

# NONPROFITS IN HEALTHCARE IN IRELAND

Thanks to Benefacts Database of Irish Non-profits, policy-makers as well as the general public have more and better digital access to data about health care non-profits than ever before.



There are 1,079 nonprofit health care providers operating at scale in Ireland. These include nonprofit organisations running hospitals and hospices, providers of other health services and health promotion, addiction services, residential and non-residential care including mental health services, and services for people with disabilities.

While some sub-sectors have a small number of entities,

their impact is significant – for example 35 voluntary hospitals and 21 hospices.

Some of the best-known of nonprofit healthcare providers are the 33 larger charities providing hospital, hospice, disability and residential care services under section 38 of the Health Act, 2004. For a quick introduction including their governance and their financial profile, check their listings on [www.benefacts.ie](http://www.benefacts.ie).

Benefacts ID	Independent voluntary healthcare providers with S.38 status*
6247467	Saint John Of God Community Services CLG
4364779	Children's Health Ireland
5130950	Our Lady's Hospice & Care Services
6486532	Incorporated Orthopaedic Hospital Of Ireland
6306241	Peamount Healthcare
6352702	South Infirmary - Victoria University Hospital
7624368	St. Vincent's Healthcare Group
6534806	Mater Misericordiae University Hospital
6299411	The National Orthopaedic Hospital Cappagh DAC
2307226	St. Vincent's Hospital Fairview
6752888	The Adelaide & Meath Hospital Incorporating The National Children's Hospital
5001597	Royal Victoria Eye And Ear Hospital
6790123	Coombe Lying-In Hospital
1398819	National Rehabilitation Hospital
8253212	The Rotunda Hospital
8518301	National Maternity Hospital.
6803627	Leopardstown Park Hospital Trust
6887111	St John's Hospital
1890346	Royal Hospital Donnybrook
3144257	The Children's Sunshine Home
7100878	Saint Patrick's Centre (Kilkenny)
4040757	Central Remedial Clinic
7948368	Cope Foundation
5121682	St Michael's House
2261819	KARE, Promoting Inclusion For People With Intellectual Disabilities
1579742	Sunbeam House Services CLG
2774516	Stewarts Care Limited
4210970	Brothers Of Charity Services Ireland
4129169	Muiriosa Foundation
1273237	Carriglea Cairde Services
7960601	Daughters Of Charity Disability Support Services CLG
3061385	Mercy University Hospital Cork CLG
2147118	Cheeverstown House CLG

\* Five other Section 38 voluntary hospitals are not included in this list because they are controlled by government – (Beaumont Hospital, St. James Hospital, and Dublin Dental Hospital), are deregistered as a charity (Saint Michael's Hospital Dun Laoghaire) or do not report as an entity independent of their parent institution (Cork university Dental School and Hospital).

By any standards these 'section 38' bodies are a significant group of entities whose 30,460 employees are deemed to be public servant equivalents. According to the latest data, publicly available from their regulatory filings, their aggregate turnover in 2019 was €3.3bn, with the HSE and other government funders accounting for €2.4bn of this.

"Benefacts' free public website has helped to make the work of Ireland's nonprofit sector and its 12 sub-sectors more legible than ever before" said Patricia Quinn, Benefacts founder and managing director. Thanks to the foresight of successive Ministers for Public Expenditure & Reform, and co-funding from the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Ireland Funds, Benefacts was first funded in 2015 as a pathfinder project to develop Ireland's only comprehensive and publicly available database of civil society, nonprofit and voluntary organisations in Ireland.

Five years later, Benefacts provides an array of data, analysis and analytics services that are relied on by policymakers, funders, private donors and other professional service providers alike.

"Fifty years ago, there would have been a fraction of this number of independently established entities, with much more of the care – where it was available at all – being provided by branches of religious-led organisations and small local voluntary organisations. The last 25 years has seen a progressive professionalisation of what used to be called the community and voluntary sector, with this group of 1,079 nonprofit organisations - including section 38 and section 39 providers - together employing more than 63,300 people", says Quinn.

The trend to professionalisation is not limited to the care services: many larger healthcare providers are supported by professional fundraising teams – in 2019 alone, reported fundraising and donations accounted for €177m - €23m of which was raised by S.38 bodies.

As forthcoming charity reporting regulations improve the quality of public disclosure, we will learn more about the profile of earned and other income of €1.3bn.

The range of care services, support and advocacy provided by nonprofits working in the health sector continues to grow. In the last five years there are new small companies established to advocate for peoples' needs, or to provide new services in areas like home hospice services, neuro ataxia, brain health, stroke rehab, thrombosis, vaccine awareness and autism support - to name but a few.

Besides the 1,079 companies and associations discussed here – of which 833 are registered charities – a further 597 local groups are devoted to some aspect of health promotion. These county-registered nonprofits are too small to appear on the radar of the national registers of companies or of charities, but they all belong to local public participation networks in all parts of Ireland and they include a large array of local community initiative and self-help, old and new, for example hospital visitation committees, defibrillator groups, support groups for people dealing with diabetes, suicide, bereavement as well as local branches of national networks for supporting people with dementia, brain injury, multiple sclerosis, autism, to name but a few.

Commenting on the value of a fully comprehensive database of non-profits in Ireland at the launch of Benefacts analysis report on Charities and the impact of Covid-19 recently, Liz Hughes, CEO of Charities Institute Ireland said; "It's research

like this that helps us to continue to build a story and narrative around our work and we all hope that Benefacts will continue to be able to provide this essential independent perspective of the sector for many years to come.”

Benefacts data model under the Open Data regulatory framework involves harvesting and digitising governance, financial and other compliance data from financial statements and other regulatory returns of 10,000 non-profits each year.

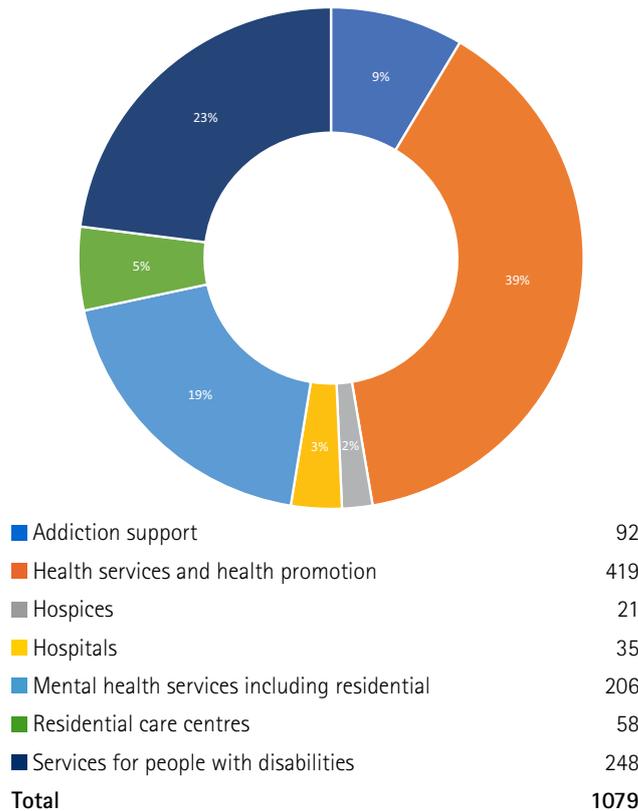
“For a sector like this, operating at such scale and affecting the lives of so many people, in some ways it is surprising that something like Benefacts didn’t emerge years ago”, says Quinn. Benefacts model of transparently sharing data, based on regulatory returns and updated daily from many public sources, was originally based on the US Guidestar project and follows an EU-funded pilot project in co-operation with four other European countries.

“Public servants are the heaviest users of Benefacts data – for evidence-based policy, due diligence, financial control and risk appraisal purposes” says Paula Nyland Benefacts head of finance and operations. Government isn’t the only party with a stake in nonprofits work. “It is a truism to say that efficient markets are characterised by high levels of transparent information, accessible by all. Non-profits working in the health sector are required to file high volumes of reports to their State regulators and funders, especially the HSE.

“These reports include large amounts of highly relevant information about the services being provided. Of course there are issues of competition among alternative providers of similar services – but everyone’s interests would be served if more of this valuable information were routinely shared, and not just within Government. Health non-profits would benefit from greater levels of shared access to business intelligence about the activities of other organisations in their own sector. This is something that’s taken for granted in the private sector, where timely business analysis based on reliable data contributes to informed debate in the boardrooms of companies operating in hospitality, agriculture, construction, IT. Why should nonprofits be different?”

In recent months, especially as COVID has driven some radical reassessment of their work, charities and larger nonprofits and their representative organisations have come to Benefacts looking for trend data and analysis to support important business decisions. Understanding who else is out there, doing what kind of work and with what resources

1,079 PROVIDERS OF HEALTH SERVICES IN IRELAND



are some of the essential components of decision-making in any large business, and not-for-profit businesses are no different.

“Having spent our first five years securing access to the data, normalising and digitising it, Benefacts is now in a position to provide solutions that will quickly become embedded in the State’s own disclosure and analysis processes” said Nyland. More recent services developed in dialogue with public sector bodies include the creation of a single digital reporting venue – Benefacts Who Funds What – where public servants can access the full range of grant expenditure data, programme by programme, across ten of the State bodies with the biggest financial outlay. “Thanks to the cooperation of Government departments and agencies, this

proof-of-concept website shows what can be done if you have the data fundamentals right”, said Nyland.

“We have built the base register of nonprofits in Ireland: a trustworthy listing of 34,000 nonprofits large and small, including their regulatory name, a unique ID provided by Benefacts and an Eircode where we can find one. This is a small fraction of the data we hold in most cases, but it is a *sine qua non* if there is to be any progress in delivering on a digital-first approach. It’s also particularly timely in view of the transposition into Irish law in July 2021 of the EU Open Data Directive, which will require a lot more of this kind of information to be readily accessible to the public and – like Benefacts Who Funds What - in machine-readable formats.

At the granular level, better data, well curated and freely available to all drives other decisions as well. Private donors and institutional philanthropies use Benefacts data to direct their giving. Individuals considering establishing a new voluntary organisation to meet a highly specific need might be glad to discover there’s one already in existence two parishes away.

“We are grateful to successive Ministers for Public Expenditure and Reform for their support in founding it, and for continuing to take an interest in this project, which has now come to the end of its proof-of-concept phase” says Quinn. The time has come to bring Benefacts - itself a not-for-profit company - into the mainstream, but without neglecting nonprofits themselves and other stakeholders not least Ireland’s growing philanthropy sector. In the longer term, a rich body of data about charities and other nonprofits active in health and other sectors, accumulating over time gives anybody with an interest in the health of Ireland’s civil society much to think about – be they a policy maker, a transition year student or anyone in between.