



Irish Gerontological Society
Strategic Plan
2018-2021

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Message from Mo Flynn, President, Irish Gerontological Society

Dear Members, Colleagues and Friends

On behalf of the Irish Gerontological Society, it is with great pleasure that I present our new Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Herein you will find set out our vision, mission and values; our background and context; our membership offering; our strengths and challenges. We have identified 7 key strategic objectives, together with implementation initiatives and activities, which will be the core focus of the work of the IGS Executive Committee over the coming three years.

In 2011, the IGS submitted a proposal to Atlantic Philanthropies for funding to implement a 3-year strategic plan to grow and develop this society. We were delighted that our proposal was successful and immediately the reigning Executive Committee embarked on its mission to build a more structured and organised society. In February 2012, Miriam Ahern was appointed as Strategy and Development Manager to lead the development and implementation of the IGS strategic plan. From then until now she, and the Executive Committee, have pursued our society's goals and objectives with determination and gusto!

I am delighted to report that during this period, the IGS has experienced considerable growth in terms of multi-disciplinary membership, sponsorship, event participation, abstract submissions, and we have enjoyed significantly improved engagement via our new and improved IGS website. With almost 2000 research papers catalogued, our online National Database of Abstracts in Gerontology - which we launched in 2014 - is the only archive of its type in Ireland.

As with the previous strategic plan, our updated strategic programme has been informed by input from our stakeholders through interviews, consultation, and feedback gathered from our annual post-event and member satisfaction surveys. On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to thank everyone who participated in these important exercises and gave generously of their expertise and views.

This year, my term as President of the Irish Gerontological Society comes to an end. It has been tremendously rewarding over the past three years as President (and four years as Secretary!), to work with Executive Committee teams that have leveraged their united disciplines to transform the IGS into the robust membership society that it is today. I have no doubt that the incoming President and future Executive Committee will carry forward the IGS commitment to the pursuit of excellence in the wellbeing, health and empowerment of older people.

Mo Flynn
President
Irish Gerontological Society
September 2017

1. Introduction

This strategy was developed by the National Executive Committee (“NEC”) of the Irish Gerontological Society (“The IGS” or “The Society”) in April 2017. The IGS NEC is comprised of the officers (President, Vice President, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer) and elected committee members. Membership of the NEC is multidisciplinary and is open to all IGS members.

IGS National Executive Committee 2016/2017

Mo Flynn, President. CEO Rehab Group.

Dr. Diarmuid O’Shea, Vice President. Consultant Geriatrician, St. Vincent’s University Hospital.

Elaine O Connor, Hon. Secretary. Senior Occupational Therapist, Connolly Hospital

Dr. Rose Galvin, Hon. Treasurer. Lecturer in Physiotherapy, University of Limerick

Catriona Malone, Senior Occupational Therapist, Health Service Executive, Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar

Dr. Rónán O’Caoimh, Senior Lecturer in Geriatric Medicine/Consultant Geriatrician, NUI Galway

Dr. Aisling O’Halloran, Research Fellow, The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA), Trinity College Dublin

Jonathon O’Keeffe, Nurse Specialist and Registered Nurse Prescriber in Gerontology, St. Vincent’s University Hospital.

Dr. Lorna Roe, Research Fellow, Centre for Health Policy & Management, Trinity College Dublin

Robin Webster, Founding Member and former CEO (22 years) of Age Action

The National Executive Committee was advised and supported by Miriam Ahern, IGS Strategy and Development Manager.

2. National Context

In general, people in Ireland are living longer than previous generations. A century ago, average life expectancy was in the region of fifty years. Today, average life expectancy for men in Ireland is 76.8 years and for women 81.6 years, and life expectancy at the age of 65 is rising faster here than anywhere else in the EU.

At the last published Census of Ireland in 2011, there were approximately 535,000 people aged over 65 – 11.4 per cent of the total population, representing an increase of 14.4 per cent since 2006. Age profile results from the latest Irish census, which was undertaken in 2016, are due for publication in July 2017 but are set to continue this trend.

Ireland will continue to experience an unprecedented ageing of the population in the first half of the twenty-first century and by 2041 there will be an estimated 1.3 million to 1.4 million people aged over 65 years, representing 20-25 per cent of the total Irish population. The greatest increases are expected in the over-80 years' age group, where numbers are expected to increase four-fold from 110,000 in 2006 to about 440,000 in 2041. Ageing on this scale is an unprecedented phenomenon in Irish history.

In stark contrast to the evident importance of ageing, there is a lack of social, economic and health information on older persons in Ireland. A

population with between 1 in 5 and 1 in 4 people over the age of 65 years in the future will have significant social and economic implications at an individual, family and societal level. Ireland currently has one of the youngest populations and the lowest proportion of people aged over 65 in the EU. However, this does not mean that we should not take demographic ageing seriously. If we are to achieve the goals of an age-friendly society in Ireland in the years ahead, we must start planning today for a future that starts tomorrow.

Sources: **Central Statistics Office. *The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA)*. *The National Positive Ageing Strategy***

3. About the Irish Gerontological Society (IGS)

Founded in 1951, the Irish Gerontological Society is one of the oldest societies in the world devoted to the study of ageing. Its core purposes are:

- Advancing education and research in the science and study of ageing.
- Promoting optimum ageing by the emphasis and reinforcement of gerontology in all its areas.

The IGS is an all-island, interdisciplinary, scientific and educational society. Membership is extended to and collaboration fostered between:

- Health and social-care professionals, practitioners and students.
- Academics and scientists involved in the study of ageing.
- Policy experts and those concerned with advocacy for older people.

- Those with an interest in older people and others deemed by the IGS to be a complementary fit.

The organisational structure of The IGS is comprised of two voluntary standing committees. The IGS National Executive Committee oversees the governance and operation of the society. The IGS Scientific Committee oversees the Annual and Scientific Meeting. Both committees meet in person or by teleconference on several occasions annually.

4. Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

A compassionate world for our ageing population where they benefit from the optimum that our united disciplines and professions can offer.

Our Mission

To improve the experience of ageing through advocating and promoting excellence in issues and practices that are important to the well-being, health, support and empowerment of older adults.

Core Values

The Irish Gerontological Society commits to the following values to guide our behaviours, judgements, decisions and activities as we strive to achieve our mission:

Optimum Ageing

As professionals concerned with the wellbeing and care of older people, we seek to discover, understand, and advocate best evidenced-based practice in meeting the needs and addressing the challenges of ageing adults.

Advanced Knowledge

We encourage, support and facilitate the exploration and dissemination of new ideas in research and education concerned with the physical, social, psychological and biological aspects of ageing.

Inclusiveness

We operate in a spirit of inclusiveness by offering balanced and equitable opportunities and platforms for our many diverse stakeholders to participate and be heard across The Society's span of activities.

Integrity

We maintain a collegial environment, based on a strong tradition of inter-disciplinary cooperation and teamwork, where transparency in our relationships and dealings with each other and with our various constituencies are assured.

Excellence

By upholding the highest of social, scientific and academic standards we will demonstrate ethical leadership.

5. Activities of The IGS

The IGS is a key player in the research and study of ageing for many decades. Our aim is to foster relationships and collaboration between geriatricians, occupational therapists, psychiatrists, physiotherapists, nurses, social gerontologists, psychologists, social workers, economists, gerontechnologists, nutritionists and other practitioners, scholars, researchers and advocates in ageing. The activities of The IGS include:

a. Annual Scientific Meeting

During this two-day event, we showcase the latest advancements in Gerontological research and practice. This event attracts a growing number of professionals, scholars and researchers in ageing. A breakdown of delegate/IGS member demographics and growth from 2012-2016 is included at appendix i. Recent & forthcoming meetings include:

62nd Annual and Scientific Meeting. Radisson Blu Hotel, Galway. 9-11 October 2014. Theme: *Science for Healthy and Active Ageing*. Partners: National University of Ireland, Galway & West/North West Hospitals Group.

63rd Annual and Scientific Meeting – *Unlocking the Demographic Dividend* - was incorporated into the 8th Congress of the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (European Regions) IAGG-ER. This major international event was hosted by the IGS at the Conference Centre Dublin from 23rd to 25th April 2015. The programme included 30 International Keynote Speakers and 99 Symposia. 1118 research abstracts were accepted for oral or poster

presentation. Of 1220 registered participants, 235 were Irish delegates.

64th Annual and Scientific Meeting. Killarney, 30th Sept - 1st Oct 2016. Theme: *Creating Cultures of Excellence*. Partners: University of Limerick, University of Limerick Hospitals, University Hospital Kerry, Institute of Technology Tralee Dept. Nursing and Healthcare.

65th Jubilee Annual and Scientific Meeting. Wexford. 28th Sept – 30th Sept. Theme: *Changing Perspectives in Gerontology – The next 65 years*. Partners: University College Dublin, Ireland East Hospitals Group.

ALONE Willie Bermingham Lecture

The ALONE Willie Bermingham Lecture is the cornerstone address at each Annual & Scientific Meeting of the Irish Gerontological Society. The theme of the lecture is generally reflective of the presenter's special interests and perspectives on ageing and older people. In recent years our esteemed lecturers have covered interests, concerns and challenges over a broad range of topics including medicine, economics, social policy and law. A historical list of presenters and lecture titles is available on our website www.irishgerontology.com.

In 1977, Willie Bermingham founded ALONE (A Little Offering Never Ends), an organisation which originally highlighted the plight of old forgotten individuals who were living in squalid neglect in Dublin. This was after he had found several people dead in appalling conditions through his work as a firefighter. Today, ALONE's ongoing mission is to support older people in Ireland who wish to age at home.

Dr. John Fleetwood Award

The IGS is committed to advancing scholarship in gerontology. The Dr. John Fleetwood Award is presented at our annual and scientific meeting. It is awarded to an undergraduate student who distinguishes herself or himself as the primary and presenting author of an oral or poster abstract which is judged to be of outstanding merit.

Dr. John Fleetwood was a founding member of the Irish Gerontological Society. Born in Edinburgh, John Fleetwood graduated in medicine from University College Dublin. He practiced as a general practitioner in Blackrock Co. Dublin and at Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services in Harold's Cross.

b. Summer Seminar

The purpose of the IGS summer seminar is to explore topical Gerontological topics and themes from a balance of perspectives including health, social care, academia and advocacy. This popular event brings together individuals, professionals and institutions to stimulate exchange and dissemination of knowledge, views and ideas. Our goal is to improve the wellbeing of older people and to contribute to public discussion through evidence-based input as well as professional hands-on experience.

c. Postgraduate Research Study Day

The objective of this IGS open study day is to facilitate and support students and other researchers who are advancing the study of ageing. The programme addresses the challenges and opportunities presenting themselves to each of the students individually. The event

provides a valuable opportunity for students, colleagues, supervisors and other interested parties from a variety of disciplines and institutions, to showcase their work, to get informed feedback, to explore the work of others, to learn from academic experts, to network, and to form new alliances and friendships.

d. National Database of Abstracts on Ageing

[The IGS research database](#) is hosted and maintained from our website and includes abstracts accepted at our scientific meetings since 2005. It is the only database of its kind in Ireland, addresses nearly every aspect of ageing, and is freely available to professionals and public alike.

e. Interdisciplinary Research Bursary

The aim of the IGS Interdisciplinary Bursary is to promote and foster research among our members which will improve the quality of life of older people. The IGS invites applications from groups of researchers who are members of the IGS. Resources permitting, the IGS may fund, or partially fund up to two projects in the range of up to €5,000 each year. Grants neither support doctoral research nor the general funding of an organisation.

f. Collaboration with Other Associations and Organisations

The IGS reaches out to a broad range of networks, which represent complementary interests, through our membership programme. Our aim is to provide leadership and to facilitate national and regional networking, communication and collaboration among researchers, practitioners, educators, caregivers, policy-makers, service providers and the community of older Irish adults.

g. Dissemination of Learning

E-newsletters are published throughout the year. These publications are used to disseminate news and information and are shared with members, colleagues, allied associations and the public.

h. Website and Social Media

The IGS maintains a dynamic and interactive website for our members and for the public. The website is an interdisciplinary collaboration which capitalises on the collective expertise of national and international communities concerned with optimal and healthy ageing. In addition to our database of research abstracts, the website hosts a rolling calendar of national and world gerontological events. The site maintains a comprehensive list of links, including to gerontological and geriatric associations and to related societies worldwide. The IGS maintains a Twitter account @irishgerontsoc

6. Strengths and Challenges

Strengths

- Esteemed provenance, professional credibility and expertise.
- Good governance and efficient operational procedures.
- Committed, engaged and active officers and committee members.
- A strong, growing membership base.
- Broad membership base with good multidisciplinary representation.

- Broad reach and access to, and good relationships with, other communities and groups with interests in gerontology
- Growing attendance and participation at annual Scientific Meeting.
- Organisational memory and processes secured and safeguarded digitally.

Challenges

- Competition for limited funding resources.
- Serving a balanced multi-disciplinary society while simultaneously meeting the needs and expectations of individual disciplines (special interest groups).
- Soliciting engagement and participation of members, most of whom have full-time roles outside of The Society.

7. Strategic Objectives

The National Executive Committee of The IGS recognises the need to advance and promote the highest standards and levels of achievement in Gerontological research, knowledge and practices in Ireland. In this context, the IGS Strategic Plan 2018-2021 identifies seven key objectives that it will prioritise in order to keep pace with the changing needs of our members against the backdrop of a dynamically evolving field of ageing:

1. To achieve and maintain financial sustainability.
2. To increase the profile, influence and visibility of The Society.

3. To attract, retain, support and engage an equitable balance of multi-disciplinary members of The Society.
4. To stimulate, facilitate and encourage cooperation and collaboration between our stakeholders*
5. To become a trusted and reliable source of information and commentary for evidence-based discussion of gerontological research, practice, education and policy.
6. To promote and disseminate evidence-based information and ideas to increase and improve knowledge, skills and awareness of the wellbeing, health and empowerment of older people.
7. To align and integrate our capabilities, communications and infrastructure: to uphold our vision, mission and values; to meet the expectations of our stakeholders*; and to implement the initiatives of our Strategic Plan.

**our stakeholders are defined as persons, groups or organisations that have interest in, or concern about, individual and population ageing.*

8. Strategic Initiatives and Activities

In pursuit of our overall vision and strategic objectives, the National Executive Committee has identified and agreed a programme of initiatives and activities as areas of particular focus over the next three years. The following outline of undertakings will provide a template to guide the strategic direction and future development of The Society. Some of these undertakings are mutually supportive and accomplishment of one initiative may facilitate the achievement of other goals.

1. To achieve and maintain financial sustainability.

- a. Establish an action-group to develop financial strategies.
- b. Explore alternative sources of funding, e.g. grants and donations.
- c. Develop and implement an overall financial plan that identifies and targets more diverse and recurring sources of revenue.
- d. Ensure that each IGS event covers its own cost, at minimum to breakeven level.

2. To increase the profile, visibility and influence of The IGS.

- a. Leverage our broad range of multidisciplinary skills and knowledge to bring key stakeholders and interests together with the objective of making a meaningful impact on policies for an ageing population.
- b. Implement proactive PR strategies and activities around key events.
- c. Issue regular, relevant news and event updates to targeted stakeholders.
- d. Signpost the reader to relevant IGS website landing pages where possible via internal and external communications.

3. To attract, retain, support and engage an equitable balance of multi-disciplinary members of The Society.

- a. Solicit balanced regional representation on standing committees and sub-groups.
- b. Facilitate local networking and regional educational events to build relationships and share ideas.
- c. Increase online infrastructure by creating and maintaining additional social media accounts and communities.
- d. Facilitate and support the establishment of specialist group activities around key events.

4. To stimulate, facilitate and encourage cooperation and collaboration between our stakeholders.

- a. Introduce a new category 'interdisciplinary research' within the IGS abstract submission system and process.
- b. Award a special medal for 'best collaborative submission' at the Scientific Meeting.

5. To become a trusted and reliable source of information and commentary for evidence-based discussion of gerontological research, practice, education and policy.

- a. Engage recognised global and national gerontology leaders to participate in our educational events.
- b. Agree key messages on ageing, age-related illness and services for older people.
- c. Create more compelling online profile and content to improve our reach and influence, enhance membership recruitment

and support our fundraising activities.

- d. Play a key role in translating cutting-edge research and innovation into real-world solutions, practices, attitudes and behaviours that will improve the experience of ageing in the coming years.

6. To promote and disseminate evidence-based information and ideas to increase and improve knowledge, skills and awareness of the wellbeing and care of older people.

- a. Maintain an ongoing awareness of the national, regional and sectoral issues and challenges affecting our members.
- b. Promote the highest standards of research quality through our abstract submission processes, our events programmes and hosting best-in-class educational events.
- c. Encourage the sharing of learning, expertise and best practice both within and across our membership disciplines.
- d. Actively promote the IGS Database of Abstracts in Gerontology, both nationally and internationally.

7. To align and integrate our capabilities, communications and infrastructure: to uphold our vision, mission and values; to meet the expectations of our stakeholders; and to implement the initiatives of our Strategic Plan.

- a. Review and update the IGS constitution.
- b. Review and update NEC roles, succession planning and

enactment.

- c. Establish sub-committees to address the society's more demanding challenges - such as funding and communications strategic objectives.
- d. Align strategic planning cycles with NEC officers' terms-of-office.

Through our commitment to implementing these initiatives and activities we will continue to build alignment, consensus and collaboration among our stakeholders. Through our diligence in maintaining our position as a source of inspiration and motivation to the next generation, we will ensure that the future physical, social, psychological and biological needs of ageing people are met.

Appendix i: IGS Membership Demographics 2012-2016

(In 2015, the IGS hosted an international conference (IAGG-ER 2015))

Membership numbers by Primary Area of Interest

Number of Delegates				
Primary Area of Interest	2012 Cork	2013 Dublin	2014 Galway	2016 Killarney
Health Gerontology	161	195	213	225
Biology of Ageing	20	17	15	16
Social Gerontology	19	59	45	45
Psychology of Ageing	12	22	22	22
Advocacy	4	4	6	5
Other	18	45	37	51
Total No Members	234	342	338	364

Percentage of Membership by Primary Area of Interest

Percentage of Delegates				
Primary Area of Interest	2012 Cork	2013 Dublin	2014 Galway	2016 Killarney
Health Gerontology	69	57	63	69%
Biology of Ageing	9	5	4	4%
Social Gerontology	8	17	13	12%
Psychology of Ageing	5	7	7	6%
Advocacy	1	1	2	1%
Other	8	13	11	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Geographical Origin (workplace) of Delegates

Number of Delegates				
Currently Based in	2012 Cork	2013 Dublin	2014 Galway	2016 Killarney
Leinster	114	241	212	222
Munster	93	64	57	99
Connaught	11	17	32	23
Ulster	7	13	27	10
England	3		6	3
Other	6	7	4	7
Total	234	342	338	364