



Strategic Plan

2026-2029



ADDICTION
COUNSELLORS
IRELAND

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Introduction

We are pleased to present the Addiction Counsellors of Ireland (ACI) Strategic Plan for 2026–2029 to our members, key stakeholders, including addiction counsellors and addiction workers, and the wider addiction services community.

This strategic plan has been shaped through extensive engagement with members, stakeholders, service users, and sector partners. It reflects the collective insights, priorities, and challenges identified across the addiction field and helps ACI respond with clarity, purpose, and strategic focus over the next three years.

At its core, this plan reaffirms ACI's commitment to supporting addiction counsellors and addiction workers as central stakeholders within the sector. It recognises their critical role in delivering high-quality, evidence-based interventions across clinical, community, voluntary, and private settings, and seeks to strengthen their professional standing, visibility, and support structures.

The addiction landscape continues to evolve. Increased service demand, the emergence of process addictions, workforce pressures, and ongoing challenges relating to parity of esteem, recognition, and access to supports all require a coordinated, strategic response.

In particular, the forthcoming regulation of counselling and psychotherapy by CORU represents a significant structural shift, with implications for professional identity, standards, and membership across the sector.

This strategic plan sets out ACI's response to these developments. It focuses on strengthening membership, supporting professional development, enhancing ACI's advocacy and influence, and ensuring organisational sustainability.

It also reflects a clear commitment to amplifying the voice and expertise of addiction counsellors and addiction workers in policy, practice, and public discourse.

We would like to acknowledge and thank the ACI Board, the Strategic Planning Sub-Committee, ACI members, stakeholders, service users, and FutureSpark Coaching for

their valuable contributions. Their engagement has been central to grounding this plan in practice realities and keeping it responsive to the sector's needs.

Signed:



John Devlin
Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee



Dr James O'Shea
ACI Chairperson

About ACI

Addiction Counsellors of Ireland (ACI) is Ireland's specialist accrediting and representative body for professionals working in the field of addiction. Originally established in 1990 as the Irish Association of Alcohol & Addiction Counsellors (IAAAC), the organisation has accredited, represented, and supported addiction professionals across Ireland for over 35 years.

In 2024, ACI expanded its support within the addiction sector by formally extending accreditation to Addiction Workers and Addiction Worker Supervisors. This introduced Ireland's first dedicated accreditation pathway for Addiction Workers, strengthening recognition and representation for a professional group that has historically lacked formal recognition within the sector.

Through accreditation, representation, education, and member engagement initiatives, ACI supports and upholds high standards of professional practice across the addiction sector. This work strengthens accountability, supports the ongoing development of addiction professionals, and contributes to safer, high-quality addiction services.

The organisation currently represents over 500 members, including Addiction Counsellors, Addiction Workers, Clinical Supervisors, and Addiction Worker Supervisors working across clinical, community, voluntary, and private settings.

ACI remains committed to supporting those it represents as the sector continues to evolve, with members' needs at the core of its work. This includes preparing for key developments in addiction policy and accreditation, such as the introduction of CORU and the forthcoming National Drugs Strategy 2026 – 2029.

Our Vision, Mission, Values

Vision

The Addiction Counsellors of Ireland looks forward to a future where those suffering from addiction can openly seek professional help from an accredited addiction professional, where addiction in Ireland is no longer dealt with behind closed doors and the stigma associated with addiction is put aside.

Mission

The Addiction Counsellors of Ireland strives to be a leading professional accreditation association for addiction professionals in Ireland.

Values

We uphold three core values relating to ethical practice, trust and support:

- Ethical. We adhere to clearly defined high ethical standards.
- Trusting. We are committed to an open, honest and trusting counselling environment.
- Supportive. We continuously encourage and empower our members and the community.

Goal 1

Serving our members and building our membership

We will work to grow our membership and be responsive to members' needs so that they feel informed, supported, and connected in our ACI community.

To achieve this, we will:

1. Keep members informed and updated on CORU developments and provide access to practical support and guidance on preparing for CORU registration.
2. Enhance and tailor the incentives and benefits we offer to members to support their personal and career development and membership journey.
3. Expand ACI Connect and regional engagement opportunities for members to build personal networks and feel that they belong to a community which values them.
4. Develop membership resources and connection opportunities tailored to membership categories and groups/sectors.
5. Continue to promote and develop our new membership categories of addiction workers and addiction worker supervisors.
6. Outreach to employers, training and education providers and other networks to promote ACI membership and its benefits for addiction professionals.
7. Seek out corporate and philanthropic partnerships to develop and resource ACI membership incentives.

Goal 2

Supporting professional development

We will offer diverse CPD opportunities and expand our member information on trends, practice, policy, and research.

To achieve this, we will:

1. Curate an annual CPD programme co-designed with members, responsive to sectoral, regulatory and professional development needs.
2. Enhance ACI's website resources to support online CPD for members.
3. Increase learning opportunities for members on emerging issues, trends, research and treatment in the area of process addiction.
4. Continue to build education and learning into ACI annual events.
5. Collaborate with education and training stakeholders and funding bodies to innovate flexible CPD opportunities and access to learning for addiction professionals and students.
6. Explore with other stakeholders nationally and internationally, flexible CPD, and shared learning opportunities for addiction professionals and students.
7. Continue to promote job/career information and resources to members.
8. Provide spaces for members and academics to share their research and learning with ACI members.

Goal 3

Advocating and influencing for our members and sector

We will build ACI's profile and connections to represent our members' interests and advocate on issues/concerns for addiction professionals and our communities.

To achieve this, we will:

1. Maintain and develop our links with CORU and other key stakeholders in preparation for registration processes to futureproof ACI.
2. Work to progress parity of recognition for ACI members with other peer professionals in insurance coverage and employer recognition.
3. Identify relevant forums which could benefit from ACI involvement to represent members' knowledge in policy and strategy development.
4. Connect and collaborate with other peer bodies and stakeholders to identify shared areas and issues for influencing and campaigning.
5. Invest in and build ACI's capacity, skills and media presence to raise ACI's profile as a leading and trusted voice on addiction issues.
6. Provide more education and ACI resources for the public and other stakeholders about professional standards, ACI and the work of addiction professionals.
7. Promote and profile more about the skills, roles and depth of addiction professionals' work on our ACI website.

Goal 4

Organisational development and sustainability

We will work to futureproof our organisational membership and sustainability, consolidating our income, systems and structures to work effectively for our members.

To achieve this, we will:

1. Research new sources of revenue to resource our work, led by a fundraising committee.
2. Develop dedicated annual plans and activities to expand ACI membership.
3. Facilitate periodic engagement with ACI members to stay attuned to their issues, concerns and priorities for advocacy work.
4. Promote member involvement and volunteer opportunities to shape and progress ACI's work and support succession planning.
5. Further develop our information systems, communication platforms and website to support members' accreditation, CPD and information requirements.
6. Ensure ongoing development of ACI's governance to meet regulatory and compliance requirements.
7. Provide training and development support to our team and Board members.
8. Focus on effective succession planning for our team, Board and committees to ensure ACI has the appropriate resources and structures in place to deliver its strategic objectives.

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