



**STRATEGY
2021-2025**

Towards Healing

Towards Healing is a non-governmental, charitable organisation whose purpose is to support survivors of institutional, clerical, and religious abuse, and their family members, who were abused on the island of Ireland as children within the Catholic Church. It aims to offer free professional counselling and other support services, appropriate to the clients' needs, in a timely manner, which are safe, respectful, cost effective, and of the highest quality.

Towards Healing is a company limited by guarantee. The Members of Towards Healing are the Catholic Archbishops of Armagh, Dublin, Cashel and Emyl, and Tuam, and four nominees of the Association of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland (AMRI).

Towards Healing is funded by the members of AMRI and the Catholic Dioceses of Ireland.

Context for Strategy

Towards Healing was established in 2011 as the successor to Faoiseamh which had been founded by the Sisters of Mercy in 1996. Towards Healing expanded the original Faoiseamh service beyond the helpline and face-to-face counselling to include group work, practical workshops, a restorative justice/facilitated listening meetings' service, a friendly call service, and an advocacy service. Over the last 25 years Faoiseamh and Towards Healing have supported over 7,000 clients and provided over 467,000 sessions of individual counselling. The cost of this support and counselling is in excess of €44,000,000 and has been funded by the Catholic Church in Ireland through the Religious Congregations (represented by CORI, IMU & AMRI) and the Catholic Dioceses (IEC).

When the transition from Faoiseamh to Towards Healing happened in 2011, it was envisaged that the future service would be more holistic, designed to provide a continuum of care to survivors, with the objective of facilitating them to transition out of counselling and eventually out of the service altogether.

The range of services expanded between 2011 and 2019. Since 2019 there have been significant changes in the organisation at board and senior management level. This disruption to Towards Healing has been amplified by the general disruption to society caused by the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 and is likely to persist through 2021.

Significant changes and trends in recent years include:

- a reduction in the number of new clients presenting to the organization;
- the provision of fewer counselling sessions and provision of many of these sessions online instead of, and in addition to, face-to-face counselling;
- the emergence of new treatments for trauma;
- an expectation of better 'corporate' and clinical governance;
- the departure of senior staff.

In light of these changes and a requirement from the Members and funders for greater transparency about the work of the organisation, the Board reviewed the current situation and decided to refocus Towards Healing so that it will continue to meet the needs of survivors and their family members while being financially sustainable and operationally flexible.

Towards Healing affirms its commitment and that of its Members to continue to support survivors of institutional, clerical, and religious abuse within the Catholic church, by providing professional counselling and other services.

Strategy Review

In order to review and update its strategic direction the Board first considered the opportunities and threats (external) facing Towards Healing and the current strengths and weaknesses (internal) of the organisation.

This analysis concluded that, on balance, developments in the external environment are favourable to Towards Healing continuing to receive the support necessary from its Members to enable it to operate. There is a recognition of the need for the service; clients benefit from and value the service; there is a belief in the church that the organisation has done, and continues to do, good work; funders are willing to fund it; and new ways of providing services could potentially reduce costs. Consequently, there is no immediate existential threat to the organisation.

However, there are questions about how the services are organised and provided and about Towards Healing's capacity to change in order to have a greater impact i.e. guarantee the quality of services, be more cost effective, be more accountable etc.

Strategy 2021-25

2021-25 will be a period of consolidation and rationalisation for Towards Healing. As the service is funded by the Church, whose resources are finite, quality of support, effectiveness and value for money will be key focus areas in this strategy period.

Towards Healing has re-defined its Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Objectives as follows:

Vision

Our vision is a world where every child and adult can feel and be safe to thrive, and where survivors of abuse and their family members will receive compassionate listening, support and healing that empowers them to live their lives to the full.

Mission

Our mission is to enable survivors of Catholic institutional, clerical and religious childhood abuse to recover, heal and rebuild their lives by providing professional counselling and other supports to them and to their family members.

Values

While the strategic themes and objectives that follow describe **what** Towards Healing proposes to do in the next five years, Towards Healing wishes to affirm the values that will inform and influence **how** we will operate.

Compassion

Compassion for survivors, recognising that they have been deeply hurt by their experiences of abuse and that the trauma and suffering is long lasting and may permeate all aspects of their lives.

Empowerment

Supporting survivors by unlocking strength and developing resilience to empower survivors to reclaim and rebuild their lives.

Hope

Hope that survivors will benefit from the service, hope that survivors will heal and will develop the resilience to live the fullest possible lives.

Strategic Themes and Objectives

The following four strategic themes have been agreed for 2021-25:

STRATEGIC THEME 1: STRENGTHENING OUR APPROACH TO COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT PROVISION FOR CLIENTS

Objectives:

1. *To provide trauma-informed counselling and support services based on evidence of best practice which enable clients to recover, to heal and to rebuild their lives.*

To achieve this objective, we will:

- (a) articulate a framework of care for clients informed by evidence of best practice in working with complex trauma. This framework will attend to the therapeutic phases of recovery and will underpin the client journey with Towards Healing
 - (b) provide trauma-informed training and resources for staff and affiliate counsellors to support the delivery of counselling having regard to the framework of care adopted
2. *To provide timely, trauma-informed professional counselling which is responsive to individual client needs.*

To achieve this objective, we will:

- (a) align the processes for assessment and counselling for each client with the adopted framework of care
- (b) refer clients to an affiliate counsellor recruited by Towards Healing within two weeks of contact
- (c) establish appropriate monitoring of the client journey including the involvement of clients, affiliate counsellors and staff
- (d) provide the opportunity for all clients to engage in group work to support psychoeducation and empowerment
- (e) involve clients in the evaluation of Towards Healing services so that survivor voices are heard at every stage

3. *To liaise with health and social care services and other agencies to ensure clients receive the appropriate service.*

To achieve this objective, we will:

- a) Forge links with health and social care and other agencies that support survivors of abuse
- b) Develop a policy on signposting and referral of clients to other services in particular to mental health and addiction services
- c) Develop a resource hub on mental health, addiction and other support services as a directory for staff and affiliate counsellors to signpost and refer clients

How shall we know we have advanced these objectives:

- i. Towards Healing will adopt a framework of care for clients that is demonstrably based on evidence of best practice.
- ii. Towards Healing will produce clear evidence that our interventions lead to improved outcomes for clients by developing adequate client feedback mechanisms. We will also seek feedback from staff, affiliate counsellors and other stakeholders.
- iii. We will establish quantitative and qualitative indicators of the impact of the services provided focused primarily on evaluating the outcomes for clients. The annual report will collate this evidence of improved outcomes with quantitative data on client numbers, counselling sessions etc. from the client record systems.
- iv. More clients will access the health and social care services they need, including through knowledge-sharing and referral.

STRATEGIC THEME 2: ENHANCING QUALITY OF SERVICES

Objectives:

1. *To ensure that Towards Healing has qualified staff, and an appropriate number of suitably qualified and trained affiliate counsellors to ensure quality of service along with ease of access for clients, that can be flexed to match clients' needs for services.*

To achieve this objective, we will:

- (a) ensure that all staff and affiliate counsellors operate in accordance with best current practice offering services that are trauma-informed, evidence-based and responsive to the needs of individual clients
- (b) update our clinical governance processes and revise the criteria for recruiting counsellors
- (c) introduce a process whereby affiliate counsellors are regularly assessed and evaluated having regard to the results achieved/benefits delivered to clients

- (d) review and update the panel of affiliate counsellors periodically based on an assessment that considers client feedback and uses agreed criteria including suitability, training and experience

How shall we know we have advanced this objective:

- I. Towards Healing will ensure that all staff are appropriately qualified and trained to deliver best practice support.
- II. Towards Healing will have clear clinical governance processes that define best practice along with selection and assessment criteria for affiliate counsellors to be reviewed annually

STRATEGIC THEME 3: ENHANCING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Objectives

1. *To ensure that Towards Healing meets the requirements of the Charities Regulator's Governance Code.*

To achieve this objective we will:

- (a) review our governance systems and processes to meet the requirements of the CRA Code.
- (b) complete a Gap Analysis to assess our compliance and implement any necessary improvements

How shall we know we have advanced this objective:

- I. We will be able to complete a Compliance Record Form and declare compliance with the Code by October 2021.
2. *To comply with all relevant statutory requirements with particular reference to legislation such as Child Protection and Data Protection legislation.*

To achieve this objective, we will:

- (a) assess our processes to ensure that we comply fully with all legislative and regulatory requirements
- (b) have staff with responsibilities allocated for Child Protection and Data Protection

How shall we know we have advanced this objective:

- I. The Board and Director of Services will understand their responsibilities under the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- II. Towards Healing will have an updated data protection policy and procedures and will have assigned responsibility for the DPO role to a member of staff or an outsourced service provider.
- III. The Board and Director of Services will understand Towards Healing's obligations under Child Protection legislation, will have an updated child protection policy and procedures, will have assigned responsibility to a member of staff and will be satisfied that its policy and procedures are being implemented.

- IV. The Board will understand Towards Healing's other statutory obligations e.g. as an employer and will be satisfied that management has processes in place to ensure compliance.
3. *To have quality management information to enable the Board to assess the benefits delivered to clients, operational and financial performance, and progress in implementing the strategy.*

To achieve this objective, we will:

- (a) design a monthly reporting pack incorporating financial and operating data
- (b) devise measures to assess the performance of the organisation having regard to factors such as the quality of services and attendant benefits to clients and operational and financial performance

How shall we know we have advanced this objective:

- I. The Board will be confident that it has all necessary information to exercise control of the organisation and can satisfy itself as to the quality of services delivered to clients.
4. *To have an agreement in place with the sponsoring bodies outlining the services to be provided and the associated funding arrangements.*

To achieve this objective, we will:

- (a) develop an annual budget and operations plan and agree it with Members by December each year for the following year
- (b) report to Members on operational and financial performance and on progress in implementing the strategy

How shall we know we have advanced this objective:

- I. Members will confirm that they are happy with the quality of information received
- II. Members will continue to fund the organisation and it will be possible to develop a medium term – and not just year-to-year – funding arrangements.

STRATEGIC THEME 4: ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES

Objectives

1. Establish effective leadership, management and staffing structures in order to deliver a quality of service to clients.

To achieve this objective, we will:

- (a) recruit through open competition a Director of Services reporting to the Board to provide effective leadership and management
- (b) design an appropriate management and staffing structure having regard to the need to provide operational leadership; provide effective client referral and support throughout the client journey, assure the quality of clinical services provided, and provide essential administrative support

- (c) manage the transition from the current staffing arrangements to the revised structure ensuring that Towards Healing has the appropriate number and mix of staff to perform its core functions
- (d) review management arrangements and staffing requirements on an annual basis

How shall we know we have advanced this objective:

- I. A Director of Services will be appointed.
- II. A revised management and staff structure will be established and reviewed annually.

Enablers of Success

In order to re-focus the organisation and achieve the strategic objectives the following enablers have been identified:

Financial Resources

Towards Healing is totally dependent on its sponsoring bodies to provide funding for the services on which its clients depend. While the funders have been and remain very supportive, Towards Healing recognises that resources are finite. It is therefore incumbent on the Board and management to demonstrate that resources invested deliver positive outcomes for clients and that the services delivered are trauma-informed, evidence-based and responsive to the needs of individual clients.

Capability building

Towards Healing needs to develop greater capability in relation to service quality assurance: the capacity to select and evaluate the performance of staff and affiliate counsellors to ensure that support is delivered in accordance with an agreed framework of care and that clients receive the required level and type of support insofar as that can be evaluated objectively.

Approval of Strategy

This strategy was approved by the Board on 14 June 2021.