

STRATEGIC

PLAN

2025-2028

People-Centred,

Rights-Based, Excellence,

Partnership, Misneach



**Irish
Refugee
Council**

RELENTLESS.

FEARLESS.

INSPIRATIONAL.

Front Cover Image: Refugees Don't Need
More Barriers display, World Refugee Day 2024
Current Image: Elevate Youth Arts Performance,
Electric Picnic 2024

Introduction

This strategic plan is underpinned by a process of organisational reflection and outreach that commenced in early 2022.

The plan will guide the Irish Refugee Council's work through to 2028 and comes at a crucial time for those seeking protection, beneficiaries of temporary protection, and refugees, as well as for the many individuals and communities across Ireland who welcome and support them. For simplicity, this plan will use the term refugee to refer collectively to all the people we support, regardless of their specific legal status.

Currently, hundreds of refugees are without accommodation, reception conditions are deteriorating, misinformation and disinformation are rising. Meanwhile, by June 2026, Ireland's international protection laws will be fundamentally changed as the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum is transposed into domestic law. The Irish Refugee Council, along with partner organisations in Ireland and across Europe have significant concerns about the impact of the Pact.

Against this changing and challenging background, we will have to be even more resilient, creative and relentless in fulfilling our charitable mission to support all refugees. This context shaped much of our thinking and strategic choices, it also strengthened our resolve and our focus on necessary and urgent solutions. This means simultaneously ensuring that our information services reach as many people as possible and delivering direct support to people in the most vulnerable situations. The connection between our services and advocacy is more important than ever.

Our organisational practice must improve and rise to the challenge.

Our 10 Key Changes

1. Commitment to Lived Experience

We commit to ensuring that lived experience informs and guides and is present and recognised in the organisation at all levels, including trustees, leadership, and staff.

2. More Focussed Casework

Given high demand and limited capacity, we must prioritise our casework and legal advice for those in the most vulnerable situations.

3. Transforming Information Delivery

We will fundamentally change how we deliver information, using the latest technology to ensure it is accessible, timely, and user-focused — with the overall aim of making it available to all refugees in Ireland.

4. Focus on Partnership

With significant challenges ahead—but more organisations, volunteers, and community groups than ever supporting people—we will lead, support, collaborate and learn from the wealth of experience that exists across Ireland.

5. More Reflective and Responsive Services

Our integration services — built around the key pillars of housing, education, and employment — will become more responsive and adaptable to the evolving needs of refugees, through improved data collection, evaluation, and coordination.

6. Focus on the Power of Young People

We will strengthen and expand our Youth Work programme, with a particular focus on our Young Leaders initiative, innovative and responsive projects devised by young people and impactful advocacy that centres the voice of young people.

7. Advocacy on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

The Pact will fundamentally reshape Ireland's protection process; we will focus our advocacy on the transposition and implementation process to uphold rights and protections and limit as much as possible the negative and harmful elements of the Pact.

8. Communications

Using the full spectrum of communications tools — including personal stories, statistics, campaigns, and a strong focus on lived experience — we will strengthen our communications and media engagement to build public understanding and support for refugee protection and its many positive contributions to Irish society.

9. Diversified Funding

We will continue to diversify our income to reduce over-reliance on any single source or category of funding and strengthen our reserves to support the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

10. Supporting our Staff

Our staff are the key drivers of the organisation's impact. In a challenging environment, we will ensure they receive the appropriate support, care, and supervision to thrive in their roles.

How we Developed this Plan

This strategic plan was developed through a participative and reflective process involving people with lived experience, the Irish Refugee Council’s staff and Board of Trustees, civil society and donors.

It is the outcome of a collective effort that involved:

- Virtual Workshops: We invited over 95 stakeholders, including partner organisations, people who use our services, academics, staff and board members, to share their views, experiences and insights during two virtual workshops.
- Staff Focus Groups: We held several focus groups with staff members, ensuring representation across our legal services, information and support team, advocacy and communications
- Regular Board Review: The Board of Trustees met regularly, including with staff, to review progress and provide support towards the final strategy
- Service User Surveys: We sought feedback from over 140 people in response to a dedicated-survey to service users.
- Learning from crisis: Our organisation, the wider refugee support sector, and refugees themselves have faced sustained periods of crisis in recent years. These conditions may persist, we must prepare accordingly by building resilience, enhancing collaboration, and embedding continuous learning into our work.

We are proud of our final strategy and look forward to making a difference in the lives of refugees and the communities across Ireland that welcome them.

We also thank Rethink Ireland who supported the development of the plan.

We thank M-CO and 2into3 for their support throughout this strategic development process and the design of this report.

Our Vision

A world where refugees can access and exercise their rights, live with dignity and agency and look forward to a future defined by their courage and potential, not by their status.

Our Mission

We work with, support and represent refugees, delivering a broad range of services, sharing and learning from best practices, conducting research and undertaking advocacy that defends and strengthens rights, prevents regression and contributes to a stronger, more inclusive Ireland.

Our Values

People-Centred:

We recognise the agency and dignity of all people and are guided by the voices and testimonies of people with lived experience of the protection process.

Rights-based:

International, EU and Irish human rights law frameworks, including the right to seek protection and to dignified reception conditions, are at the core of our work.

Excellence:

We aspire to excellence in all aspects of our work and are committed to sharing our knowledge and best practices and to listening to, and learning from others.

Partnership:

We partner and collaborate with and support the broad ecosystem of organisations, activists and communities working with refugee-led organisations and refugees across Ireland and Europe.

Misneach:

Misneach is an Irish word meaning courage or spirit. We are relentless and fearless in striving for a better world for refugees and fulfilling our charitable mission.



Youth Work Camping Trip, Connemara, August 2022

DRIVEN BY LIVED EXPERIENCE.



Elevate Youth Arts Performance, Electric Picnic 2024

Strategic Priority 1:

Driven by Lived Experience

The Irish Refugee Council will ensure that the lived experiences of refugees are the primary guides and drivers of our work. By proactively incorporating these experiences—through our advocacy, staff, services and trustees —we will bring about more **meaningful** and **sustainable** change for the people we serve.

Implementing Strategic Actions

- 1. Targets for Minimum Levels of Staff and Trustees with Lived Experience:** We will establish and track clear targets for increasing the representation of people with lived experience within our staff, management team, and trustee roles.

2. Strengthen Feedback Systems: We will develop systems and processes that enable people to provide direct and indirect feedback on their experience of our services. This will ensure continuous improvement and adaptation, making our services

more responsive to the immediate needs of the people we support while maintaining the highest quality and impact within our available resources.

3. Develop an internal leadership programme for those with lived experience: We will create and maintain pathways to leadership positions for people with lived experience, enabling them to advance within the organisation and beyond. This demonstrates a genuine commitment to addressing barriers to growth and career development.
- 4. Build and Commit to Support and Empower Young People in The Protection Process:** **The power of change and progress lies largely with young people.** We will strengthen and expand our Youth Work programme, with a particular focus on our Young Leaders initiative, innovative and responsive projects devised by young people and impactful advocacy. Through collaboration with youth work networks across Ireland, **we aim to empower young people and amplify their voices in shaping a more inclusive and equitable future.**

5. Amplify Voices of Lived Experience in Policy, Advocacy, and Communications: We will strengthen the connection between our services and our Policy, Advocacy and Communications work to ensure that lived experience informs and guides our work in addressing the structural barriers people face. **We will also use our position of privilege** to amplify and support organisations and initiatives led by people with lived experience.

INCREASED INFORMATION REACH AND TARGETED CASEWORK AND LEGAL SUPPORT.

A world where all
refugees and people
international
protection can exercise
their rights with dignity
and opportunity



Strategic Priority 2: *Increased Information Reach and Targeted Casework and Legal Support*

Amid rising demand and in anticipation of the significant changes that the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum will make, the Irish Refugee Council will identify new ways of adapting and scaling our information and legal services to meet new challenges.

We will scale our information resources so that all refugees in Ireland can, in theory, access them. Our casework and legal services will focus on supporting those in the most vulnerable situations, ensuring access to and protection of their rights, and identifying any deterioration in standards.

Implementing Strategic Actions

1. *Expand Access to Information for Refugees:* We will develop new methods of delivering information to reach all refugees in Ireland. Using the latest digital tools and best practice, these expanded services will address the evolving challenges people face and provide the right information and support at the right time.

- 2. *Prioritise Casework for People in the Most Vulnerable Situations:*** Our Information and Advocacy Service and Independent Law Centre will prioritise supporting and representing people in the most marginalised and vulnerable situations, ensuring our limited resources reach those most at risk.
- 3. *Strategic Litigation for Refugee Rights:*** Our Independent Law Centre will be a leading refugee law practice and a recognised hub of expertise in Ireland. We will provide legal representation at critical moments for refugees and proactively analyse emerging policies and trends to identify issues for legal challenges and strategic litigation that advance the rights and dignity of refugees.

4. *Build and Strengthen Networks Supporting Refugees:* We will actively lead and contribute to the development of networks and coalitions that support the inclusion and integration of refugees. Through information sharing, alliances, and initiatives like the Asylum Support Network, **we will better support refugees.**



**IMPROVED AND REFLECTIVE
SERVICE DELIVERY.**

Mavis Ramazani and Matie Beja, Employment Officers, Outreach 2025.

Strategic Priority 3:

Improved and Reflective Service Delivery

We will adopt a user-centred approach to all our services, enabling people to navigate and access support more easily and quickly. We will enhance our capacity to recognise emerging challenges and trends, allowing us to adapt and respond quickly.

Implementing Strategic Actions

1. *Responsive Integration Services*

That Build New Lives: We will develop and deliver integration services focused on the key pillars of housing, education, employment, and youth work. These will address current and emerging challenges in accessing services and identify opportunities to leverage our existing partnerships to support the people we serve.

delivery. This system will provide real-time information, be user-friendly and easy to share, and account for the growing demand for our services within the constraints of our available resources.

2. *Develop Processes to Monitor and Evaluate Our Service Delivery:*

We will establish a consistent system for monitoring and evaluation to ensure efficient and effective service design and

3. *Housing Programme:*

We will continue to provide our transitional housing and accommodation programme, a ‘Place to Call Home’ that supports people transitioning from IPAS accommodation and other types of precarious accommodation. The programme will undergo

a comprehensive review and evaluation to enhance its impact, ensure sustainability, and adapt to evolving housing needs.

4. *Developing And Consolidating Safe Pathways to Protection:*

We will work with partners and supporters to consolidate and build our Community Sponsorship work, engaging communities across Ireland to directly support and welcome refugees.

5. *Embedding and Improving Our Crisis Response:*

We will prepare for and anticipate future crises,

ensuring we can respond quickly and appropriately while focusing on our core strategy, goals, and ongoing work. We will strengthen our fundraising capacity and establish a crisis response fund and ensure the organisation endures. We will evaluate and learn from our responses to past crises and that we can scale up and down efficiently.

STRENGTHENED ADVOCACY FOR REFUGEE RIGHTS.



“The Future of Legal Advice for People Seeking Protection
in Ireland under EU’s Migration and Asylum Pact” Seminar, 2025

Strategic Priority 4:

Strengthened Advocacy for Refugee Rights

We will lead advocacy to the Irish government, agencies, and national and international stakeholders to take effective action to improve refugee protection and rights through critical reforms and changes to government policy and practice. A critical part of this will be advocacy on the transposition on the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum into Irish law and the monitoring of its implementation.

We will have a stronger positive impact on, and higher levels of strategic engagement with, the Irish public, politicians, and government and at an EU level.

Implementing Strategic Actions

1. Increased Policy and Advocacy Impact: Our advocacy and campaigns will focus on five key areas: influencing the national transposition of the EU’s Pact on Migration and Asylum legislation, the international protection process, the right to asylum, dignified reception conditions, housing solutions, and progressive integration policies. **We will advocate fearlessly and constructively,** identifying emerging issues and challenges

and proposing effective solutions. We will lead in preventing rights regression, but also in developing evidence based policy solutions and recommendations for all key stakeholders.

2. Be a leading refugee advocacy organisation in Ireland: Our diverse range of services, combined with our commitment to informed advocacy, positions us as a leading organisation in supporting and empowering refugees.

3. Champion the Power of Protection and Combat Hate and Racism: We will strengthen our communications and media engagement to engage the people of Ireland on the importance of refugee protection and its many positive impacts. Our messaging will be informative, research based, timely, clear, factual, engaging, bold, inspirational and centre lived experience. We will focus our communications on increasing awareness of the reality of the lived

refugee experience and informing and strengthen public knowledge of international protection and **standing up to hate and racism.**

4. Build and Lead a Network of Organisations Advocating for Refugee Rights: We will continue to lead in building a network of Irish organisations working with and for refugees in Ireland. **We have more power and impact when we speak together** with other organisations and recognise that we each have strengths and experience that, together, create more effective advocacy.

5. Create and Strengthen National and EU Partnerships to Promote and Protect the Right to Seek Protection: Collaborate with partner organisations across the EU to expand the influence of our work on policy and public perception. By working, learning, and sharing with partners across the EU and beyond, we will promote the rights of refugees in Ireland and Europe, drawing on each other’s experiences to **strengthen our collective impact.**



Irish Refugee Council, 30 year celebration 2023

Strategic Priority 5

Empower Our People, Expand Our Resources, and Strengthen Our Governance

Our people, processes, and governance drive our impact. We will enhance our organisational development to build resilience against external challenges, ensuring sustainable growth and effectiveness.

Implementing Strategic Actions

- 1. Invest Resources in Tools, Infrastructure and Processes to Increase Efficiency:** We will direct funds and resources into tracking and evaluating our services to become a more data-driven, responsive and efficient organisation. This will allow us to use our limited resources more efficiently and with more direct impact on people we support.

excel. We will focus on creating an efficient workplace that supports professional development and cultivates a culture of excellence. Recognising that our staff support people in increasingly difficult circumstances we will continue to invest and develop our employee assistance programme and proactively develop meaningful support and supervision support for staff.
- 2. Employee Support and Sustaining a Positive, Caring and Impactful Working Environment:** We will invest in to continuing and building a positive culture and work environment that allows staff to

3. Commitment to, and Strength in Diversity: We recognise that **diversity, in all its forms, strengthens our impact** as an organisation. Alongside our
- strategic goal of increasing lived experience, we will strive for a diverse workforce, leadership, and board of trustees through inclusive recruitment and development practices, **enabling all people to thrive and reach their full potential.**

4. Strengthen Our Fundraising Capabilities: We will invest in our fundraising efforts to build meaningful and lasting relationships with donors, members, and supporters, aiming to achieve a greater share of our fundraising targets and increase our unrestricted annual income. We will cultivate a culture of fundraising
- for critical services throughout the organisation and plan strategically for future crises and income fluctuations to ensure increased financial resilience.

5. A Diverse, Expert and Strategic Board: We will build a diverse board of trustees that can guide the organisation through this strategic plan. We will continue to demonstrate to our stakeholders that we are operating to the highest standards of governance and risk and financial management through the ongoing work of our board of trustees and sub-committees.



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