



Advocacy Policy

May 2025

Version	Purpose/ Change Summary	Approved by Board	Effective Date	Next Revision
1.0	Original Policy	May 2025	May 2025	2028

1. Purpose

This policy provides clear guidelines for all advocacy activities undertaken by Parkinson's Ireland ("PI"). The policy ensures that advocacy work is in line with PI's charitable purpose and supports the

charity's mission. In addition to ensuring that PI meets all obligations under Irish law and regulatory frameworks, this policy also ensures that any advocacy work carried out is transparent.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all board members, staff, and volunteers of PI involved in any advocacy efforts. It covers all forms of advocacy, including public awareness campaigns, lobbying, and media outreach.

3. Definitions

- **Advocacy:** The process of influencing public opinion, government policies, or decision-makers to bring about change in line with the charity's mission.
- **Lobbying:** Directly engaging with designated public officials, legislators, or policymakers to influence specific laws or public policy.
- **Non-political:** The charity will not support or oppose any political party or political candidate in Ireland.

4. Legal Framework

This policy adheres to the following Irish laws and regulations:

- **The Charities Act 2009:** Governs the operation of charities in Ireland, ensuring that all charitable activities, including advocacy, are in line with the charitable purpose (i.e. what the charity was set up to achieve).
- **Lobbying Act 2015:** Defines lobbying and sets out specific requirements for lobbying activities, including registration and reporting.
- **Revenue Commissioners:** Charities in Ireland must comply with Revenue's guidelines for maintaining charitable tax-exempt status.

5. Overarching Principles

- **Mission-Driven Advocacy:** All advocacy activities must be in furtherance of PI's charitable purpose and be consistent with its legal obligations as a registered charity.
- **Transparency:** Advocacy efforts will be conducted transparently and be open to scrutiny by stakeholders and the public.
- **Non-Political:** The charity will not support or oppose any political party or individual candidate for public office. Advocacy is strictly focused on issues, not political affiliations. PI is particularly cognisant of the 'Guidance on Charities and the Promotion of Political Causes' document, published by the Charities Regulator..
- **Evidence-Based:** Our advocacy will be grounded in research, data, and expert opinions to ensure it is credible, balanced, and effective.
- **Collective Advocacy Issues:** PI's advocacy work relates to issues of concern relevant to people with Parkinson's disease and their care partners collectively, e.g. securing additional neurologists. PI does not engage in advocacy for individuals, e.g. trying to obtain an appointment with a neurologist at an earlier date, or corresponding with a local authority on a

housing grant. Members/service users may be asked to form part of campaigns on collective issues e.g. a public awareness campaign on the prevalence of Parkinson's disease. PI signposts members/service users to other organisations/services, if it receives queries that it is not in a position to deal with, e.g. guidance on an application for carer's allowance.

- **Compliance:** All advocacy activities will comply with Irish charity law, including the Charities Act 2009, the Lobbying Act 2015, and the guidelines set out by the Revenue Commissioners.

6. Types of Advocacy Activities

PI may engage in the following types of advocacy, provided they align with our mission:

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** activities aimed at educating the public about issues related to our cause.
- **Consultations and Submissions:** examples include: engaging with governmental bodies, preparing submissions on relevant policy areas e.g. services for people with Parkinson's disease, public inquiries, and consultations on relevant policy matters.
- **Research and Reports:** publishing evidence-based research, reports, and policy papers to inform public discourse.
- **Coalition Building:** collaborating with other charities or organizations that share similar goals to amplify our advocacy efforts.
- **Media Outreach:** Issuing press releases, participating in media interviews, and using social media to raise awareness on key issues.

7. Lobbying Activities

In accordance with the **Lobbying Act 2015**, if the charity engages in lobbying activities, the following must occur:

- **Lobbying Register:** Any lobbying activity (defined as communication with designated public officials, e.g. government ministers, certain senior public servants etc.) must be registered on the Lobbying Register.
- **Transparency:** The purpose, scope, and impact of lobbying activities will be documented and made publicly available through the register.
- **Reporting:** We will ensure that all lobbying activities are reported in line with the legal requirements outlined in the Lobbying Act 2015, currently a requirement to file quarterly returns.

8. Political Activity

As a registered charity in Ireland, PI is prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity:

- **Non-Endorsement of Political Parties:** The charity will not endorse any political party or candidate.
- **Resources and Funds:** PI's charitable funds and resources will only be used where it can be shown that the activity is directly advancing or supporting the charitable purpose of the charity.

- **Clear Separation of Roles:** Personal political views of board members, staff, and volunteers must be kept separate from the charity's activities.
- **Public Events:** Any public events or campaigns must not include political endorsements or partisan messaging.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board of Directors:** Responsible for overseeing this policy and ensuring compliance with all relevant laws. The Board of Directors approve major advocacy activities.
- **CEO:** Oversees day-to-day implementation and ensures alignment with the charitable purpose of PI. The CEO oversees specific advocacy campaigns, media outreach, and the coordination of coalition-building efforts. The CEO also ensures adherence to lobbying laws and manages interactions with designated public officials.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** All employees and volunteers must ensure that their involvement in advocacy aligns with this policy and must seek guidance if they are unsure about their compliance with this policy.

10. Risk Management

PI acknowledges that advocacy can pose risks (e.g. reputational, financial, legal), and therefore:

- A risk assessment will be conducted prior to engaging in any major advocacy or lobbying activity.
- Clear guidelines and approval processes will ensure that all activities are within the bounds of the law.
- Advocacy communications will be reviewed for accuracy, neutrality, and compliance with charity law.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Tracking Activities:** All advocacy and lobbying efforts will be documented and monitored.
- **Regular Review:** The Board of Directors will review compliance with the policy on a regular basis and assess the effectiveness and compliance of the charity's advocacy efforts.
- **Reporting:** We will publicly report on the purpose, activities and impact of major advocacy campaigns, ensuring transparency in all activities.