



# 2023

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# Annual REPORT

**PREPARED BY**  
THOMAS MCCABE  
NATIONAL MANAGER

Siel Bleu Ireland, 18 Eustace St, Temple Bar, Dublin 2

# COMPANY DETAILS

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**Company Number:** 488914C

**Reporting Period:** 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2023

**Company Type:** CLG – Company Limited by Guarantee

**Registered Name:** Siel Bleu Ireland

**Address:** 18 Eustace St, Temple Bar, Dublin 2 D02 WR53

**Bank:** Allied Irish Bank, Dame St, Dublin 2

**Solicitors:** McCann FitzGerald, Riverside One, 37 - 42 Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Grand Canal Dock, Dublin 2

**Auditors:** Woods & Partners, 2 Dublin Landings, North Wall Quay, Dublin 1.

**Charity Number:** CHY19489

**CRA Number:** 20076504

**National Manager:** Thomas McCabe



**@SielBleulreland**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL MANAGER

I am pleased to present Siel Bleu Ireland's annual report for the year 2023.

This year has been the first year since 2019 where we were not severely impacted by the Covid19 pandemic, and I am pleased to report that Siel Bleu Ireland has had a profound impact nationally through the delivery of our innovative exercise programmes tailored to the needs of older adults and individuals living with chronic conditions, we empowered thousands of individuals to lead healthier, more active lives.

Our incredible team must be applauded for their continued commitment and delivery of programmes that have a monumental impact on our service users throughout Ireland each week. In Siel Bleu Ireland, we are incredibly lucky to have a team of dedicated, passionate and adaptable professionals who have driven our growth in 2023. Their efforts daily ensure that Siel Bleu Ireland continues to strive to achieve our ambitious goals and objectives over the years to come.

Siel Bleu Ireland is privileged to have a brilliant Board of Directors in place who have continued to provide invaluable support in 2023. 2023 saw some long-term Board Members step away from our Board after many years of service for which we are forever grateful. We have also welcomed new Board members who have added fresh enthusiasm, skills and experience to continue to push Siel Bleu Ireland over the coming years.

We are extremely grateful to the Hospital Saturday's Fund, Baillie Gifford, Avolon Aerospace, and the HSE for their funding in 2023 which allowed us to continue delivering services, particularly in the early part of 2022 when we were still faced with extensive restrictions as a result of the pandemic.

We aim to continue the momentum in 2024 to improve the quality of life of the wide cohort of the Irish population that we are proud and privileged to serve. We are committed to continue to provide high quality services that are affordable and accessible for our service users nationally to improve the quality of life of our service users.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate my heartfelt gratitude to all of our amazing team members, our Board of Directors and all other supporters who allow us to achieve our goals each day. To all who funded or contributed to Siel Bleu Ireland in 2023, thank you.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Sincerely,  
Thomas Mc Cabe  
National Manager



## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRWOMAN

Dear Siel Bleu Ireland Community,

What an extraordinary year it has been! As I reflect on the past number of months as Chairwoman, I am filled with gratitude for the shared commitment and strides we have taken together and excited about what the future holds.

Joining Siel Bleu Ireland has been a genuine privilege. During this time, I've witnessed the incredible impact of our programmes on the lives of those we serve. The dedication to promoting autonomy and well-being resonates deeply with me, igniting my passion for our mission.

This year, as a team, we have outdone ourselves. Despite challenges, we've strengthened our board, and our programmes, expanded our reach, and deepened our connection with the communities we serve. The collective efforts of the board, our staff and the individuals we impact have elevated Siel Bleu Ireland to new heights.

Our collaborative efforts have fortified programmes, widened our influence, and strengthened our ties with communities. As Chairwoman, my role is to work with the board to further construct partnerships, nurture a culture of continuous improvement and safeguard the vibrancy of our shared vision.

I am eager about the opportunities ahead of us. Let's continue enhancing Siel Bleu Ireland, setting ambitious goals, and continuing to transform lives through exercise together.

Thank you for a phenomenal year, and here's to many more!

Gratefully,

Sinead Lonergan  
Chairwoman, Siel Bleu Ireland

# WHERE WE ARE NOW

Let's add life to years and life to years!

## Vision

To create a society where older adults living with disease can experience the benefits of physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour irrespective of their social, cultural or economic background.

## Mission

The mission of Siel Bleu Ireland is to provide affordable and accessible exercise programmes for all members of Ireland's older population and for people living with disease, to ensure they live full and independent lives.



# WHO WE ARE

Siel Bleu Ireland was established in 2010 to meet the extensive unmet need for professional, preventative exercise classes for older people and adults living with chronic disease.

Our population is ageing; the over 65 age group saw the largest increase of any age bracket from 2011 to the 2016 census. This ageing trend brings an increase in sedentary lifestyles, reduced mobility, increase in falls as well as chronic and age-related diseases. One of the simplest ways to counteract the adverse effects of ageing is exercise, however it can be difficult and intimidating for an older adult or person living with disease to reach the WHO's target of 150 minutes of exercise per week. Often people don't even know where to start.

Siel Bleu Ireland offer professional exercise programmes that help to counteract the adverse effects of ageing and sedentary lifestyles and help to increase our participants' physical, social and mental wellbeing.

Our expert Physical Trainers hold at a minimum a degree in sports science or a related field and are then trained to Siel Bleu standards which have been developed by the Siel Bleu Association over the last 23 years. Our range of programmes delivered and adapted to suit the needs of our participants by our Physical Trainers result in physical, social and mental wellbeing.



## INTRODUCTION

# OUR WORK

### In Residential Settings

This is the core of the business activity that Siel Bleu Ireland delivers on a weekly basis. Prior to the pandemic, our trainers delivered programmes in 150 nursing homes and daycare centres each week in 20 counties throughout Ireland. Our trainers travel to each contracted daycare centre and nursing home on a weekly basis and deliver programmes that range from fall prevention programmes for more able-bodied service users to around the table programmes for service users living with severe cognitive impairment.

### With Patient Groups

Exercise is seen as one of the main methods of treatment for numerous chronic diseases. Siel Bleu Ireland deliver programmes that are tailored to meet the needs of people with chronic disease and in 2020 delivered programmes with the following patient organisations;

- **Irish Heart Foundation**
- **COPD Support Ireland**
- **Parkinson's Ireland**
- **Alzheimer's Ireland**
- **Living Well with Dementia**
- **Arthritis Ireland**
- **Irish Cancer Society**
- **Pulmonary Hypertension**

### Disability Groups

Siel Bleu Ireland currently works with numerous groups who provide services for people managing physical and intellectual disability;

- Enable Ireland
  - HSE Intellectual Disability services
  - Prosper
  - Private nursing homes
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## Community Groups

In 2023, Siel Bleu Ireland delivered numerous programmes with numerous community groups including;

- Irish Men's Shed Association
- Active retirement associations
- Dublin Southside partnership
- HSE funded community groups
- Walking groups
- Stand-alone community groups

## Individual Sessions

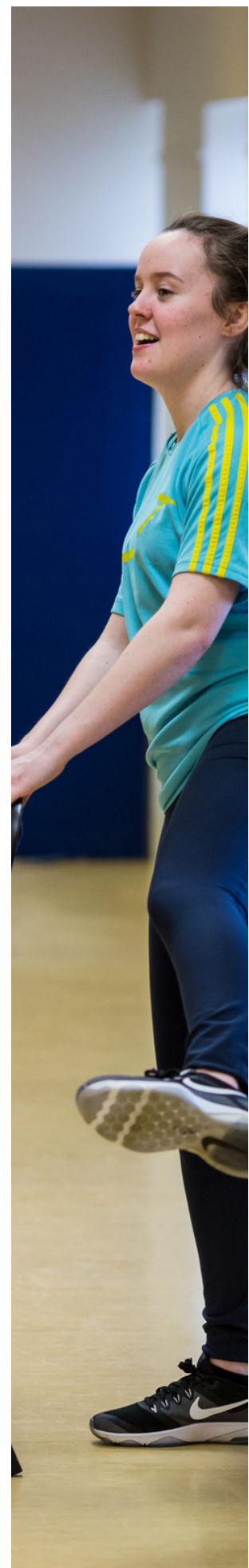
Siel Bleu Ireland trainers travel to people's homes to deliver sessions in situations where people are unable to travel to a community session or prefer to exercise in their own home.

## Online Programmes

On March 16th 2020, Siel Bleu Ireland ceased delivery of 100% of our services due to the restrictions in place as a result of COVID-19. As a social enterprise, this resulted in a loss of our entire earned income. In anticipation of cocooning, and to help us continue to achieve our mission, we created Siel Bleu At Home, a programme of free exercise classes delivered on social media to counteract the adverse physical, social and psychological effects of being unable to participate in community exercise programmes. To date we have had over 1 million views of those exercise classes.

## Mental Health Services

In partnership with St James' Hospital and Mullingar Hospital, Siel Bleu delivers exercise programmes that aim to promote the physical, social and mental benefits of the patients in living with Mental Health difficulties. The aims are to improve patient's strength, mobility, aerobic capacity and balance. Each programme is tailored to the group and adapted to each participant and their ability level and centered around improving the participants mental and physical health.







# 2023 IN REVIEW

In 2023, Siel Bleu Ireland made significant strides in achieving its mission to promote health and well-being across communities. Key highlights of Siel Bleu Ireland's progress in 2023 include;

1. **Expansion of reach:** Siel Bleu Ireland expanded its reach to reach even more individuals in need of our services. Through innovative approaches such as virtual classes and new offerings, Siel Bleu Ireland were able to engage with diverse demographics, empowering them to lead healthier, more active lives.
2. **Programme Innovation:** Siel Bleu Ireland continued to innovate its exercise programs, tailoring them to the specific needs of older adults and individuals living with chronic conditions. By incorporating evidence-based practices and leveraging technology, Siel Bleu Ireland enhanced the effectiveness and accessibility of its programs, ensuring maximum impact.
3. **Strengthened Partnerships:** Siel Bleu Ireland forged strong partnerships with healthcare providers, community organisations, and local authorities, amplifying its reach and impact. By collaborating with like-minded entities, the organization was able to leverage resources, expertise, and networks to better serve its target population.
4. **Organisations Resilience:** Despite the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic, Siel Bleu Ireland demonstrated remarkable organizational resilience. By implementing robust safety protocols, investing in staff training and support, and fostering a culture of adaptability, the organization was able to navigate uncertainty and continue delivering high-quality services to its beneficiaries.
5. **Webinar Launch:** The Siel Bleu and Nursing Home Ireland collaboration in hosting educational webinars for activity coordinators and healthcare professionals has proven highly successful. These quarterly sessions cover crucial aspects of older adult health, including physical fitness, mental well-being, and nutrition. The practical approach, featuring expert presentations and hands-on exercise sessions, ensures immediate applicability for professionals working with older adults. The webinars also foster a supportive community and allow for the exchange of ideas. Due to the positive response, future webinars are planned, continuing the commitment to continuous learning and community building. The impact on the well-being of older adults is significant, and recordings ensure wider accessibility to the valuable content.

Overall, Siel Bleu Ireland's progress in 2023 reflects its unwavering commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities across Ireland. Through innovation, collaboration, and resilience, the organization continues to be a leading force in promoting health and well-being for all.



## AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

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- The Social Innovation Fund Ireland SED Fund recipient **2019**
- Dublin City Inner City Enterprise Awardee **2019**
- Nutramino Health & Fitness Awardee **2019**
- Charity Impact Award Finalist **2018 & 2019**
- The Social Enterprise Development Accelerator Programme **2018**
- Medtronic Health Communities Fund **2016**
- Social Entrepreneurs Ireland Impact Award Finalist **2016**
- Irish Healthcare Award – Best Patient Education Project **2015**
- Irish Healthcare Award – Best Patient Lifestyle Project **2015**
- King Baudouin Foundation Social Innovation for Active & Healthy Ageing Finalist **2014**
- Launch of HAPPIER report **2014**

### **Irish Heart Foundation**

- Throughout 2023, Siel Bleu Ireland delivered tailored physical activity programmes online for people living with stroke and heart failure on an online basis. Siel Bleu Ireland have also developed two handbooks for people living with stroke to exercise at home throughout the pandemic.

### **COPD Support Ireland**

- COPD is the 4th largest pathology in Ireland, with 400,000 living with it currently. Over the past 9 years, Siel Bleu Ireland have developed a community based pulmonary rehabilitation programme, called “Exercise, COPD & Me” that was previously not in place and now deliver community based pulmonary programme with 16 groups around Ireland.

### **Parkinson’s Ireland**

- In 2018, Siel Bleu Ireland were approached by the Dublin branch of Parkinson’s Ireland and rolled out three pilot programmes with the Swords, Portmarnock and Harold’s Cross Parkinson’s groups. The groups have continued following the completion of the pilot and a fourth class in Loughlinstown joined soon after. We currently deliver one programme per week online for people living with Parkinson’s.

### **The Wheel**

- The Wheel is Ireland’s national association of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises that provides training and advocacy services for its members. Siel Bleu Ireland has been a member of The Wheel since 2015 and has availed of numerous training opportunities for staff members in recent years.

### **Irish Men’s Sheds Association**

- Siel Bleu Ireland have worked in partnership with the Irish Men’s Shed Association since 2016 delivering programmes in the Men’s sheds with the aim of improving cardiovascular fitness, walking ability and strength of the members of the Men’s Shed groups throughout Ireland. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Siel Bleu Ireland have delivered weekly sessions to multiple Men’s Sheds classes across Ireland.



### Alone

- Alone is an organisation working with older people who are socially isolated, living in poverty or crisis and that ultimately supports older adults in Ireland to live at home. Siel Bleu Ireland established a partnership with Alone in 2019 and have rolled out programmes in the Dublin north, Ardee and 12 Dundalk areas. A referral pathway has been developed between Alone and Siel Bleu Ireland and both organisations are looking to collaborate further in 2024.

### Get Up, Get Dressed, Get Moving

- Get Up, Get Dressed, Get Moving is an initiative being carried out within the HSE to promote physical activity throughout hospital stays in order to decrease deconditioning of older patients.

### Charities Institute of Ireland

- The Charities Institute of Ireland (CII) support and enable charities to create positive social change. As an organisation, the CII works with its members to help them professionalise, sustain, grow, maximise their impact and improve the welfare of others. The CII also provides educational programmes and resources for charities all across Ireland. Siel Bleu Ireland has sought the advice of the CII in recent years in relation to governance compliance.



**Nursing Homes & Day Care Centres**

- Nursing homes and Day Care Centres are the main channels of Siel Bleu Ireland’s business.
- Prior to the Covid19 pandemic, Siel Bleu Ireland delivered programmes in over 150 nursing homes and daycare centres throughout Ireland. This is a priority area for Siel Bleu Ireland and will continue to be the priority area of growth for the next three years. The resumption of services in this area in 2022 was the main priority and we are delighted to have achieved this target.

**Community Groups**

- Siel Bleu Ireland currently worked with numerous community groups prior to the pandemic throughout Ireland and is an important area of business for Siel Bleu Ireland. The main focus for Siel Bleu Ireland will be on continued growth in nursing homes and daycare centres due to the varying levels of revenue and seasonal dips and peaks in participation levels, the growth in community classes is not a priority for Siel Bleu Ireland and this time. When Siel Bleu Ireland achieves a market share of over 40% in nursing homes and is fully sustainable, community groups will become a higher priority, due to the enhanced social and health economic benefits on a local and national level.

**Patient Advocacy Groups**

- Siel Bleu Ireland will continue to expand its tailored physical activity programmes with patient groups throughout Ireland. Presently Siel Bleu Ireland is working with the following patient groups;
  - COPD Support Ireland
  - Living Well With Dementia, Stillorgan
  - Irish Heart Foundation
  - Arthritis Ireland
  - Parkinson’s Ireland
  - Fibro Ireland
  - Enable Ireland
  - Irish Cancer Society
  - Irish Men’s Sheds Network

**One on One**

- Individual sessions represent a small portion of the sessions delivered on a weekly basis by Siel Bleu trainers and are usually delivered in “off-peak” times by our team when they are unable to deliver programmes in a residential setting.

**Online Programmes**

- In response to the Covid19 pandemic and resulting lockdown, Siel Bleu at Home was developed. This programme has been further developed and is now a paid subscription platform that is fully integrated into the Siel Bleu Ireland website.

# SUCCESSSES OF 2023

## Growth of Service Delivery

Siel Bleu Ireland has grown significantly in 2023 following the easing of restrictions in early 2022, with a strong demand for our in-person programmes throughout Ireland. 2023 was Siel Bleu Ireland's best ever year, with a sales revenue that was 36% higher than 2019 and 53% higher than 2022. A sales increase of 35% is forecasted for Siel Bleu Ireland in 2024.

## Achievement of Triple Lock Certification

The Triple Lock Standard of Governance is awarded by the Charities Institute of Ireland to organisations that actively demonstrate openness, transparency and integrity to your beneficiaries and donors your charity should be operating to the Triple Lock Standards - transparent reporting, good fundraising and governance. The Siel Bleu Ireland Board and staff has strived for a number of years to achieve this standard and in late 2023, were awarded this certification.

## Grants Received

The awarding of external funding and grants to Siel Bleu Ireland has ensured that Siel Bleu Ireland are in a position to retain its staff and manage the severe impact of the reduction in income from the delivery of services even through the final stages of severe restrictions in Ireland as a result of the pandemic. Funding from Hospital Saturdays Fund, Baillie Gifford and the HSE has significantly supported Siel Bleu Ireland throughout 2023.

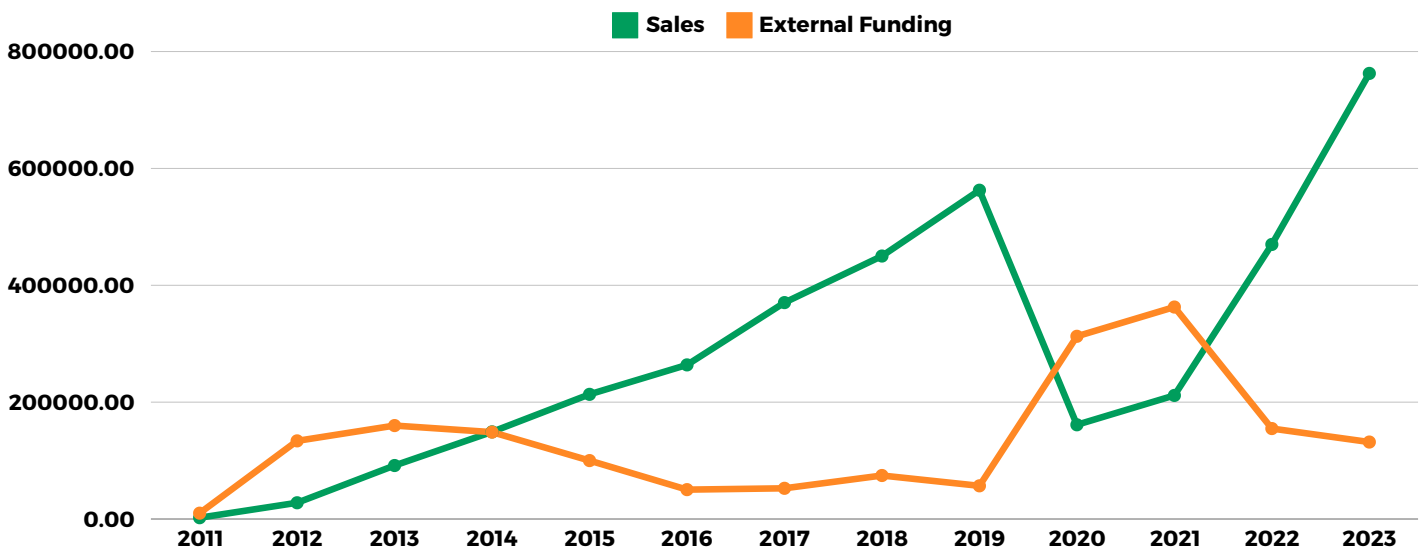
## National Expansion

In 2023, Siel Bleu Ireland expanded the delivery of services into Roscommon, Galway Longford and Monaghan. Siel Bleu Ireland also have a strong presence in the North East of Ireland. This is a direct result of the strong link between Siel Bleu Ireland and Alone.



# FUNDING OVERVIEW

2023 was a successful year for Siel Bleu Ireland financially with the organisation being growing traded income significantly. The following table illustrates the comparison between traded income and external funding in recent years.



## External Funding

Siel Bleu Ireland received external funding from several sources including the Hospital Saturday Fund, The Department of Health National Lottery scheme, Pobal and Baillie Gifford.





Siel Bleu Ireland has had an effective board in place since June 2014. The role of the Board is to oversee governance and the strategic direction of Siel Bleu Ireland. The current board comprises the following members;

- **Sinead Lonergan** - Board Chairperson
- **James Hogan** - Board Member
- **Colin Edwards** - Board Member
- **Guillaume Lefebvre** – Board Member
- **Jean-Daniel Muller** – Board Member
- **Sheena Forde** - Board Member
- **Michael Lynch** - Board Member
- **Barry Minnock** - Board Member

In 2023 the following board members stepped down, Roger Jupp, Fiona Rafferty, Caroline Daly and Dr. Phil Jakeman

Meetings of the Siel Bleu Ireland board of directors took place on the following dates in 2023;

16th January, 27th March, 26th June, 26th September and 5th December

### **Sub Committees**

The following sub-committees are currently in place to support specific projects;

#### **Governance Sub Committee**

**Members:** Sheena Forde, Sarah Shailendra, Michael Lynch & Thomas Mc Cabe

This subcommittee aims to oversee Siel Bleu Ireland's compliance with all governance requirements set out by the Charities Regulator. In 2023, Siel Bleu Ireland complied with all aspects of the Governance Code set out and achieved Triple Lock Certification from the Charities Institute of Ireland.

#### **Siel Bleu at Home Sub Committee**

**Members:** Sheena Forde, Margueritte O'Malley, Sarah Shailendra

This subcommittee aims to oversee the development of the Siel Bleu Ireland At Home programme and the redevelopment of the Siel Bleu Ireland website.

Siel Bleu Ireland presently has a staff of 34 with 22 full-time, 10 part-time and 2 placement students.

### **Full Time (22) Part Time (10) Placement (2)**

## **PROCESS UPDATE**

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### **Auditors**

In 2023, Siel Bleu Ireland's 2022 financial audit was carried out by Woods, Delaney & Co.

### **Strategic Planning**

Work on a revised strategic plan for Siel Bleu Ireland over the coming years is underway to ensure that Siel Bleu Ireland can continue to grow and meet the strong demand for our services nationwide.

## **2024 AIMS**

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- **Continued increase in the delivery of face-to-face services**

Siel Bleu Ireland aims to continue to increase the delivery of our services in 2024.

A target of an increase of 40% from 2023 has been set.

- **Governance**

Following on from 2023, Siel Bleu Ireland will aim to comply with the Charities Regulator Governance Code and to meet the Triple Lock Standard for Charities that is set out by the Charities Institute of Ireland which includes the following;

- Financial reporting
- Governance Code compliance
- Adherence to fundraising principles

- **National Expansion**

Siel Bleu Ireland aims to expand the delivery of services into Cork, Galway, Sligo, Wexford and Cavan in 2024.

- **Increased Awareness of Siel Bleu Ireland**

As we expand nationwide, we will be bolstering our social media presence and utilising our associations with other organisations to act as spokespeople for the brand. We would aim to feature in national newspapers and radio channels to create greater awareness. The whole initiative will be supported with a 360-degree digital plan.

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## COMMUNICATIONS

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Siel Bleu Ireland has consistently maintained a prominent presence across diverse social media platforms, strategically engaging with various audiences. Our social media approach is centered on cultivating awareness about our organization and its mission, emphasizing the significance of physical activity for the elderly. To achieve this, we have implemented a multifaceted content strategy, incorporating testimonials, informational videos, and exercise routines featuring our trainers. These engaging materials are disseminated across TikTok, Instagram Reels, Facebook, and YouTube shorts.

The impact of our social media is evident in the substantial growth of Siel Bleu Ireland's reach. Specifically, our Facebook reach has surged by 39.5%, while our Instagram reach has experienced an impressive 504% increase, attributable to our intensified content sharing. On LinkedIn, our follower base has surpassed the 1,000 mark, underscoring our expanding influence within a professional network.

The integration of YouTube shorts has not only contributed to heightened visibility but has also attracted a greater audience to our profile. Recognizing the unique appeal of TikTok, we have recently established a presence on the platform to connect with audiences beyond those targeted on other platforms.

Moreover, Siel Bleu Ireland's online growth extends to Google, with a remarkable 200% increase in phone and email enquiries. This signifies a growing interest and engagement with our organization, reflecting the effectiveness of our comprehensive social media strategy in fostering awareness, engagement, and outreach.

**@SielBleuIreland**





*Once I had read about them in The Irish Times, I could log in easily every day I wanted. The variety was so good, different exercises, different trainers. So simple to take part from home where it was private – and I could go mad or just go gently! - Siel Bleu Member*

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