

Coeliac Society of Ireland
Moving Forward
Strategic plan 2010 – 2014

August 2009

FOREWORD

The Coeliac Society has undergone significant change in recent years. The Society now operates in a more regulated and complex environment with ever increasing demands being made on volunteers to provide an essential service for Coeliacs in Ireland. Regulation of the charity sector, changes to company law and the current downturn in the economic climate will result in further challenges for the Society in the years ahead. However, the Coeliac Society is in good position to meet these challenges head on through dedicated volunteers and staff.

The Coeliac Society has an important role in providing support and information to the 1% or so of people in Ireland who are Coeliac and has been doing so for the past 40 years. This 5-year Strategic Plan, the first for the Coeliac Society, will provide direction for the Society in the coming years. It will focus on 5 key areas, enhancement of products and services, improved communications, greater awareness of the Coeliac Condition, increased efficiency in day-to-day administration and identification and development of sustainable funding sources. The members and volunteers are the lifeblood of the Coeliac Society and will be key part of all the actions listed in the Strategic Plan.

The Coeliac Society would like to thank all the members, volunteers, staff and directors who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan and look forward to continued support from Carmichael Centre, Gluten Free Manufacturing Companies, the Wheel, the Health Services Executive, the Department of Health and Children and other state agencies in the coming years to provide an improved service for Coeliacs in Ireland.

Introduction to the Coeliac Society

Who are we?

The Coeliac Society is a voluntary Charity and Company Limited by guarantee based in the Carmichael Centre in Dublin 7. Since 1970 Coeliac Society has provided information, support and awareness to Coeliacs throughout Ireland. At a time of change and reform in the health care sector and the charity sector, there is a need for the Coeliac Society to remain a valuable source of information and support to Coeliacs now and into the future.

Vision Mission, and aims of the Coeliac Society

The vision of the Coeliac Society is a healthier life for all Coeliacs and those who benefit from a gluten free diet.

The mission of the Coeliac Society of Ireland is to improve the quality of life for Coeliacs and those who benefit from a gluten free diet.

The aims of the Coeliac Society include the following:

- To raise awareness of the condition, its symptoms and the difficulties faced by approximately 1% of the Irish population estimated to be Coeliac and within the catering and hospitality industry.
- To improve the quality of life for Coeliacs, those with Dermatitis Herpetiformis or Gluten Intolerance and those who must adhere to a strict gluten-free diet for life.
 - To ensure that all Coeliacs have the information and support to cope with their condition,
 - To help those on a gluten free diet to make the transition from a normal diet through support and information,
 - To provide information about the suitability of certain manufactured products for a gluten free diet,
 - To endeavour to ensure events are held regularly around the country.
- To present the concerns of Coeliacs on a national level through meetings with various bodies, including the Department of Health and Children, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Food Safety Authority, the GMS Board and Health Service Executive.
- To present the concerns of Coeliacs at a European level by being an active member of the European Association of Coeliac Societies (AOECS). AOECS has observer status at the Codex Alimentaris Commission that sets International food standards.
- To keep members up to date with new developments in medical research on the Coeliac condition and any changes in legislation in areas such as food labelling.

Organisational Structure

Figure 1 outlines the Coeliac Society organisational chart. The Management Committee (directors of the company) consists of volunteers from all over Ireland affected in some way by the Coeliac Condition. There are local branches and support groups around of Ireland, with many dedicated volunteers providing their valuable time to organise events and increase awareness campaigns in addition to their work and family commitments. President of the Society Dr. Nicholas Kennedy, a Lecturer in the Trinity College Dublin and St. James Hospital, provides medical advice to the society and Clinical Nutritionist Sinéad Stone provides dietary advice to the Society in relation to gluten free products and healthy eating. There are currently four full time paid staff members in the Coeliac Society and a FAS CE Participant.

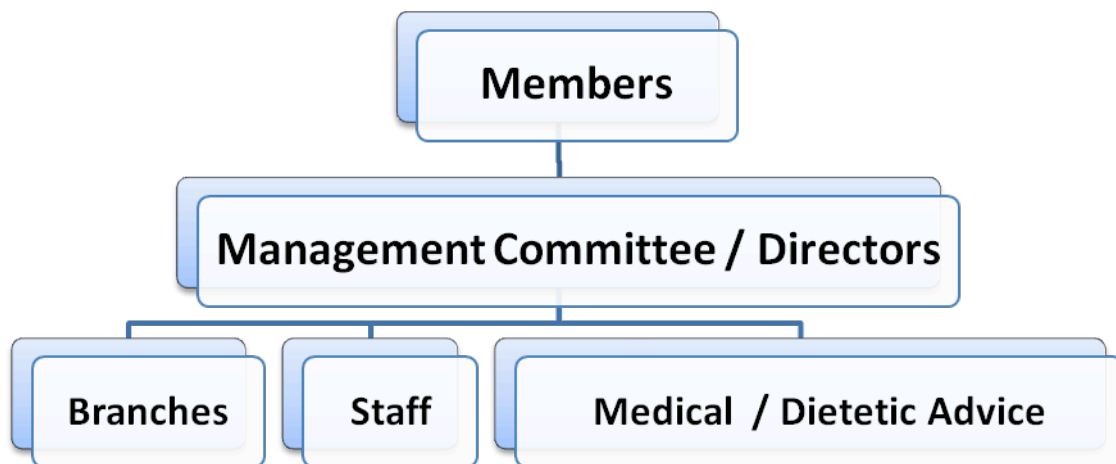


Figure 1 Coeliac Society Organisational Chart

The Management Committee is responsible for the efficient and effective running of the organisation and is accountable to the members of the Coeliac Society at the Annual General meeting. It provides a long term focus for the Society with powers and responsibilities clearly set out in the Articles and Memorandum of Associations. Office Administration is mainly managed by staff members. In addition, to the day to day office administration, the staff provide a valuable phone and email support service for Coeliacs and their families and produce a food list booklet of gluten free products for all coeliac. These services are not provided elsewhere and can be invaluable for all Coeliac, in particular, for newly diagnosed Coeliacs.

Products and Services

The following provides an overview of existing products and services being provided by the Coeliac Society and outlines the day to day activities:

Information and Education

- All new members receive an information pack produced by the Coeliac Society containing the following:
 - Annual Food List of gluten free products
 - 'Coeliac News' – twice yearly newsletter
 - Gluten Free handbook
 - Information Leaflets
- Cookery Book titled 'Gluten Free All-Sorts', with tried and tested recipes for Coeliacs and information on suitable non-contaminated natural flours for gluten free cooking.
- A Catering List to assist those working in the catering and hospitality industries in coping with the coeliac diet.
- A list of Restaurants throughout the Republic of Ireland suitable for Coeliacs, based on feedback from members.
- Travel Information including dietary information cards in foreign languages and information about the gluten free diet in other countries.
- News and information through www.coeliac.ie with a monthly 'Coeliac News Online' email.
- Seasonal Gluten Free Goodie Lists are prepared for Christmas and Easter.
- Events are organised at national and branch level, including cookery demonstrations, presentations by medical experts and product displays by manufacturers of gluten free food.
- Support is provided by the Society to branches and support groups at a local level

Services

- Email and phone support for members and all those who benefit from a gluten free diet and have an interest in the Coeliac Condition.
- Provide a link between members and manufacturers of gluten free products
- Work closely with food industry to improved existing and provide new gluten free products on the Irish market and distribution to food stores.
- Provide advice for new companies wishing to provide gluten free products on the Irish market in areas sourcing of ingredients, labeling, cross contamination issues, product testing etc

People who benefit from the Coeliac Society

The Coeliac Society primarily serves people with:

- Coeliac Disease
- Dermatitis Herpetiformis
- Those who benefit from a Gluten Free Diet

The gluten free diet may be recommended for the following situations in which scientific evidence is not conclusive.

- Gluten intolerance
- Autism
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Wheat Intolerance
- Lupus
- Osteoporosis
- ADHD

Requests for information from the Coeliac Society are made by:

- Hospitals
- Medical Professionals
- Pharmacists
- Community Care Workers
- Industry and food providers
 - Catering and Hospitality
 - Supermarkets
 - Primary and Secondary Schools
 - School Training Colleges
 - Food and Drink Producers

There are also people who need knowledge on the condition:

- Parents and families of those affected
- Medical Personnel
 - Primary care
 - Hospital based
- Dieticians
- Dentists
- Nurses Chefs
- Hotel and Restaurant Frontline Staff
- Nursing home staff
- Hospital Catering Staff

Strategic Objectives

The purpose of the Plan is to provide a clear strategic direction in the achievement of the aims and Corporate Governance of the Coeliac Society in the coming years in this ever changing health and charity sector. It will provide a greater focus on professionalism in the day-to-day operation of the Coeliac Society and in the responsibilities of directors in meeting the needs of members. The Coeliac Society will focus on 4 objectives over the 5 years of the plan and these are outlined in the following sections.

Objective 1	To review and update all existing products and services to provide an improved service to members
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Actions

- Seek advice from professionals to review and update existing products and services with a view to developing new products and services if required.
- Enhancement of the website and IT software to offer more online services and support to Coeliacs and to improve office efficiency.
- To develop a Communication Plan to improve communication internally and externally by identifying stakeholders and their needs.
- To work closely with the catering and hospitality industry to provide a greater range of gluten free products and coeliac friendly outlets.
- To work closely with relevant agencies in the Community and Voluntary Sector to improve the governance of the Society. E.g. the Wheel.
- To forge greater links with overseas Coeliac Societies through the AO ECS to help Coeliacs travelling overseas
- Further development of branch and support groups to enhance the provision of local services.
- Carry out qualitative and quantitative surveys of members to assess their needs.

Targets

- Review and update a minimum of 3no existing products and services per annum.

Objective 2	To develop a Communication Strategy to provide improved communication / efficiency within the Coeliac Society internal and with external agencies
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Actions

- To review existing and develop new policies and procedures to improve the efficiency of the Coeliac Society (staff, directors) in line with best practice and national legislation.

- To develop guidelines for directors to ensure that roles and responsibilities are understood and legal duties are clear and to ensure the reporting mechanism between the Management Committee and Staff and Management Committee meetings are efficient and purposeful
- To develop event management guidelines to assist the Management Committee and local branches in the hosting of the events
- Further development of the skills of staff and directors through relevant external training, e.g. corporate governance, health and safety, IT
- Develop new policies governing staff recruitment and volunteers.
- Develop office management procedures on the day to day running of the office.

Target

- A Communication Plan to be developed by the end of 2010 outlining all internal and external stakeholders and how their needs can be met and how the efficiency of the Coeliac Society can be improved.
- Office management procedures to be developed by the end of 2009.
- All policies to be reviewed every 2 years

Objective 3	To develop a Public Relations Plan to provide an improved awareness of the Coeliac Condition and a positive national image of the Coeliac Society.
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Actions

- Work closely the health sector, relevant state agencies, the catering industry, the media sector, and the general public to increase knowledge and awareness of the Coeliac Condition.
- Develop guidelines for dealing with all media and develop a press media pack.
- Enhancement and update of branding to project a positive image of the Coeliac Society including the development of a new logo.
- Work closely with the AO ECS to promote European and World Coeliac Day

Target

- A Branding Strategy to be in place by the end of 2009 including a new logo.
- Public Relations Plan to be developed by the end of 2010.

Objective 4	To identify sustainable form of funding for the Coeliac Society and improve develop a financial management policy.
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Actions

- Identify external sources of funding from government agencies, voluntary sector and external companies.
- Ensure all funding proposals have a sound financial basis with all applications carefully developed and reviewed.
- Develop guidelines for local fund raising to be in accordance with Charity legislation requirements.
- Develop guidelines for the management of the financial accounts and to meet the annual HSE reporting requirements.
- Develop a financial reserve policy.
- Identify greater efficiencies to reduce the costs of running the Coeliac Society and increase the revenue generated from sales and events

Target

- Financial policy to be in place by mid 2010.
- Ongoing funding from HSE and other project funding to be identified by end 2010.

Review

To progress the targets outlined in the report, working groups will be set up within the Management committee under each main area. An annual report will be prepared and presented to the members at an AGM outlining the annual progress on the 5 year Strategic Plan. This will also contain information on the reporting requirements of the HSE Service Level Agreement. The following are the main programme outputs that will be monitored by the Coeliac Society and included in the annual report:

1. Financial Position – Income and Expenditure
2. Membership numbers – new members and renewals by existing members
3. Publications Produced – Food List, Catering Booklet, Coeliac News, Eating out cards, Leaflets, Coeliac Handbook, Awareness Poster(s)
4. Sales of Publications – Food List, Cookery Book, Eating out cards
5. New company policies being developed and/or provided
6. Number of Coeliac events and PR events
7. Number of staff/volunteers trained/attending courses
8. Office Administration. 90% membership application and queries processed within 2 weeks.
9. Qualitative member surveys undertaken at least annually to assess existing products and service and how services can be improved.