



National Rehabilitation Hospital
STRATEGIC PLAN
2026–2028



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Foreword by Chief Executive



Following the legal restructure of the NRH from a Trust to a Company Limited by Guarantee, we conducted a Governance and Strategy Review which began in 2025. As part of this process, we sought input from patients, families and key external stakeholders along with staff across all areas of the organisation. Together, they have helped to shape the early strategic considerations that will guide future decisions and inform more detailed operational and tactical planning. This strategy sets out the vision and key priorities for the NRH in the years ahead, ensuring that future planning reflects the needs of our patients, families, staff, and healthcare partners.

The NRH Strategic Plan 2026–2028, outlines the overarching direction for the organisation over the next three years and also sets out the long-term ambitions that will guide its development into the future.

Strategic Priorities 2026 - 2028

The Strategic Priorities outline the key areas of work that the NRH will focus on in the next three years. Each priority aligns with one of the Strategic Themes ensuring a clear link between what we aim to achieve and the actions required to build momentum for long-term change. Together, these priorities set out the immediate building blocks that will drive the organisation's transformation, they are outlined below:

Clarity of Service Scope and Pathway

Integration: A nationally recognised and clearly defined service scope, supported by transparent pathways and consistent outcome measures, underpins an equitable and coherent rehabilitation system. A shared clinical strategy and a strengthened national rehabilitation forum reinforce clarity, accountability and alignment across regions and services. Aligned with Strategic Theme 1 – Patient Care.

Strengthened Leadership and Influence:

NRH's leadership role is expressed through recognised contributions to policy development, research and system planning. Strategic partnerships, academic collaborations and visible participation in national and international forums enhance its reputation and influence within specialist rehabilitation. Aligned with Strategic Theme 2 – Leadership, Influence and Advocacy.

Future-Focused Models of Integrated

Rehabilitation: Regional networks, digital rehabilitation approaches and ambulatory models represent the future direction of integrated rehabilitation delivery. Academic partnerships and aligned workforce planning enable innovative, flexible and responsive models of care that evolve in line with national rehabilitation needs. Aligned with Strategic Theme 3 – Innovative Ways of Working.

Operational Excellence and

Organisational Performance: Digitally enabled operational and clinical systems, aligned with Phase 2 development and future infrastructure plans, support high-performing, efficient and well-governed services. Robust resource management efficient use of funding, and clear value for money, alongside data-driven insights enable agile, outcome-focused decision-making at all levels of the organisation. Aligned with Strategic Theme 4 – Organisational Effectiveness and Stewardship.

People, Culture and Workforce

Sustainability: A learning, research-active and development-focused culture supports excellence in specialist rehabilitation. Strong, compassionate leadership, clear progression pathways and structured engagement

frameworks foster collaboration, capability and pride in the organisation's national role. Aligned with Strategic Theme 5 – People and Culture.

The NRH Board of Directors has endorsed the Strategic Plan and I look forward to continuing to work with an excellent and skilled team of Staff, Clinicians and Healthcare Professionals, Management Team and Board of Directors to implement the NRH Strategy as we continue to evolve and lead the development of specialist rehabilitation services in Ireland.

June Stanley

Chief Executive



Chairman's Message



As Chair of the NRH Board of Directors, I am pleased to confirm that the Board fully supports the delivery of the hospital's Strategic Plan 2026 – 2028.

In a rapidly changing health environment, the National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) is entering a period of significant transition. To guide this next phase of development, an extensive programme of engagement and analysis was undertaken with Board Directors, senior clinicians, managers, HSE representatives, national clinical leaders, external regulators, patient representatives, past and returning patients, and staff across the organisation. These consultations and analyses highlighted a series of core issues that will shape the NRH's future direction and inform the priorities of this Strategic Plan.

Given the degree of change underway and the level of focus required, this strategic plan sets out an initial three year phase of

development for the NRH. This period is intended to deliver practical improvements in access, pathways and patient experience and to ensure we can remain responsive in an evolving health system.

The Strategic Priorities set the foundations for the transformation of the NRH. These priorities clarify the immediate actions required to strengthen service scope and pathways, evolve integrated models of care, enhance organisational leadership and performance, and build a sustainable, values-driven workforce. These priorities ensure the organisation begins its strategic journey with a clear focus on practical, achievable steps that will unlock longer-term change and position the NRH to lead the development of specialist rehabilitation nationally.

Kieran Fleck

Chairman



Introduction



Introduction

The National Rehabilitation Hospital (NRH) CLG is a voluntary hospital and is fully publicly funded. It is a tertiary referral hospital providing Specialist Rehabilitation services to patients from across Ireland who have acquired a physical or cognitive disability as a result of an accident, illness or injury, and require an intensive programme of specialist rehabilitation. The NRH operates on the ethos of providing high quality specialist rehabilitation services based on patients' individual clinical needs. The NRH delivers services for both Adult and Paediatric patients and is the only hospital of its kind in the country.

The NRH is accredited by CARF (Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities),

an international, independent accrediting body. This accreditation reflects the commitment of the NRH to the highest standards of quality and excellence in clinical and organisational practice, and places it within an internationally benchmarked framework of specialist rehabilitation providers.

The hospital provides Consultant led rehabilitation through interdisciplinary teams and accepts referrals from Consultants and GPs when patients are medically stable and able to participate in a structured programme of rehabilitation. Services are delivered across comprehensive Inpatient, Day-patient and Outpatient settings. Rehabilitation programmes are tailored to

meet the individual needs of patients and are organised through Clinical Programmes in the following areas of specialty:

- **Acquired Brain Injury Programme:** for adults with traumatic and non-traumatic acquired brain injury and other neurological conditions.
- **Stroke Specialty Programme:** for adults recovering from stroke.
- **Spinal Cord System of Care Programme:** for adults with traumatic and non-traumatic spinal cord injury, supported by a full continuum of coordinated care.
- **Prosthetic, Orthotic and Limb Absence Rehabilitation (POLAR) Programme:** for people with limb loss or congenital limb absence, delivered in partnership with Opicare Ireland.
- **Paediatric Family-Centred Rehabilitation Programme:** National tertiary programme providing specialist rehabilitation for children and young people up to age 18 with complex neurological injury or limb absence.
- **Outpatient Programmes:** Consultant and multidisciplinary clinics across Brain Injury, Stroke and Spinal Cord System of Care are delivered from a dedicated Outpatient unit.

New Hospital Development

Phase One of the new NRH capital redevelopment is now fully operational. It is the first purpose-designed rehabilitation facility built in Ireland and represents a significant step forward in specialist rehabilitation infrastructure. The new building provides single ensuite rooms for all patients, integrated therapy and treatment spaces, and purpose-built rehabilitation facilities throughout.

The benefits of investing in the future of rehabilitation for the national population are becoming very evident with the successful

completion of Phase One of the NRH capital redevelopment project. It has delivered a world-class, award-winning rehabilitation facility, on time and within budget. It is an exemplar in accessibility for patients, staff and community.

The NRH is now focused on ensuring that Phases Two and Three of the planned campus development proceed as a priority to complete the modernisation of the hospital's facilities and support a comprehensive national rehabilitation service.

This environment enhances the potential for patients to achieve optimal rehabilitation outcomes and supports staff to deliver care in a purpose-built setting designed explicitly around rehabilitation needs. The development is underpinned by extensive international research and reflects global best practice in rehabilitation design.

Further investment is urgently required to complete the redevelopment plan for the NRH, to meet the needs of people who have acquired a disability, temporary or permanent, following injury or illness, and require a programme of complex specialist rehabilitation (Level 1) services, and or Level 2 and Level 3 specialist rehabilitation services as outlined in the Model of Care.

The NRH will continue to advocate for the next phases of the Capital redevelopment project and have submitted the Feasibility study to the HSE, presenting the case for urgently progressing the next phases of the NRH redevelopment programme as expeditiously as possible, to meet the needs of people requiring timely admission to the NRH, now and in the future.



Context

In a rapidly changing health environment, the National Rehabilitation Hospital is undergoing a period of significant transition. To guide this next phase of development, an extensive programme of engagement and analysis was undertaken with Board Directors, senior clinicians, managers, HSE representatives, national clinical leaders,

external regulators, patient representatives, past and returning patients, and staff across the organisation. These consultations and analyses highlighted a series of core issues that will shape the future direction of the NRH and inform the priorities of this Strategic Plan.

The key strategic considerations identified include:



Ireland's evolving health system

The Health Service Executive (HSE) is now organised into six regional health areas, each Integrating hospital and community services to provide patient-centered care closer to home. These regions were established to align hospital and community healthcare services geographically, enabling integrated, person-centered care and supporting the objectives of the Sláintecare strategy for improved healthcare delivery. Within each health region, there are Integrated Healthcare Areas (IHAs) and Community Healthcare Areas (CHAs): Community Neuro-Rehabilitation Teams.

NRH Collaboration with the Managed Clinical Rehabilitation Networks (MCRNs)

The NRH is positioned to remain responsive to the evolving healthcare landscape. Colleagues from across Clinical Programmes will continue to engage in ongoing collaboration with the new Community Neuro-Rehabilitation Teams (CNRTs) to support with induction to neurorehabilitation and integrated pathway development. This includes the development of CNRT Competency Frameworks and training,

and NRH support & supervision of CNRTs, and discuss standardisation of resources and education and access to rehabilitation pathways.

Strategic Direction, National Alignment and System Influence

As the health system undergoes significant restructuring, there is an opportunity for the National Rehabilitation Hospital to ensure that specialist rehabilitation is fully embedded within Ireland's future model of care. Greater clarity and visibility around the specialist scope of the NRH will reinforce a shared understanding of its unique contribution within the national model of care. By drawing on its clinical expertise, research capability and established reputation, the NRH is well placed to provide informed leadership, contribute to national discussions on rehabilitation and policy, and influence the development of services across regions in ways that enhance access and outcomes for those people requiring specialist rehabilitation services.

The NRH Voluntary Status and Value to the Health System

A defining feature of the National Rehabilitation Hospital is its voluntary status, which has been central to its identity, governance and contribution to the Irish health system since its establishment, playing a foundational role in the development of rehabilitation services in Ireland.

As a voluntary hospital, the NRH retains a degree of self-determination that is critical to upholding its mission. The voluntary status of the NRH has enabled a sustained focus on national need, clinical expertise and innovation in specialist rehabilitation, supported by a Board structure that provides rigorous oversight, strategic challenge, stewardship and accountability in the public interest. Voluntary hospitals such as the NRH remain integral partners in the delivery of complex, highly specialised services on behalf of the State.

The NRH works closely with the HSE, and with regional and national providers to further develop specialist rehabilitation services for the national population.

As set out in the 'Report of the Independent Review Group established to examine the role of voluntary organisations in publicly funded health and personal social services', protecting and respecting this status is essential to sustaining the diversity, adaptability and overall effectiveness of Ireland's health system, and to enabling voluntary providers to contribute constructively and transparently to national health objectives.

The report states '... voluntary organisations bring added value to Irish health and social care. The challenge in today's context is to find ways of preserving this capacity into the future, sharing learning and proposals for reform between the voluntary and public sectors, and developing an effective and appropriate relationship between the State and the voluntary sector.'

The report recommends that Voluntary organisations should be consulted fully regarding any future health structures so that a solution is agreed to enable them to retain their separate legal identity and autonomy, while ensuring that the services they contract to provide are part of an integrated concept for the whole region. The NRH is committed to engaging in consultations that will ensure it preserves its voluntary status.

Increasing Complexity, Patient-Centred Care and Quality Outcomes

Increasing demand for complex specialist rehabilitation is placing sustained pressure on specialist inpatient capacity and contributing to longer waiting lists and delayed transfers of care, with implications for both acute hospitals and individuals awaiting admission to the NRH.

A more strategic approach to managing complexity, including enhanced pre-admission coordination, clearer prioritisation and stronger collaboration with regional partners, will be essential to ensure that NRH can continue to focus its resources on those who most require tertiary-level care. At the same time, strengthening clinical governance, expanding opportunities for patient voice and ensuring that quality systems evolve with changing service demands will help safeguard patient experience and outcomes. Understanding population trends and anticipating future need will further support system-wide planning, ensuring timely access to rehabilitation.

Service Scope, Access and Pathways

Ensuring that patients receive the right care in the right setting at the right time relies on clear service scope, coordinated pathways and strong collaboration across the health system. This is central to **Sláintecare**, Ireland's healthcare reform programme, which seeks to create a universal health service .

The variation in referral practices and how patients move between acute, specialist and community services continues to influence patient flow into and out of the NRH and affects the organisation's ability to provide early access and timely admission to patients on the waiting list. Clarifying NRH's specialist service scope, alongside strengthening partnerships and refining admission processes, will help ensure that patients are either treated directly by the NRH or guided to the most appropriate service to maximise their rehabilitation potential. Advancing a more integrated and consistent pathway will support earlier access, continuity of care and more effective use of specialist capacity.

Infrastructure, Capacity and Long-Term Sustainability

Ensuring that the NRH can continue to meet national rehabilitation needs requires modern, adaptable infrastructure supported by resources aligned with the complexity and multidisciplinary nature of specialist rehabilitation. Progressing Phase II and III, alongside broader site development, is essential to creating the physical capacity and clinical environment required for contemporary and future models of care.

Strengthened financial planning, appropriate investment and constructive engagement with funders will support long-term organisational resilience, ensuring the NRH can meet rising demand, adopt modern models of care and maintain its role as Ireland's national tertiary centre for the provision of complex specialist rehabilitation services.

Workforce Capability and Organisational Culture

The NRH is one of the largest employers in the local area. Meeting the growing national need for specialist rehabilitation requires a highly skilled and resilient

workforce, yet shortages across key clinical disciplines continue to place pressure on specialist services. As patient needs become more complex, the demand for advanced rehabilitation expertise is increasing, highlighting the importance of attracting, developing and retaining staff with specialised skills.

Supporting organisational wellbeing, improving access to development opportunities and enhancing the overall staff experience will be central to sustaining service quality and preserving the national role of the NRH. A continued emphasis on compassionate leadership, open communication and a positive organisational culture will help reinforce a supportive environment where staff can thrive, contribute effectively and remain committed to delivering high-quality rehabilitation.

Progressing the capital redevelopment of the NRH will also help to promote recruitment and retention as the new development impacts positively on staff who benefit from delivering services in a new and innovative environment designed specifically around patients' needs, in a learning organisation.

Research, Technology and Innovation

Enhancing digital capability, data quality and research capacity is increasingly important for supporting evidence-based rehabilitation and informing future service planning. Strengthening digital systems and improving data integration will enable more robust outcome measurement, better insight into patient pathways and more effective participation in national digital health initiatives.

Building research capability will allow NRH to generate evidence, evaluate emerging rehabilitation approaches and contribute to a learning health system. Together, these developments will support continuous improvement, foster innovation and help ensure that rehabilitation services evolve in line with changing needs and best practice.



Our Mission

The NRH leads complex specialist rehabilitation in Ireland – delivering person centred care, advancing innovation, and building national capability so every person achieves their best possible potential for lasting positive outcomes and improved wellbeing.



Our Vision

People in Ireland achieve their fullest potential through world-class, equitable and innovative rehabilitation that transforms lives and strengthens communities.



Our Values

The NRH values guide the organisation, embodying its identity and principles. They shape how we work, how we make decisions, and how we engage with patients, families, staff and partners across the health system.



Compassion



We treat every patient and colleague with kindness and empathy.

- We listen actively to concerns and act on what we hear
- We prioritise dignity, comfort, and understanding in every interaction.

Accountability



We are stewards of public trust and resources setting clear standards and measuring our impact.

- We use resources and data responsibly, fairly, and transparently to improve the quality and safety of our services.
- We are answerable for the quality and safety of our services and lead nationally through evidence-based practice.

Respect



We value every person's voice, expertise, and lived experience, showing respect in action as well as words.

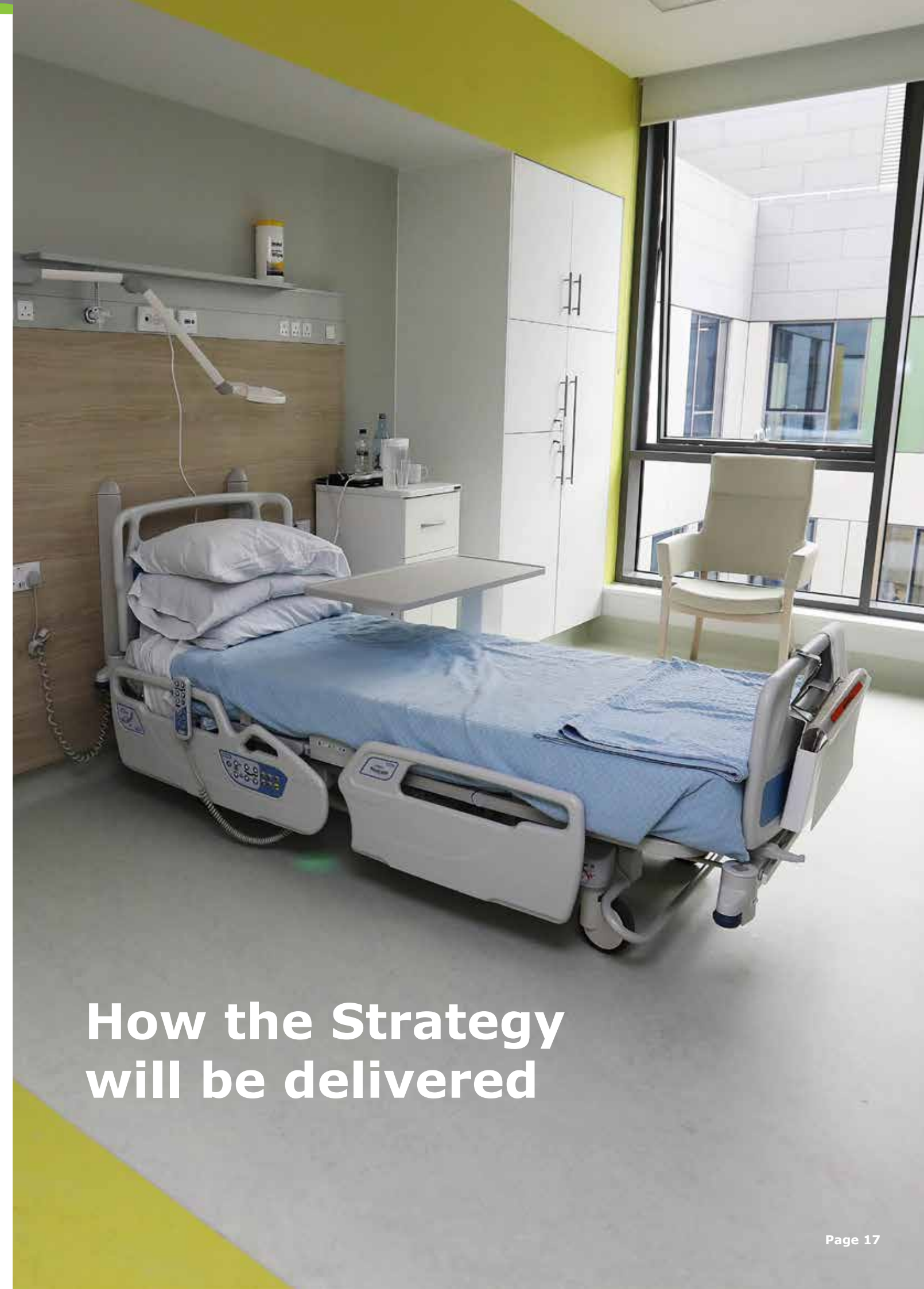
- We treat patients, families, and staff fairly and inclusively.
- We ensure equity of access and opportunity, recognising its importance in delivering fair and consistent services and outcomes.
- We create a culture where diverse views are welcomed and acted upon.

Excellence



We strive for the highest standards of specialist rehabilitation through commitment, innovation, and collaboration.

- We honour our commitments by staying focused on what matters most for patients, families, and colleagues.
- We embrace innovation, learning, and new ideas to continuously improve how we work and the outcomes we deliver.
- We collaborate across disciplines, services, and partnerships to ensure seamless, integrated, and effective rehabilitation pathways.



How the Strategy will be delivered

Theme 1 - Patient Care

The NRH will develop a nationally recognised and clearly defined service scope, supported by transparent pathways and consistent outcome measures, underpinning an equitable and coherent rehabilitation system. A shared clinical strategy and a strengthened national rehabilitation forum will reinforce clarity, accountability and alignment across regions and services.

Key activities:

- **Ensure Access to Appropriate and Timely Rehabilitation Pathways**
Create and implement system-wide referral and triage tools and guidance packages, including clear referral criteria and training supports, to promote equitable access, support consistent pathway decision-making and appropriate admissions nationally.
- **Development and Rollout of NRH Clinical Strategy**
Define and publish the NRH Clinical Strategy to formally articulate its national role, scope of service and complex specialist rehabilitation remit, and to standardise admission, referral and discharge criteria through nationally agreed rehabilitation pathways for each specialist programme, co-designed with RHAs, acute hospitals and community services, thereby ensuring access to appropriate and timely rehabilitation pathways
- **Enhance Patient Experience and Goal Achievement within Expected Timeframes**
Establish and operate a National Rehabilitation Forum to set standards, address system delays and support policy alignment, underpinned by a national clinical strategy and outcomes framework incorporating PROMs, PREMs, functional measures, reporting cycles and national benchmarking to support transparency and shared standards across the system.
- **Increase Capacity to Meet Service Needs**
Progress the next Phases of the NRH Capital Development to expand specialist rehabilitation capacity, ensuring facilities, beds and therapy spaces are aligned with national service scope, pathway demand and the delivery of care at the appropriate levels.

Theme 2 - Leadership, Influence and Advocacy

The NRH will strengthen its leadership role as the national provider of Level 1 Complex Specialist Rehabilitation Services with recognised contributions to policy development, research and system planning. It will continue to develop strategic partnerships, academic collaborations and visible participation in national and international forums to influence policy and planning within specialist rehabilitation service provision and advocate for those people who require specialist rehabilitation services.

Key activities:

- **Influence and Advocacy Across The Wider Health System**
Secure formal NRH representation on national policy, strategy, and planning groups, including trauma, neuro-rehabilitation, RHAs, workforce planning, National Clinical Programme for Rehabilitation Medicine, and national rehabilitation strategy forums.

Elevate the profile of specialist rehabilitation services and communicate the role of the NRH, its impact, and value to policymakers and the public.
- **Development and Rollout of the NRH Academic Strategy**
Develop and publish national rehabilitation insight reports that demonstrate outcomes, system impact and return on investment, informing patients, national planning and strengthening policy influence.
- **National Leadership and Advocacy for Rehabilitation Access**
Develop and implement a coordinated national advocacy and visibility strategy to strengthen awareness of rehabilitation needs, clarify patient pathways, and improve access to appropriate rehabilitation facilities.
- **Develop All Island Complex Specialist Rehabilitation Services**
Establish strategic international and academic partnerships to benchmark outcomes, support joint research, develop fellowships, and introduce global best practice.

Theme 3 - Innovative Ways of Working

The NRH will develop future-focused models of Integrated Rehabilitation. Regional networks, digital rehabilitation approaches and ambulatory models represent the future direction of integrated rehabilitation delivery. Academic partnerships and aligned workforce planning enable innovative, flexible and responsive models of care that evolve in line with national rehabilitation needs.

Key activities:

- **Development and Rollout of the NRH Digital Strategy**
Develop process optimisation and continued digital uptake. Scale digital rehabilitation models, including tele-rehabilitation, virtual MDTs and remote monitoring, to expand access, support early intervention and align with national digital health developments.

Digitally enable clinical and operational systems, including Electronic Health Record (EHR) readiness, scheduling, integrated reporting and real-time analytics for waiting lists, Delayed Transfers of Care, length of stay, capacity and outcomes, to support the next phases of the NRH Capital Redevelopment and informed decision-making.
- **Expanded Ambulatory and Step-down Rehabilitation Models**
Development and scaling of new Models of Rehabilitation including stepdown, ambulatory and outreach models.

- **Develop Specialist Regional Networks to Enhance Timeliness across the Rehabilitation Pathway**
Develop regional specialist rehabilitation networks supported by structured NRH outreach, including MDT clinics, early specialist consultation, shared care protocols and complex care triage, and strengthen national education and training partnerships to support joint appointments, clinical placements, research opportunities and coordinated training pipelines.
- **Standardisation of Interdisciplinary Team Models across Pathways**
Develop and implement a national specialist rehabilitation workforce strategy, supported by standardised Interdisciplinary workforce models that ensure appropriate skill mix, advanced practice roles and flexible staffing aligned to patient need.
- **Establish Lean and Innovation Hub at the NRH**

Theme 4 - Organisational Effectiveness and Stewardship

Strong governance, modern facilities, and aligned resources enable the NRH to deliver specialist rehabilitation at scale, use resources efficiently and deliver value for money, adapt to system change, and sustain high-quality services. The NRH will continue to develop operational excellence and organisational performance through digitally enabled operational and clinical systems, aligned with future infrastructure plans that support high-performing, efficient and well-governed services.

Key activities:

- **Maintain Financial sustainability and Cost Control**
Integration of financial, workforce, and activity planning into a unified annual planning cycle aligned with national demand and regional priorities.

Robust resource management, efficient use of funding, and clear value for money, alongside data-driven insights will enable agile, outcome-focused decision-making at all levels of the organisation.
- **Stakeholder Feedback and Responsiveness**
Embed a digitally enabled feedback and insight framework that systematically captures, analyses and acts on patient and family feedback, using real-time data to inform operational decisions, strengthen governance and drive continuous service improvement.
- **Self-Generated Income and Non-Costed Resources**
Develop and implement a coordinated approach to generating self-sustaining income and non-costed resources, including fundraising, philanthropy, partnerships and volunteering, to support service delivery, infrastructure development and long-term organisational sustainability.
- **Integrated (Clinical and Corporate) Governance Effectiveness**
Design and implement aligned organisational, clinical and corporate governance structures that support the NRH strategic direction and future service model, providing clear accountability, effective oversight and alignment with new legal structures.

Ensure that facilities, compliance, audit readiness and infrastructure are scalable and fit for system change and future growth. Implement a hospital-wide performance and governance framework, defining KPIs, dashboards, reporting cycles, and clear accountability at clinical programme and organisational levels.
- **Achieve Successful CARF Re-accreditation**

Theme 5 - People and Culture

The NRH will cultivate its learning, research-active and development-focused culture which supports excellence in specialist rehabilitation. Strong, compassionate leadership, clear progression pathways and structured engagement frameworks will foster collaboration, capability and pride in the organisation's national role.

Key activities:

■ **Safe and sustainable workforce resourcing**

Implement integrated workforce and cost planning to ensure safe skill-mix, sustainable staffing levels and effective deployment of specialist teams to support high-quality rehabilitation care.

Develop a national specialist rehabilitation workforce strategy, including training pipelines, rotations, advanced practice roles, and succession planning to ensure long-term workforce sustainability.

■ **Staff Development and Professional Progression**

Roll out a comprehensive multidisciplinary learning and development programme, including simulation, induction, leadership development, and interdisciplinary training.

Embed a research-active and learning culture through protected time, mentorship, academic partnerships, multidisciplinary research activity, and participation in national and international trials.

■ **Performance Accountability**

Develop and implement a performance framework that sets

clear expectations and accountability across the organisation, while allowing performance measures and assessment approaches to be tailored appropriately by role, grade and service context.

■ **Positive Staff Experience, Culture and Shared Purpose.**

Strengthen organisational culture through structured collaboration mechanisms and targeted actions across leadership practice, workload management, development opportunities and workplace supports, informed by the workforce strategy and staff feedback to enhance staff satisfaction and wellbeing.

■ **Embed Compassionate Leadership and Maintain a Positive Working Environment.**

Management and staff strive to foster a workplace that is supportive, inclusive and where every person feels valued and appreciated. This reflects the hospital's person-centred values, its commitment to quality, and dedication to achieving best possible outcomes for patients, all those who engage with our services, and the wider health system.



