026 we will have done so.

Community Response does not stand alone: our service users benefit from many other services both voluntary and statutory. We are grateful for the trust that our funders, the HSE Addiction Services CHO7 and the South Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force place in us, and the opportunities and guidance that they provide us with. Our collaborators are too many to list, but notably we have a close working relationship with the Canal Communities Drug and Alcohol Task Force which is beneficial for both services and service users.

A final acknowledgement to the team members, who worked so hard during the last plan, and ultimately will be the leaders on implementing the majority of the next one - thank you.

Yours,

**Nicola Perry**

Service Manager

# About Community Response

Community Response is primary alcohol service based in Dublin's South Inner City. It is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital, governed by a voluntary board of management, and staffed by a small but committed team of nine people, some full-time and some part-time, with a full-time equivalent employment of seven roles. The organisation supports peer engagement in its services but does not use volunteerism to a significant extent. The organisation is fully funded through statutory and private sources and does not currently engage in fundraising from the public to support its service

## Our Vision

Our vision is to empower people to make and maintain healthy lifestyle changes related to alcohol and poly-drug use.

## Our Mission

Community Response offers a local response to the difficulties faced by individuals, their families, and the wider community in relation to alcohol and poly-drug misuse. We aim to provide a wide range of client centred services for those infected and affected by Hepatitis C. Our team provides health information, education, and support to encourage people to make positive changes for their health and wellbeing.

# Our Values



## **HONESTY**

We want to be honest with you, and about you. This starts from the first time we start working with you, when we ask: “is this the right service for you?”. We also want you to be honest with us and will ask you to give us feedback on the supports and programmes we provide you.



## **RESPECT**

We will respect you as the individual that you are, we won't put you in a box.



## **SAFETY**

This is a confidential, safe place where you can be who you are.



## **DIGNITY**

Everyone working in or using the service has the right to be treated with dignity.



## **CONSISTENCY**

We'll be here for you, for the short or the long haul, working through problems together.



## **ADVOCACY**

Not being listened to? We will support you. Together we can work to shape how services are supporting you.



## About this plan

This strategic plan has been developed to be both realistic and ambitious, providing a roadmap for the organisation for 2022-2026. Like many small non-governmental organisations, Community Response faces important challenges in strategic planning. For instance, most of the organisation's income is derived from contracts with agencies such as the Health Services Executive and the South Inner City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force. As such, our income is - to a significant extent - already committed to ensure compliance with our contractual obligations each year. We are grateful for the state's support for our work - without it, we could not do what we do - but also recognise that we want to do more in our community. To achieve this, we need to be able to generate income that can be spent at the board's discretion. In this plan, we look to meet both these challenges - setting out some actions which we would be expected to do using existing resources - and others which we will need to generate additional income to deliver on.

## Development

This plan is the culmination of several months' work and consultations with our key stakeholders in the South Inner City community and beyond. An initial scoping session with the board in March 2022 identified broad areas for potential strategic action. These areas were further explored through a consultation process in May 2022, which took input from key stakeholders, facilitated through online surveys, face to face workshops and one to one

interview. In total, the board listened to and took the views of the following groups and individuals into account prior to developing the plan:

- **The people who use our services.** A total of 18 people, who had experience across the range of services and groups provided by Community Response, shared their views with us.
- **Our staff.** All the organisation's staff were engaged in the planning process, from giving initial contributions at the opening planning workshop with the board to contributing through surveys and a staff only workshop, to providing input on the draft goals and actions.
- **Our funders.** The organisation's key funders gave their time to one-to-one phone interviews and provided informal feedback on draft goals and actions.
- **Our partners in the South Inner City community.** A total of 31 other community-based stakeholders, many of whom are representatives of partner agencies that CR works with in the community also gave their input.

A second workshop with the board in June 2022 focused on considering the stakeholder input and creating draft high level goals. These goals and associated actions and timeline were further developed through an iterative process involving board and staff over the summer period resulting

in a plan that is relevant to the work of Community Response and its stakeholders and focused on tangible action that will result in measurable benefits.

## Overarching principles

In addition to the organisation's values, there are several overarching principles that inform all of Community Response's work, including this strategic plan. While they do not appear as items in the plan itself, this does not mean we are not focused on them – they are the underlying approaches of the organisation's work, going on continuously in the background, even if they are not always explicitly highlighted. These are:

**Good governance.** Community Response is committed to the highest levels of governance appropriate to a charity of our size. We are fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code, work closely with our funders on good governance, both operational and financial, and follow the regulator's guidelines.

**Person-centered care.** We believe in self-determination and the ability of all people to make positive changes in their lives. We recognise that many of the people who use our services have

experienced trauma and this understanding informs our work. We endeavour to ensure our service is trauma informed, and our staff are appropriately trained. We also believe that each person is best placed to know what they want and need to support them in their life. We listen to our clients and work hard to ensure that our services are accessible and tailored to each individual and their unique needs.

**Rights and responsibilities.** We acknowledge that everyone we engage with has a right to a service free from discrimination. Although Community Response is not a public body, we see ourselves as having a responsibility to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of our staff, service users and other stakeholders impacted by our work. We ensure that consideration is given to the implementation and duties of Section 42 of Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014.

**Partnership.** We are, at heart, a community agency. We are rooted in the community and our services are intended to respond to the needs of our service users. We recognise that no one entity can meet all the needs of a community – we work in collaboration, and value all our partners from the public sector, private sector, and civil society.

## Our strategic plan

Our plan covers the period 2022-2026. It sets out seven strategic goals across five functional areas – services, people, communications, business continuity and funding. These high-level goals are set out below.



**We will continue to collaborate with clients and key members of the communities we serve...** so that we can review and develop our services to meet the changing needs of our clients.



**We will document our methods and ways of working with clients...** so that they can be assessed and replicated to benefit as many people as possible.



**We will place staff development and wellbeing at the heart of how we deliver our service...** so that we can ensure the organisation has the expertise needed to deliver high quality services.



**We will make sure everyone understands what we do, why it matters, and how they can access our services...** so that we can change the landscape of addiction and addiction services in Ireland to best serve our clients, future clients and broader society.



**We will make sure we have suitable space and resources to deliver our services...** so that we can deliver the highest quality service in comfortable and accessible surroundings for our clients and staff.



**We will assess and develop ways of reducing the risks involved in losing members of a small team...** so that we can share relevant expertise across roles and become less reliant on key staff in the context of essential activities / relationships.



**We will reduce Community Response's reliance on restricted funds by securing funds from non-state sources...** so that we can provide additional services to our clients and the community and deliver on all aspects of our strategy.

## AREA 1: SERVICES

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 1.1: Ensure Community Response's services continue to be relevant to service user need in the community**

We recognise that we need to continue to provide services that the community needs. We will achieve this by consulting with our clients and other key community stakeholders throughout the plan's lifecycle, adjusting our offering as needed. We will also work to expand service delivery in key areas such as aftercare and one to one support where an existing need has already been identified.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 1.2: Document the Community Response methodology and way of working with service users for the purposes of sharing with other services**

We provide services that are structured, high quality and replicable. Documenting how we do what we do in a clear, consistent way creates opportunities for those services to be delivered elsewhere, benefiting other communities.

## AREA 2: PEOPLE

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Attract, retain, and support high quality staff to ensure continued high quality of services**

We recognise that there is an inequality in pay, benefits, and progression between the statutory and non-statutory sectors and that this can result in difficulties in staff retention. For this reason, there is a need to strategically focus on improving opportunities for staff and volunteers to ensure the organisation has the expertise needed to deliver high quality services effectively.

## AREA 3: COMMUNICATIONS

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Position Community Response as a recognised leader in community-based alcohol services**

We have a good story to tell, and a lot to offer the community. It is important that we take a strategic approach to communications ensuring that potential clients, potential referrers, and other key stakeholder groups have a good understanding of what Community Response provides and how to access our services.

## **AREA 4: BUSINESS CONTINUITY**

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 4.1: Ensure Community Response has the appropriate infrastructure in place to deliver services**

We face into an uncertain future during the currency of this strategic plan. The lease on our premises is up in 2024 and we need to ensure that we have suitable space and resources to meet the needs of our clients and service delivery offerings.

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 4.2: Ensure Community Response has robust Human Resources capacity to ensure delivery across all functions**

We recognise that like many small organisations, Community Response has an overreliance on some key staff in the context of some key organisational activities / relationships. From a good governance perspective, it is prudent to approach this issue in a strategic way and ensure there is a deeper sharing of relevant expertise across roles.

## **AREA 5: FUNDING**

### **STRATEGIC GOAL 5: Reduce Community Response's reliance on restricted funds**

We are deeply grateful for the funds that are provided to us from state sources – they support our work and make our programmes possible. However, it is also important for the organisation to be able to supplement this funding with funds from other sources, helping us provide additionality to the services the state supports us to deliver. To achieve this and so we can deliver on elements of our plan and vision, we are taking a strategic approach to securing funds from non-state sources.

## A note on implementation

Each of the high-level strategic goals above have been broken down into objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.

Each objective has been assigned to a particular role or group of roles in the organisation and has been documented in an implementation plan which will be used internally to guide delivery, and which will be incorporated into annual work plans. Actions related to the strategic plan will be reported on at board meetings.

It is important to note that certain elements of the plan will require additional resources for implementation; the implementation plan contains actions directed towards acquiring these resources, but there is always a risk that these efforts will not be successful. The organisation also recognises that the strategic landscape is constantly moving, and the plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant, with appropriate adjustments being made by the board if not.



