

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



History of the Irish Cancer Prevention Network

Prepared by: The Irish Cancer Prevention Network

Date: August 2025

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

Contents

Background	3
Establishment of the ICPN	3
ICPN Objectives	4
ICPN Co-ordination and collaboration	5
ICPN Achievements	5
Policy	5
Ezines	6
Public education	7
ICPN members community initiatives	10
Education	12
Resources	13
Future for ICPN	14

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

Background

It is well documented that the proportion of cancer incidence attributable to modifiable lifestyle and environmental factors is estimated to be between 30% and 50%¹. Cancer prevention is highlighted as a corner stone of The National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026² as it offers the most cost-effective long-term approach for cancer control. Partners working to strengthen cancer prevention initiatives is recognised in the National Cancer Strategy as a key element in advancing the cancer prevention agenda.

Tackling modifiable risk factors has vast potential to reduce the risk of cancer, and other non-communicable diseases, for the people of Ireland. Addressing modifiable risk factors requires a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary approach which must address action areas outlined in Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion:³

Establishment of the ICPN

The Irish Cancer Prevention Network (ICPN), the first of its kind in Ireland. It is a collaboration between the HSE National Cancer Control Programme, the Irish Cancer Society (ICS), the Marie Keating Foundation (MKF), Breakthrough Cancer Research (BK) and the HSE National Screening Service (NSS). National organisations that have a focus on cancer prevention in Ireland.

The network was established in 2018, following a review of international networks, lectures from the founders of the Scottish Cancer Prevention Network and a workshop with organisations on establishing an Irish Cancer Prevention Network.

The first ICPN memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed by the founding organisations (ICS, MKF, BK and NCCP) in December 2018. The HSE National Screening Service (NSS) joined the Irish Cancer Prevention Network in 2020.

The network established itself over the years and an updated MoU was signed in 2024.

¹ World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/activities/preventing-cancer#:~:text=Between%2030%E2%80%9350%25%20of%20all,for%20the%20control%20of%20cancer>.

² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a89819-national-cancer-strategy-2017-2026/>

³ <https://www.who.int/teams/health-promotion/enhanced-wellbeing/first-global-conference>

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service



Figure 1 Members of the Irish Cancer Prevention Network (ICPN) signing the first and renewed memorandum of understanding. Pictured on the left are Dr Jermonie Coffey, Director NCCP, Liz Yeates-Chief Executive Officer, Marie Keating Foundation Orla Dolan-Chief Executive Officer · Breakthrough Cancer Research, Kevin O'Hagan – Cancer Prevention Manager, Irish Cancer Society, December 2018. Pictured on the right are Lynn Swinburne, Senior Health Promotion Officer, National Screening Service, Dr Triona McCarthy-, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, HSE National Cancer Control Programme, Orla Dolan-Chief Executive Officer · Breakthrough Cancer Research, Kevin O'Hagan – Cancer Prevention Manager, Irish Cancer Society, Liz Yeates-Chief Executive Officer, Marie Keating Foundation, February 2024

ICPN Objectives

The ICPN MoU outlines the objectives and expected outcomes of the Network. The overarching objective is to contribute to the development of a culture and environment conducive to cancer prevention for the Irish population and support the delivery of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026 recommendations in relation to cancer prevention.

The ICPN brings stakeholders together, who are specifically working in cancer prevention, to:

- collaborate on cancer prevention initiatives in Ireland;
- agree consistent evidence-based cancer prevention public awareness messages;
- disseminate up to date cancer prevention research;
- support members and organisations in cancer prevention queries;
- facilitate peer learning;
- support the implementation of the National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026;
- support national programmes with a unified voice.

Bringing together national organisations strengthens supportive work in cancer prevention with a unified voice.

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

ICPN Co-ordination and collaboration

The objectives and expected outcomes are accomplished by the joint responsibility of the network members undertaking the following activities:

- Co-ordination of the network by the NCCP.
- Agreement of annual deliverables.
- Minimum quarterly meetings annually to share planned cancer prevention initiatives and research in cancer prevention. Meeting chair rotates between members.
- Group agreement on aligned consistent evidence-based cancer prevention messages/language, in line with international messages tailored for the Irish context.
- Annual collaboration cancer prevention initiatives including public engagement, education for health and social care professionals and advocacy related to cancer prevention.
- Establish the group as a contact point for cancer prevention consultation.
- Agreed advocacy for cancer prevention initiatives.

As of May 2025, there has been 31 network meetings progressing delivery of objectives and sharing initiatives.

ICPN Achievements

Policy

Together the ICPN is a unified voice for policy change to reduce cancer risk for people living in Ireland.

An application to become an affiliate member of the European Cancer League was successful in 2019. As part of this the ICPN was part of the European Cancer League that called for all European Union (EU) and WHO/Europe member states to take immediate action towards fulfilling the ambitious goal of eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem, signing a joint statement.

The ICPN was part of the Tobacco 21 Alliance calling for a rise in legal age for sale of tobacco. The Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2024 Act raised the minimum legal age of sale of tobacco products to 21 years. It was enacted in December 2024 and will take effect from February 2028.

Additionally, the ICPN supports implementation of the Public Health Alcohol Act, co-signing multiple letters to government calling for enactment of the legislation, in particular warning labels that

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

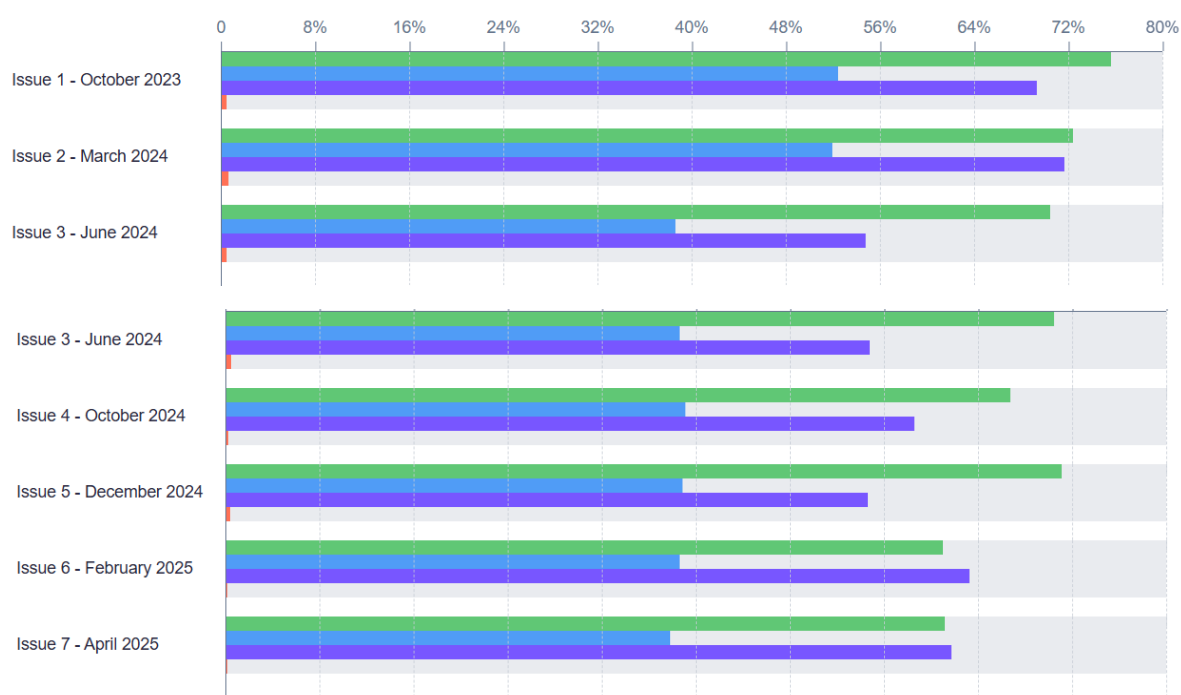
include the link between alcohol and cancer on products. The Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018 was developed to address the high volumes and harmful patterns of consumption of alcohol prevalent in Ireland. Section 12 of the Act provides for health labelling on alcohol products and was due to be commenced in May 2023 however the government has taken the decision to delay the introduction to 2028. The law provides for health information and health warnings of the risks associated with alcohol consumption to be presented on the labels of alcohol products and includes a warning of the direct link between alcohol and fatal cancers.

Ezines

The ICPN circulates a quarterly ezine which includes articles on cancer prevention evidence, initiatives, resources available and related research/reports.

A total of 17 ezines have been sent since December 2020. From October 2023 the ICPN moved to a new platform to disseminate ezines. Figure 2 below details engagement with the ezine.

The number of subscribers has grown to greater than 1000 individuals, with only 25 individuals unsubscribing from the ezine during this time period.



Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

- ☒ ☐ Opened
- ☒ ☐ Clicked
- ☒ ☐ CTOR
- ☐ ☐ Bounced
- ☒ ☐ Unsubscribed
- ☐ ☐ Complained

Figure 2 Ezine engagement since October 2023. Note: click-to-open rate (CTOR) is the number of clicks out of the number of opens

Public education

Since 2019 the ICPN has delivered public educational and engagement events for World Cancer Day which is held on the 4th of February each year.

In 2019 and 2020 the ICPN collaborated with parkrun, undertaking press related activity to increase awareness and engagement with physical activity to reduce cancer risk. Figure 3 illustrates some of the promotional activity.



Follow

Ahead of #WorldCancerDay on Monday - @parkrunIE are asking people to bring a friend for a run this Saturday! Ray will speak to Catriona, Annette and Sean who are all avid 'park runners' about how park runs helped them through cancer. 🏃🏃🏃🏃🏃🏃
📻 Tune in @ 4 @RTERadio1

6:32 AM - 30 Jan 2019



Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service



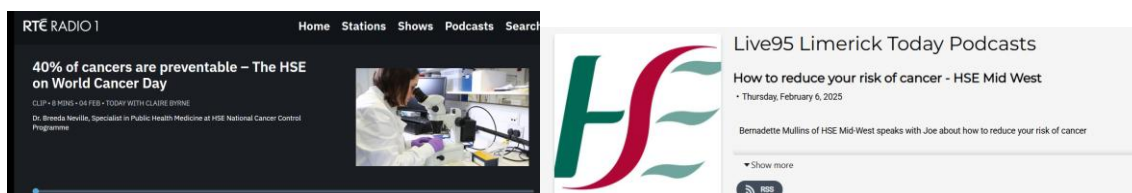
Figure 3 World Cancer Day promotional activity 2019 and 2020

Error! Reference source not found. below displays the number of events and participants at parkrun f or World Cancer Day 2019 and 2020.

Table 1 parkrun participation for World Cancer Day

Year	Events	Athletes
2019	70	8806
2020	88	10756

During the Covid pandemic the ICPN moved the annual World Cancer Day event online, hosting public webinars. Promotion of the webinars has been completed through a communications plan with support from HSE Comms. Annually a press release is published, radio and printed press interviews are conducted complimented by a social media campaign and direct email to ICPN members networks. Figure 4 below gives examples of promotional activities through the years



Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

Working Life: Detecting cancer early improves survival and quality of life

Fiona McGuire, specialist registrar in public health medicine,
National Cancer Control Programme



GOOD HEALTH Expert advice on CUTTING CANCER RISKS



By DR UNA KENNEDY

Reduce your risk of lung cancer
In smoking, diet, alcohol consumption and levels of exercise. Here are some of the changes that you can make to reduce your risk.
QUITTING SMOKING
Smoking is a significant risk factor, as tobacco contains chemicals that increase the risk of at least 15 types of cancer, including lung cancer. The best form of defence is to not start smoking, or choose to quit if already smoking. Quitting smoking at any stage can help reduce your risk of developing cancer. The HSE has a range of self-stopping, cessation resources and supports, as well as free nicotine replacement therapy, that may help. For more information, people can visit quit.ie.
CHECK FOR RADON
Another risk factor that can be reduced is your exposure to radon. It is a naturally occurring radioactive gas found in the ground.
N Ireland, almost 2,600 people are diagnosed with lung cancer each year. It is the leading cause of cancer death in the country.
Daily Mail, 30 January 2024
Spokesperson: Dr Una Kennedy, GP adviser to NCCP

Webinar

Steps to reduce our cancer risk

Learn about smoking, vaccines and HRT

DATE: **Thursday 2nd February**
TIME: **1-2 pm**

Visit www.hse.ie/cancerprevention for the registration link

Brought to you by

Irish Cancer Prevention Network

for

World Cancer Day

Figure 4 World Cancer Day 2021 – 2025 example promotional activities

Table 2 and Figure 5 outline webinar details and engagement. Presentations are delivered by subject matter experts. Evaluation of these events is conducted with the majority of participants reporting an increase in their knowledge of cancer prevention and planning to use the information learned/resources.

Table 2 Webinar details 2021 -2025

Year	Webinar Title	Registrations	Live webinar attendees	Total number of recording views (including individual talks) as of May 2025
2021	Diet and cancer 'Food for thought, Eating to reduce cancer risk'	3591	500	760
2022	'Steps to reduce your cancer risk' covering eating for health, radon, skin protection, breastfeeding, know the signs of cancer	601	264	442
2023	'Steps to reduce your cancer risk' covering Smoking Tobacco/Passive Smoking,	602	195	1198

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



	Vaccinations, HRT, Screening, Skin Cancer Prevention			
2024	<i>'Reducing your risk of lung and bowel cancers'</i> covering how to reduce risk of lung and bowel cancers and recognising the early signs/symptoms	1389	383	1187
2025	<i>'Your cancer prevention questions answered'</i> covering tobacco and vaping, alcohol, melanoma and healthy eating	998	546	797
Total		6282	1888	4384

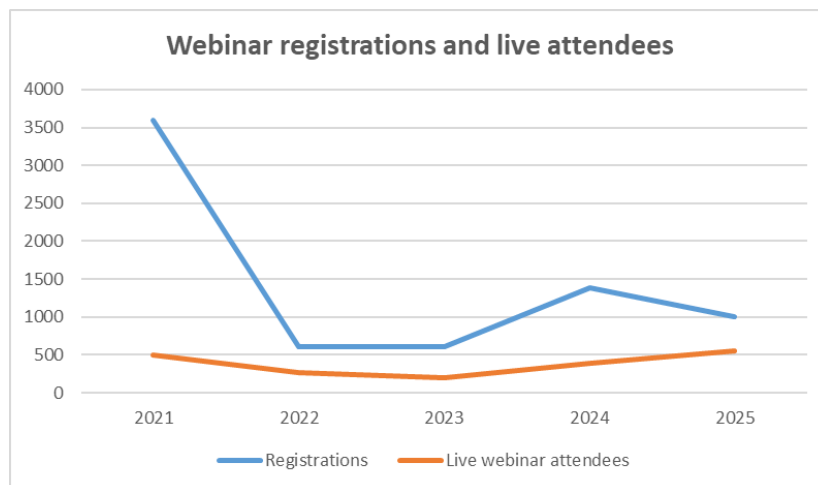


Figure 5 Webinar registrations and attendees 2021-2025

ICPN members community initiatives

ICPN members delivered a range of community and educational initiatives including

- The Marie Keating Foundation: The Foundation's Schools Cancer Awareness Programme reached over 14,600 students during the 2023/2024 academic year, delivering vital education on cancer prevention and awareness. Their Nursing Outreach Service has supported more than 8,500 people annually across over 320 communities, providing essential health information and support, with a particular focus on underserved communities. Through their Corporate Wellness Programmes, the Foundation educates nearly 5,000 people annually in workplace settings, delivering both in-person and online sessions to a wide range of corporate audiences.

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

- Irish Cancer Society: The Your Health Matters Roadshow, which aims to reduce people's risk of cancer and improve early detection, attended 19 counties over 49 days in 2024. This nurse-led community outreach initiative is delivered in shopping centres in areas of most disadvantage. Close to 2000 people had a health consultation with a cancer nurse at the Roadshow and a further 27,000 people engaged with the information on screening, lifestyle advice and cancer symptoms.
- The HSE National Screening Service designed and piloted a Community Champions programme. In 2024, 5 pilot sites were identified. A total of 40 people across the sites have been trained as Community Champions by the Health Promotion team in the National Screening Service. These cover a range of workers from peer support workers, community health workers, migrant support workers, Roma support workers and health promotion staff. The types of interventions that are currently being delivered in communities include, group education, one to one education and support, use of small media, reducing out of pocket expenses, reducing administrative barriers and reducing structural barriers.
- The HSE National Cancer Control Programme established a network of regional Senior Health Promotion and Improvement Officers – Cancer Prevention, who delivered extensive engagement and education sessions on cancer risk reduction with 200 groups of HSE staff, community organisations and the public in 2024, including a focus on marginalised populations.
- Breakthrough Cancer Research: Breakthrough Cancer Research marked a significant milestone in their collaboration with UCC, celebrating five years of pioneering advancements in cancer research. The partnership has catalysed cutting-edge research and advanced clinical applications to benefit people with some of the most challenging and low-survival cancers, including ovarian, liver, lung, stomach, brain, oesophageal, and pancreatic cancers. Breakthrough are currently supporting over 165 cancer researchers. Breakthrough Cancer Research nutritional cookbooks are available, covering cancer prevention and living with and beyond cancer.
- The HSE NCCP and Healthy Ireland won the award for the 'Best Public Information Campaign' for the SunSmart campaign. Judges highlighted the campaign "demonstrated well-identified objectives and audiences, strong research and hard-working execution".

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

Education

Annually, the ICPN hold an education event, online or in person, for health and social care professionals. The overarching aims of these events are to increase health and social care professional awareness about modifiable cancer risk factor research and initiatives, provide information about how they can support service user and signpost to relevant services and resources. Subject matter experts present on a range of topics. Figure 6 depicts the adverts for these events. Table 3 outlines these events and engagement. Evaluation of these events is conducted with most of the participants reporting an increase in their knowledge of cancer prevention and planning to use the information learned/resources in their work.



Figure 6 Adverts for ICPN educational events for health and social care professionals

Table 3 Overview of ICPN educational events for health and social care professionals.

Year	Event title and content	Registrations	Attendees	Total number of recording views (including individual talks) as of May 2025
2020	Webinar Irish Cancer Prevention Network: 'Learning from the Past – Planning for the Future'	N/A	121	N/A

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scaghtástála
National Screening Service

	covering Cancer in Ireland: The Potential for Prevention, Smoking, HPV Vaccines, Alcohol			
2021	Webinar: 'Ageing well: how to reduce cancer risk' covering: Healthy lifestyle choices as we age: it is never too late, Cancer Screening, acting early on signs of cancer, Living well with and beyond cancer	293	140	190
2022	Webinar: 'Reducing cancer risk in Ireland' covering National cancer awareness survey findings, National Cancer Risk Reduction Initiatives, National Screening Services Initiatives, World Go Day plans, National Skin Cancer Prevention Initiatives, The Marie Keating Foundation Initiatives, Mouth Cancer Awareness Day	510	240	442
2023	In person event 'Cancer Prevention in Ireland, what are we doing' covering: E-cigarettes, Effectiveness of mass media campaigns on cancer prevention awareness, Cancer prevention in people with intellectual disabilities	60 (60 max attendance)	30	N/A
2024	In person event: 'Cancer Prevention Symposium: Cancer prevention in Ireland – sharing new insights'	81 (60 max attendance)	52	1100
Total		944	583	1732

In 2024, the HSE National Screening Service held an upskilling workshop for ICPN staff members to support the engage the public in cancer screening programmes.

The ICPN plans to hold another upskilling workshop for ICPN staff members in 2025.

Resources

The ICPN collaborate on evidence-based resources for the public on how to reduce cancer risk, Figure 7. A base document which includes a collation of evidence was created by the ICPN to inform resources. Together the ICPN have produced:

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

- [Reduce your cancer risk booklet](#)
- [Reduce your cancer risk poster](#)
- [Reduce your cancer risk easy read leaflet](#)



Figure 7 ICPN resources

Future for ICPN

The ICPN has successfully established a collaborative working environment across national organisations with an interest in cancer prevention. Each year the network has grown and initiatives such as the ICPN ezine, World Cancer Day webinars, health and social care professionals' education and consistent evidence-based cancer prevention messages to the public has strengthened. The network is the first of its kind in Ireland and provides a platform for shared learning and support for organisations work in cancer prevention.

Dr Triona McCarthy, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, HSE's National Cancer Control Programme

"The National Cancer Control Programme highly values the commitment of the ICPN partners to the reduction of cancer incidence in Ireland by collaborating on national initiatives around cancer risk reduction. As we look forward to the next National Cancer Strategy, it is an opportune time to reflect on the success of the network to date and consider new approaches and initiatives for the coming years. While work in the area of cancer prevention can be complex and challenging, there is great

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

potential to reduce the cancer burden, particularly with the ICPNs evidence-based approach, ongoing close collaboration and utilising the broad reach of partners.”

Kevin O’Hagan, Cancer Prevention Manager at the Irish Cancer Society

“The Irish Cancer Society is proud of our involvement in the establishment of the ICPN. Together with our partners we have built a sustainable partnership and elevated the importance of prevention strategies. The partnership has enabled us to build capacity across the health sector and society in general by sharing emerging evidence, knowledge and tools which will ultimately improve population health. The Network has built an important foundation which can continue to develop, ensuring that prevention can remain a cornerstone of future cancer control plans”.

Liz Yeates, CEO of the Marie Keating Foundation

"Cancer prevention has always been at the heart of what we do at the Marie Keating Foundation. Our mission is to make cancer less frightening by enlightening — through education, awareness and empowering people to reduce their risk. Being part of the Irish Cancer Prevention Network allows us to work more closely with other national organisations who share that same focus. It means we can align our messages, share the latest evidence and strengthen the impact of cancer prevention efforts nationwide.

“We’re proud to be part of a network that is truly collaborative, committed and focused on making a real difference. The values and aims of the ICPN mirror our own and together we are stronger — working to raise awareness, reduce cancer risk and improve health outcomes for people right across Ireland.

“Together, the ICPN is a unified voice for policy change to reduce cancer risk for people living in Ireland — and we’re proud to be part of that voice.”

Fiona Murphy, Chief Executive, National Screening Service

“The National Screening Service is a proud member of the ICPN, which has had significant successes in promoting the importance of cancer prevention in all communities in Ireland.

Irish Cancer Prevention Network



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Scagthástála
National Screening Service

Detecting and diagnosing cancer early is a critical step in reducing mortality from cancer. NCRI data has shown that our cancer screening programmes have contributed to improvements in survival rates, and in 'stage shift', where more people are diagnosed earlier and cancer is more treatable. These are welcome indicators of the impact of screening. There are also many more people who will never develop cancer because they choose screening. In cervical screening this means removing abnormal cells before cancer develops; in BowelScreen we remove polyps in the bowel before they can go on to become cancerous.

The network's emphasis on collaboration has enabled us to foster strong links. These links have enhanced the delivery of screening messages. Sharing resources and expertise to support prevention, particularly to educate health professionals and the public, have been highlights for our teams.

In 2024 the NSS hosted the first in-person ICPN event where members could learn from each other's work. The presentations included our Public Health and screening programme teams' work with Travellers to increase awareness of our screening programmes. Screening plays an essential role in cancer prevention and our work through the ICPN highlights this and our close collaboration with our ICPN partners. We in NSS look forward to playing our part in the network into the future.

The ICPN has a place to inform actions in relation to cancer prevention in the next National Cancer Strategy. It brings together national organisations, strengthening supportive work in cancer prevention with a unified voice".

The ICPN will continue to work towards annual objectives, maximising outputs and impact. It has the potential to grow providing membership to organisations with niche cancer prevention interests.