Older People's Council Guidelines
Age Friendly Ireland

Ireland: A Great Country in Which to Grow Old

Age Friendly
IRELAND

A Shared Service Function of Local Government

Jackie Maguire

Chief Executive of Meath
County Council

Foreword

I am extremely pleased to present this updated version of Age Friendly Ireland's Guidelines for Older People's Councils. This publication, while modelled on the original guidelines from 2016, takes account of the Age Friendly Programme's formal transition into local government as a Shared Service and in doing so acknowledges the significant role of Older People's Councils as the authentic voice of older people across Ireland.

Older People's Councils are now developed in every local authority area in Ireland, as part of the local Age Friendly Programme, bringing together a diverse group of people to advise on and support the delivery of local Age Friendly Strategies. They are a key consultative group for local authorities and multisectoral groups to engage with, being established to have a broad and representative membership base in the community, with the governance of a strong Executive Committee. We recognise the valued contribution of dedicated volunteers who are members of Older People's Councils.

As Chief Executive of Meath County Council, I am delighted to host the national Shared Service, which encompasses and works collaboratively with all sectors across Ireland. Local government is the host body for the national shared service, supporting all 31 local Age Friendly Programmes which include a strategic multiagency Alliance whose members work collaboratively and in partnership to ensure that Ireland is preparing for population ageing and demographic change.

It was hugely inspiring to welcome the World Health Organisation to Ireland in December 2019 to achieve formal recognition of Ireland as the first age friendly country in the world to reach full scale national affiliation. Age Friendly Ireland is a valued affiliate member of the World Health Organisation's Network of Global Affiliates. We continue to work collaboratively with our international partners to ensure that ageing is high on the global agenda. These guidelines for Older People's Councils will support local Age Friendly Programmes to ensure that their Older People's Councils operate in a consistent way across the country, and strengthen the structures that represent the authentic voice of the older person.

Mary Cronin

Chair of National Network of Older People's Councils (outgoing chair)

Everyone experiences hills and valleys in their life. We all have mountains to climb. We have to take the good and the bad with everything that life throws at us. But there is one thing that really gets us through difficult times, and that is community. I am a firm believer in the three rings of life. The first ring is the two people you are closest to in life, to whom you can always turn. The second ring is your social circle, maybe five or six friends who you can go to the pictures with, or a men's shed group, the group that gives you space to socialise and talk. The third ring is where you become a volunteer and you are part of a big circle that is community. You feel that you are needed and that people are glad of your help. You know you are making a contribution. By volunteering in Older People's Councils, people are helping to create strong communities.

It has been my privilege to act as chair of the National Network of Older People's Council. It has been a pleasure to work with the vibrant members who represent their cities and counties in a strategic way. It gives me great pride to feel I have had an opportunity to shape the future of Irish society in terms of how older people are positioned and supported.

Kitty Hughes

Chairperson, National Network of
Older People's Councils

'To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often' the words of John Henry Newman. The pace of change has certainly increased in the lifetime of today's older citizens. Due to the Covid pandemic we have been in the fast lane of change and with newly acquired digital skills the voice of older people can reach right to the heart of the decision makers at local and central government level as never before. So, it is timely that we have up dated the guidelines for Older People's Councils to ensure the voice of older people from all strata of society is heard and heeded by the decision makers.

 The colourful World Health Organisation (WHO) eight petal logo of Age Friendly Ireland is now familiar in public places as the needs of older people become part of public infrastructure. The Age Friendly Alliance is the medium through which the concerns and issues raised at OPC level can be discussed and solutions found. For all our goals to be reached we need a structured approach and in these guidelines OPC members will find helpful signposts to influence membership, planning and the procedures necessary on the road to making Ireland a great place in which to grow old. I am very proud.

Minister Mary Butler

Minister of State for Older People at the Department of Health

Welcome Address

The Age Friendly Ireland Programme, which includes local Older People's Councils, is a critical partner in the implementation structure that is delivering the objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

A core mission of the new Programme for Government 'Our Shared Future' is to develop an Age Friendly Ireland. The Programme includes policies to help value our older people with objectives for wellbeing, housing for older people, telehealth, homecare, and expansion of primary and community care, among other measures.

> 'As more of us enjoy our older years, we must plan to meet the accommodation and future healthcare needs of our diverse, aging population. Our approach is to support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence for as long as possible. To deliver on this vision, we need to recognise the close connection between healthcare supports and housing options.'

The Department of Health co-ordinates the development of key partnerships with organisations that have a role in promoting positive ageing. Strategies such as Slaintecare and Healthy Ireland are hugely significant in how we prepare for and support population ageing. This Department recognises that the Age Friendly Ireland Programme is an exemplar of inter-sectoral working co-ordinated by local authorities which supports positive ageing.

Older People's Councils are structures hosted by local authorities, where members of the civic society can raise local concerns or challenges. These councils have a 'bottom-up' role in monitoring the implementation of Age Friendly Strategies. One of the critical success factors of Age Friendly Ireland has been the co-design of solutions with older people. In establishing these Councils, local authorities ensure that:

- their composition is representative of the diversity of the older population at the local level

- they provide the authentic voice of older people

- they support the participation of older people from more disadvantaged backgrounds and those whose voice is not usually heard

A central tenet of local government reform has been its emphasis on citizen participation. Older People's Councils facilitate this participation by representing the views of all older people in the community, whether rural or urban, younger or older, diverse ethnic groups, members of the Traveller community, older people with disabilities including dementia and other minorities. Importantly, the participation of the most vulnerable is supported.

I very much welcome these guidelines which outline clear information on how Older People's Councils operate across all of Ireland, ensuring there is a transparent process in place and clear objectives to support the goals of positive ageing.

I look forward to working closely with the Age Friendly Ireland Programme and to helping create a society that is a great place for older people.

CONTENTS

Appendices

Table of Figures

Case Studies

Ireland commenced its journey to become an Age Friendly country in 2009, aligning with the World Health Organization's global Age Friendly framework. This WHO programme was established in 2007 to response to population ageing at global level.

Age Friendly Ireland was set up to assist with the expansion and development of age friendly programmes across all administrative areas of Ireland. Age Friendly Ireland provides networks and communication channels, advice and technical support to local programmes. It operates to support the scaling up and replication of Age Friendly good practice nationally.

In Ireland local authorities are the lead agencies for this multi partner programme.

Initially funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, Age Friendly Ireland transitioned into a Shared Service of local government in 2017, hosted by Meath County Council. This was a very significant development that has supported the mainstreaming and embedding of age friendly principles in multisectoral work practices. Shared services were introduced to local authorities as part of a local government reform programme that sought to enhance efficiencies.

The voice of the older person is central to the development of Age Friendly programmes and good practice. Older People's Councils have been developed in every Age Friendly Programme area so that the views of a diverse range of older people can inform how the Irish programme is run.

Older People's Councils play an extremely important role in policy development, strategy implementation and monitoring.

The World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Programme works across **eight themes.**

communication & information

civic participation & employment

community support and health services

social participation

respect & social inclusion

housing

transportation

outdoor spaces & buildings

World Health Organization

Figure 1 Eight Themes of the World Health Organization Programme

What is Population Ageing?

The term 'population ageing' describes a demographic trend that signifies an increasing proportion of older people in the population in almost every country of the world. This is related to increasing life expectancy and a declining birth rate.

Ireland at present is a 'young' country, but the number of older people will rise significantly in the years ahead. Central Statistics Office (CSO) figures predict that those aged 65 years and over will increase significantly from a level of 629,800 in 2016 to potentially nearly 1.6 million by 2051. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), in a report in 2017, projected that by 2030 the population aged 80 or above would increase by between 89 per cent and 94 per cent.

This shift will have considerable social and economic implications at an individual, family and societal level. The implications for public policy areas as diverse as housing, health, urban and rural planning, transport, policing and the business environment are considerable.

As life expectancy increases, there is a greater onus on our society to ensure that Ireland becomes a great country in which to grow older. We need to plan now to create the kinds of communities in which older people are included and feel able to participate.

Walkability audit at the National Convention of Older People's Councils, Donegal 2019

Methodology for Updating the Older People's Council Guidelines

The original guidelines for Older People's Councils were published in 2016. Given the significant changes in the Age Friendly Programme, notably its move into local government as a shared service in 2017, it was considered appropriate to update the guidelines. The process for updating the guidelines was as follows:

Age Friendly Ireland delivered six regional sessions for Older People's Councils in 2019. These sessions provided an opportunity to consult with older people to inform how Older People's Councils should operate. 168 people attended in total.

Hosting County	Date	Numbers
Donegal	April 2019	20
Roscommon	June 2019	30
Kildare	June 2019	14
Westmeath	June 2019	9
Tipperary	July 2019	60
Dublin City	July 2019	35

An invitation was issued to members of the National Network of Older People's Councils in August 2019 to form a subgroup to review the guidelines. The first meeting of this subgroup took place in October and subsequent meetings were held in November 2019 and March 2020.

A draft document was prepared, drawing heavily on the content of the original guidelines and also informed by discussions at the subgroup meetings, data collated at the regional sessions, and information contained in the Shared Service Memorandum of Understanding with local authorities. Age Friendly Programme Managers and the National Network of Older People's Councils were kept informed of the revisions at meetings in early 2020.

A draft document was discussed at the meeting of the National Network of Older People's Councils in June 2020, before being circulated to all Older People's Councils.

Our Core Values

Our Core Values

Efficiency

Sharing learning's, adopting models of good practice demonstrating cost effectiveness responsibilisation

Participation

Older people find solutions to issues and help us determine priorities with positive meaningful engagement *consulted with 20,000 to date.*

Collaboration

Working across public, private & NGO & Academic sector.

Innovation

Thinking differently and finding solutions.

Implementation

Measuring improved outcomes for older people.

Partnership

Key Stakeholders working collaboratively on an interagency basis.

Mission Statement

Age Friendly Ireland's mission statement is that Ireland will become a great place in which to grow older. In order to achieve this, our plans must be informed by the needs of today's older people, so that future generations will experience their communities as age friendly. The Canadian planner Glenn Millar put it simply as:

'If you design for the young you exclude the old, but if you design forthe old you include everyone.'

The Age Friendly programme itself involves the development of a multi-agency approach to age-related planning and service provision at city and county level. Through consistent application of this methodology throughout Ireland, the Age Friendly programme supports cities and counties to become more inclusive of older people. Two key pieces of 'infrastructure' are developed in the process of adopting and supporting an Age Friendly City or County programme. These are the Age Friendly Alliance and the Older People's Council.
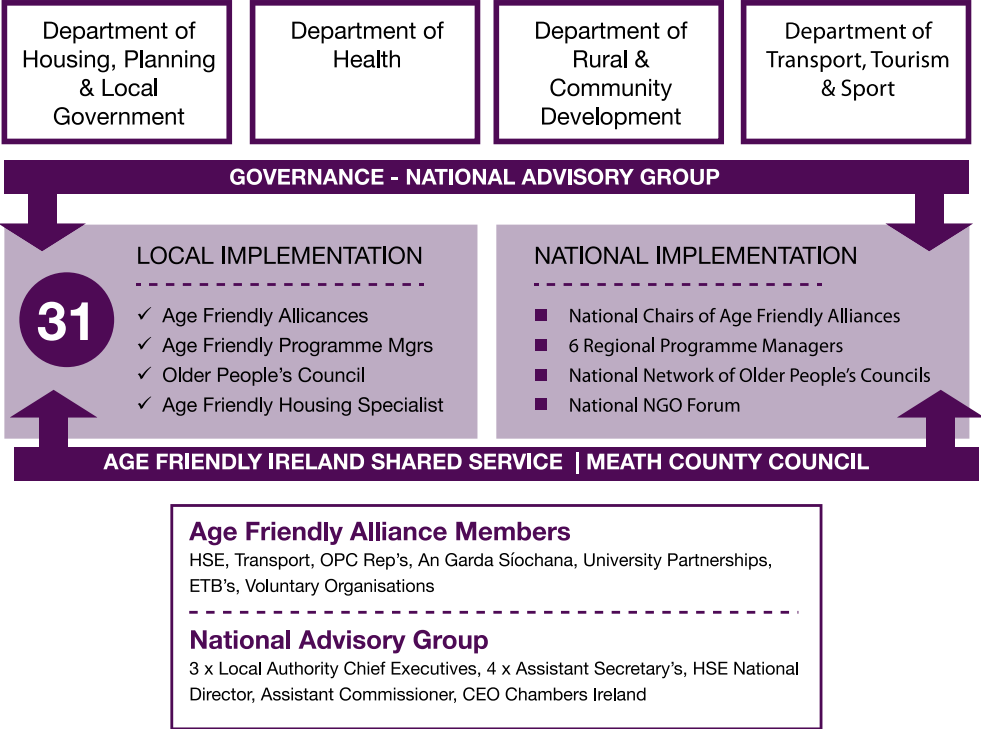

| Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government | Department of Health | Department of Rural & Community Development | Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport |

GOVERNANCE - NATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

31

LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION
- ✓ Age Friendly Alliances
- ✓ Age Friendly Programme Mgrs
- ✓ Older People's Council
- ✓ Age Friendly Housing Specialist

NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION
- ■ National Chairs of Age Friendly Alliances
- ■ 6 Regional Programme Managers
- ■ National Network of Older People's Councils
- ■ National NGO Forum

AGE FRIENDLY IRELAND SHARED SERVICE | MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

Age Friendly Alliance Members
HSE, Transport, OPC Rep's, An Garda Síochana, University Partnerships, ETB's, Voluntary Organisations

National Advisory Group
3 x Local Authority Chief Executives, 4 x Assistant Secretary's, HSE National Director, Assistant Commissioner, CEO Chambers Ireland

Figure 3 Age Friendly Ireland Programme Structure

AGE FRIENDLY STRUCTURE

Local Age Friendly Structures

Each local Age Friendly Programme operates with the same structure which relies on an active Older People's Council, an Age Friendly Alliance, an Age Friendly Programme Manager and, more recently, Age Friendly technical advisor and an interdepartmental group.
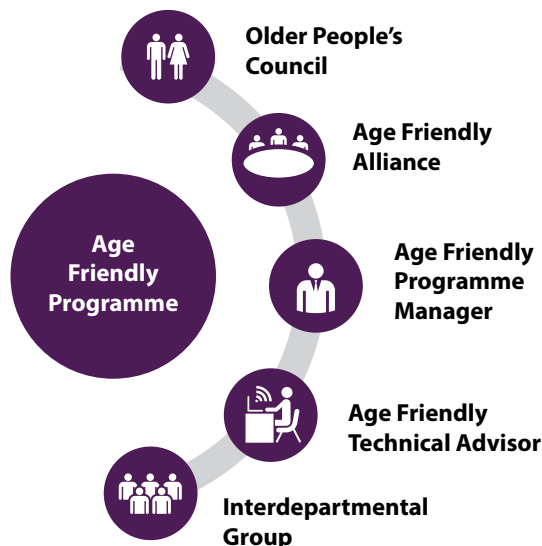

Figure 4 Local Age Friendly Programme Components

▶ Local Age Friendly Alliance

This is a high level cross-sector group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority (or an independent chair). The member agencies of the local Age Friendly Alliance form a strategic partnership to develop and oversee the realisation of the Age Friendly City or County Strategy. Members include the local authority, the Health Service Executive, the Education and Training Board, An Garda Síochána, Chamber of Commerce, the third level education sector, other relevant stakeholders including the participation of an elected member representing a Strategic Policy Committee.

▶ Older People's Council

This is a representative group of older people, established by local authorities as part of the development of the local Age Friendly programme. The group of older people identify priority areas of need, raise issues of importance and inform and influence the decision making process of the local Age Friendly Programme. Representatives of Older People's Councils participate, alongside representatives of the relevant member agencies, on the local Age Friendly Alliance.

Older People's Councils are two tier structures that have a wide membership base representing all older people in the community, and an elected Executive Committee. The membership is made up of individual older people and older people's groups. The Executive Committee members are elected by the full membership every two years. Members can include individual older people and older people's groups, for example, community and voluntary groups, active retirement groups, people with dementia, people living in residential care, former residents of state institutions and people of different ethnicities or foreign nationalities.
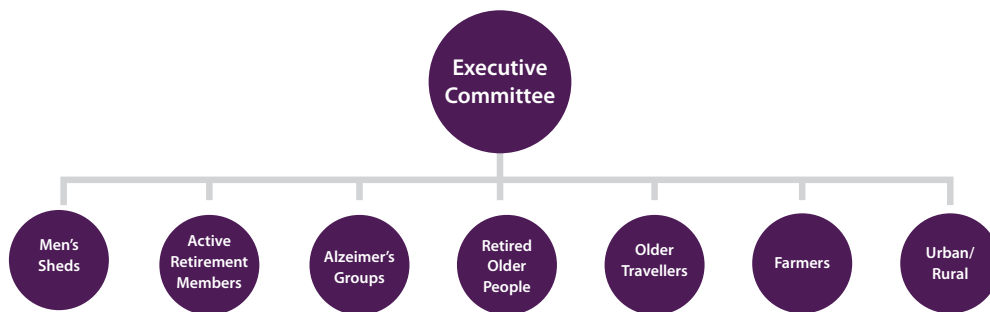

Figure 6 Sample Executive Committee

In addition to taking on specific commitments related to the implementation of the Age Friendly strategies, the Older People's Council also provides a citizen or service user perspective in monitoring the implementation of those strategies. The Older People's Councils are structured to be representative of the diversity of the older population in the city or county, linked to local older people's groups and supportive of the participation of the most marginalised.

The key role of **Older People's Councils** is to:

• Provide the voice of older people to support the Alliance at strategic level in the delivery of its actions

• Co-design solutions in response to barriers and challenges

• Surface up national policy issues through the Age Friendly Shared Service

▶ Programme Executive

The Age Friendly Programme Manager and support staff are employees of the local authority responsible for the management of the local Age Friendly Programme.

▶ Local Age Friendly Strategy

This is a strategy prepared by the local Age Friendly Alliance to address the issues identified by older people in the local area. It is typically a three to five year cycle. Through the Age Friendly Strategy and accompanying action plans, participating service providers and businesses become accountable to each other and to older people for the age friendly actions they agree to take on.

Regional Age Friendly Structures

Regional structures were re-introduced to the programme in 2019 and early 2020 with the appointment of Regional Age Friendly Programme Managers in six regions. These roles act as a link between the Age Friendly Shared Service and local programmes and provide support to the individual programmes in their regions.

National Age Friendly Structures

At national level, there are a number of Age Friendly structures providing oversight and governance to the programme. These include the National Advisory Group which comprises five government departments, An Garda Síochána, Chambers Ireland, the Health Service Executive and three local authority Chief Executives.

There are also national network meetings for the Chairs of Older People's Councils, the Chairs of Age Friendly Alliances, the Age Friendly Programme Managers, and Age Friendly NGO Forum members.

National Network of Age Friendly Technical Advisors → National Advisory Group → National Network of Older People's Councils → National Programme Managers Network → National Chairs of Age Friendly Alliances → National NGO Forum

Figure 6 National Network Structures
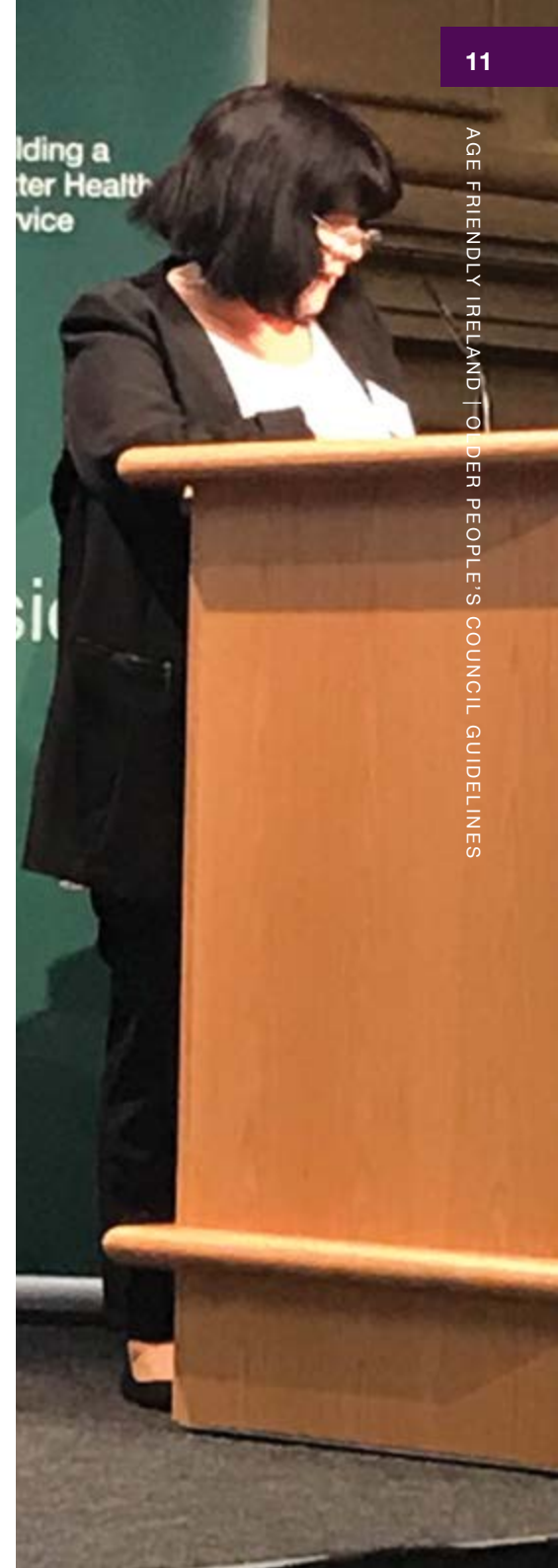
National Network of Older People's Councils

Each of the local Older People's Councils nominates a representative to sit on the National Network of Older People's Councils (usually their Chair). This National Network convenes three times annually to discuss policy issues of national significance and seeks to work in partnership to resolve issues identified by older people that cannot be resolved at local level. The role of the National Network is to:

1 **Support and inform** the ongoing growth and development of Older People's Council's nationally in pursuit of the agreed goal for Older People's Council's to be increasingly reflective of diverse local populations. This network will reflect the national collective voice of all Older People's Councils across the National Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme in Ireland and will provide a fundamental element of the overall programme structure and framework

2 **Provide a platform** for skill sharing and the transfer of knowledge across the age friendly network and, in particular, to support the fast tracking of formative Older People's Councils.

3 Support the **exchange of good age friendly practices** and models of excellence that can be replicated, either directly or following local customisation, across the network of Age Friendly programme areas.

4 **Surface, prioritise and communicate national issues** relating to policy or practice which go beyond the city and county boundaries and the ability to respond locally.

5 Work with the relevant host Age Friendly Programme of the National Older People's Council Convention to inform the design and **prioritisation of themes for the annual Older People's Council convention.**

The National Convention of Older People's Councils is held annually, hosted by one of the programme areas. This two day event is an opportunity to bring members of all Older People's Councils together for policy development, networking, debate and site visits.

National Convention of Older People's Councils, Donegal, May 2019

Participation Supports

There are many opportunities for older people to get involved in their Older People's Council at local level, either in the broader membership base or in its Executive Committee. Older people participate in their local Older People's Councils as volunteers, on a similar basis to any other community or voluntary group. Like most local voluntary groups, remuneration such as mileage expenses are not paid to individuals for their participation in meetings. When initially consulted, older people said that they would happily participate in a voluntary capacity and cited existing supports such as availing of the Free Travel Pass, car-

sharing and rural transport programmes to participate in local meetings. Where travelling is a barrier to attending meetings, the Age Friendly Programme Manager can facilitate remote access to a meeting or consultation via teleconference facilities. Where possible, local Age Friendly Programme Managers may organise transport for OPC members to attend any national & regional events as a group. For national events, such as the National Convention of Older People's Councils, the local Age Friendly Programme will support the overnight accommodation costs.

Overview of Local Older People's Councils

Older People's Councils are representative groups of older people who work together and with key state and voluntary agencies to make Ireland a better place in which to grow old. The Programme for Government (2011-2016) committed to the establishment of Older People's Councils by Local Authorities so that older people can raise concerns or issues of importance at a local level. This short guide will explain how Older People's Councils have been set up in Ireland.

There are two key initiatives that have led to the development of Older People's Councils in Ireland. The first is the Age Friendly Ireland Programme, now in place across all 31 administrative areas of local government. This initiative has been set up around the world, following the Age Friendly Cities guidelines developed by the World Health Organisation.

The principal aim of the Age Friendly Programme is to give older people a strong voice in decision-making on housing, health, spatial planning and all aspects of everyday living so that policies will be inclusive of the needs and choices of older people in urban and rural areas. The approach also gives older people a joint platform as senior managers of voluntary and state agencies in the development, implementation and monitoring of Age Friendly strategies in each local authority.

Ireland's National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013) is the second key initiative which promotes the development of Older People's Councils in cities and counties across Ireland. The vision statement of the National Positive Ageing Strategy says that Ireland will be a society for all ages that celebrates and prepares properly for individual and population ageing. It goes on to say that Ireland will 'enable and support all ages and older people to enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential'. It aims to promote and respect older people's engagement in economic, social, cultural, community and family life whilst fostering better solidarity between generations.

To be successful, the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy must be the responsibility of all sectors of society; government, health service providers, local authorities, businesses, voluntary groups and families.

What age group are we talking about?

Traditionally, many people viewed 'older age' as being associated with retirement from work or being aged 65 and over. But views on what is now considered 'older' are changing. The Irish National Positive Ageing Strategy acknowledges that ageing is a lifelong process that does not start at 65 years of age.

Definitions of 'ageing' and 'older people' are changing in part because life expectancy is changing. A century ago, average life expectancy was in the region of fifty years. Today, average life expectancy for men in Ireland is 78.4 years and 82.8 years for women.

The Age Friendly Programme recognises that in order to prepare for population ageing, we need to include the views of 'younger' old as well as 'older' old people.

Local Older People's Councils welcome different age groups of older people to take part to take part in their activities. Specific age criteria may be set out at the discretion of the local Terms of Reference for each Older People's Council. It is important to ensure that a range of different voices and perspectives are brought to the Older People's Councils structures, including younger and older age groups.

A note on Terminology

In the past, there were variations to the name of older people's structures, with some counties calling their group an Older People's Forum or some variation. For consistency, the term Older People's Council should be used, as this is the terminology referred to in the National Positive Ageing strategy and the Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service.
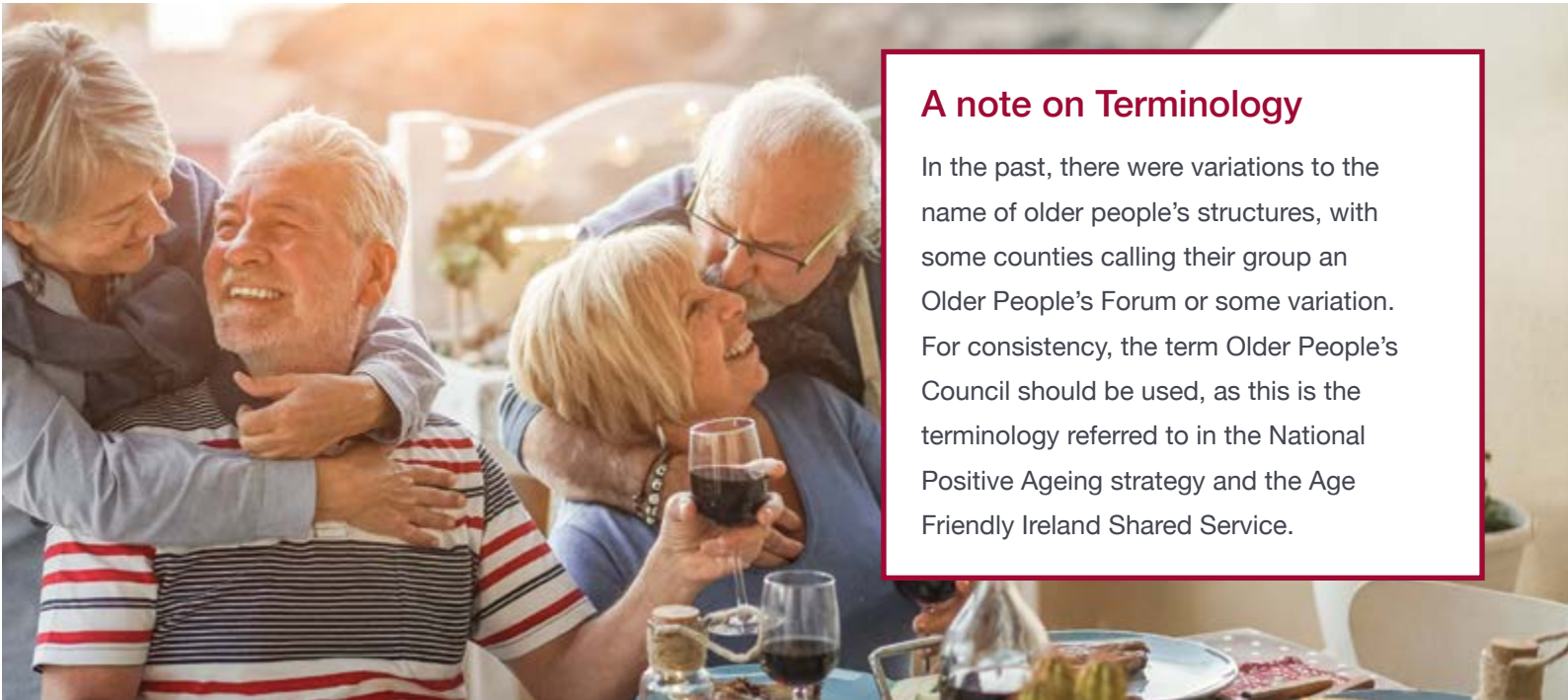
Policy Context

Age Friendly work in Ireland is delivered in the context of various policy documents. Because of the range of work involved, it relates to many different Government Departments.

International Context

In an international context, the World Health Organization implements a 'Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health', and has designated 2020-2030 as the 'Decade of Healthy Ageing'.

The Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Communities was signed in Ireland in (2011, 2013 & 2014) by Mayors and Cathaoirligh from across the world who pledged that their cities and communities would become more Age Friendly.

National Context

The National Positive Ageing Strategy, published in 2013, outlines a vision for Ireland as a society for all ages that celebrates and prepares properly for individual and population ageing.

The establishment of Older People's Councils in Ireland addresses the core vision of the National Positive Ageing Strategy which states that this is a society 'in which equality, independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people are pursued at all times.' It's worth noting that the core aim of Older People's Councils is precisely this, to ensure that Irish society is an age-friendly one in the years ahead.

The Programme for Government 'Our Shared Future' outlines a commitment to achieving a better quality of life for all and emphasises equality within society. It charts a vision of an Ireland for all ages which values older people. Many of its objectives relate to the health and wellbeing of older people, including objectives for older people's housing and retrofitting homes, town centre regeneration, public transport, a new digital strategy, a rural mobility plan, telehealth, expansion of primary and community care, a statutory homecare scheme, palliative care pathways, assistive technologies, supports for carers and wellbeing indices. The National Positive Ageing Strategy includes in its statement that in establishing Older People's Council, local

authorities should ensure that their composition is representative of the diversity of the older population at a local level; that the councils are linked with local groups of older people and that the participation of the most vulnerable is supported.

Other significant policy and strategy documents relating to Age Friendly work in Ireland include Project Ireland 2040, the government's long-term overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all of its people, and linked to this is the National Planning Framework; Housing Options for our Aging Population; Slaintecare; Healthy Ireland; the National Falls & Bone Health Project; An Garda Síochána Older People Strategy; the Public Libraries strategy; the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion; the National Carers' Strategy; Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse; Creative Ireland; the Integrated Care Programme for Older People; the National Dementia Strategy, the National Volunteer Strategy, and the National Disability Strategy.

Older People's Councils play a key role in contributing to policy development. Members are active in consultation for major national policy documents. For example, members drafted a submission to the National Volunteer Strategy, they participate in the National Positive Ageing Strategy Stakeholders Forum, and they take part in consultations for key initiatives such as transport services, particularly where major changes in services are planned.

The ambition of every Older People's Council in Ireland is to work creatively with the Age Friendly programme and the Age Friendly Alliance in each city/county to improve the delivery of services and supports for us all as we age. The collaborative model at the heart of the Age Friendly Programme is the blueprint for this work. This guide will explain how local authorities set up and maintain an Older People's Council, drawing examples from counties which have successfully done so already.

The National Network of Older People's Councils is a recognised place to seek the authentic voice of a diverse population of older people. The National Network have consulted and continue to consult on a number of programme and policy areas including national policy and local programmes, including the following:

- Affinity National Falls and Bone Health Project

- Integrated Care Programme for Older People

- Bus Connects

- Palliative Care Study

- Local plans such as Local Economic and Community Plans, Joint Policing Committees and Local Community Development Committees

Below we highlight one case study where the voice of older people is directly inputting into the implementation of a joint departmental policy on housing for older people.

Case Study: How Older People's Councils Contribute to Policy Development

The Department of Health and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government jointly published the 'Housing Options for an Ageing Population' policy statement in February 2019. This policy outlined 40 actions to support the provision of housing for older people and to support older people to remain in their own homes and communities for longer. A national implementation group was established to oversee the implementation of these actions.

Both Junior Ministers from the Department of Health and the Department of Housing saw the merit in having the voice of older people at the table and asked Age Friendly Ireland to work with the National Network of Older People's Councils to identify two nominees to contribute to this group. Bridie O'Reilly from Fingal OPC and Rosaleen Smartt from Westmeath OPC were selected as the nominees and regularly attend the National Implementation Group to oversee the implementation of this policy. This is an example of where Older People's Councils are recognised as the voice of the older person and are utilised to feed into policy development and implementation in areas that affect older people.

" I am extremely pleased that we have voices on the National Policy Group. It allows us to bring forward practical ideas and concerns that were not thought of before, also we can get more information on the ideas that the Departmental Officials put forward. I feel being involved in groups like this empowers us to bring problems and factual everyday experiences to the meetings in a constructive way and we all go forward together, teasing out concerns at the beginning and it shows a positive result when the group publishes their policy document. I know my input is valued and respected because anything I say is acted on and if I request anything, the request is granted. There is good communication in a friendly manner and group members are very interested in what I have to say. I also feel that being on groups representing older people empowers them and they know that they are being listened to and their opinions are valued and respected.

Rosaleen Smartt, Westmeath Older People's Council

" I think it is a great achievement for Age Friendly Ireland to have succeeded in getting the voice of older people heard at national level. I feel privileged to be part of the Housing Implementation Group, representing Fingal Older People's Council and the National Network of Older People's Councils. This group was formed to progress the issues of housing and health for our ageing population and Rosaleen and myself have been welcomed and included at every level of discussion. Our representative views have been respected, listened to and acted upon. I know that our contribution is making a difference to the ambitious plans that are underway. Being heard at national level provides a valuable platform on which the concerns of older people can be progressed.

Bridie O'Reilly, Fingal Older People's Council

How would I know if my community is Age Friendly?

Ask yourself the question: What sort of place would I like to grow old in? Is it a place where older people can…

- Engage and participate fully in everything that is going on in the community

- Easily get to where they want to go, when they want to go

- Access great quality healthcare and other services without difficulty

- Have a say in what happens in their county or city if they wish to

- Feel safe and secure

- Live a healthy and active life, and

- Where young and old interact and get along

(Source: Age Friendly Cities and Counties Handbook)

Members of Older People's Councils participate in Walkability Audits of their communities to assess how Age Friendly the environment is.

Chapter 1 Setting up an Older People's Council

In this section, we explain how Older People's Councils are established in each Age Friendly Programme area. There are several key steps to go through so as to reach a diverse group of older people in the city or county. Getting older people involved in the process as early as possible is key, as is spreading the word about the establishment of an Older People's Council in the area.

Setting up a Network of Older People in your County

The first task is to set up a database of older people's groups in your local authority area and voluntary and state agencies that provide services to older people. The Age Friendly Programme Manager in the local authority will often have access to a database of organisations in which older people are involved. This database can be built upon to ensure that it includes an up-to-date list of older people's groups and voluntary and state agencies that provide services to older people. This is the first essential step to recruiting as wide and diverse a group of older people onto the Older People's Council as possible.

Wider OPC Membership

Community and Voluntary Groups

Individual Older People

Residential Care

Socially Disadvantaged

OPC Executive

Figure 7 Diagram of Older People's Council Two Tier Structure

A note on General Data Protection Regulations [GDPR]

In May 2018 new regulations came into force that protect the rights of European citizens to privacy. These are the General Data Protection Regulations, also known as GDPR.

There are strict rules in place regarding how people's personal data can be collected, stored and used. Personal data can refer to any type of identifying information such as a personal photograph, contact telephone number or address.

Local authorities are the 'data controllers' for Older People's Councils which means they must manage any personal data that they collect. They must have consent from an individual to collect and store their personal information.

In relation to Older People's Councils, it is important that local authorities follow GDPR regulations when collecting and storing contact information for older people in the community. It is mandatory to ask each person who is interested in registering with the Older People's Council to sign a registration form and give their consent. The local authority should outline to them how their personal information will be used and stored. This information should not be shared with third parties without the consent of the older person.

Age Friendly Ireland acknowledges that, prior to the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulations, communication with the membership of Older People's Councils was somewhat less formal. However, since the regulations were introduced, all communication to members should come through the secretariat which is provided by the local authority Age Friendly Programme. Local authorities are the custodians of databases of Older People's Council members and therefore cannot share this information with third parties.

Hold an open meeting to set up the Older People's Council

The Age Friendly Programme Manager will facilitate the organisation of Older People's Council meetings. The local authority will provide the venue and refreshments. Local libraries are often excellent free venues that are available for such meetings. A wide range of older people should be invited to this first open meeting. The Age Friendly Programme Manager will also give administrative support for this meeting by sending out invitations to people, devising an agenda in consultation with the Chair and collating the expressions of interest from those keen to join an Older People's Council.

A note on administrative supports for local Age Friendly programmes

Since transitioning into a local government Shared Service, all local authorities have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Age Friendly Ireland which sets out their commitment to the programme. Under this agreement, each local authority has agreed to provide:

• A local Age Friendly Programme Manager

• Hosting of a local Older People's Council

• A Strategic Age Friendly Alliance (chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority or an independent chairperson)

The Role of the Age Friendly Programme Manager

The Age Friendly Programme Managers is an employee of the local authority whose role is to manage the local Age Friendly Programme. Part of this role is to work closely with the local Older People's Council, supporting them with meetings administration and in the delivery of actions in the Age Friendly Strategy. The relationship between the Age Friendly Programme Manager and the Older People's Council is collaborative and they work closely on various projects.

Case study: Partnership Working in Kildare Older People's Council

Kildare Older Persons Council is a citizen-led collaborative agent of change that works in partnership with stakeholders to deliver better outcomes for all older people in Kildare. It is well established and on its third Age Friendly Strategy.   A mutually supportive relationship exists between Kildare Older Persons Council Executive and the Age Friendly Alliance where Information flows freely between them. They operate side by side on the Communication Working group. Kildare Older Persons Council Executive works according to their Terms of Reference which was developed according to the best practice guidelines devised by Age Friendly Ireland and is agreed with the Age Friendly Alliance. This clearly sets out the purpose of the group and how it functions. From time to time the group carries out research by way of questionnaire on specific themes which prove invaluable to Alliance members when streamlining their services. As well as receiving support from the Age Friendly County Programme Manager, a key support worker has been assigned by Kildare County Council.

Kildare Older People's Council works co-operatively with Kildare Sports Partnership inclusive of our local community groups. A member of the Executive represents the fears and needs of the older person on the Joint Policing Committee. The group creates, designs and organises Positive Ageing Week in our county bringing in other agencies to assist and deliver. The group is involved in local Initiatives countywide and Wellbeing Day is rolled out annually for older people. Older Wiser Laughter Libraries programme are events specifically designed for and with older people and delivered in the libraries around Kildare. They assist with walkability audits in towns and villages around the county which feeds into town and village renewal projects for the public realm.

"
As support worker assigned, I find the programme as a whole, really proficient at capturing the complexity of needs and issues both from the younger older person at 55 yrs. right up to the truly elderly members of our society.

OPC Support Worker
"

The group organises information sessions promoting the Age Friendly County programme in the five Municipal Districts across Kildare and also use these sessions to allow expressions of interest to come forward if there is a gap on the Executive. A co-option process involving expressions of interest has been agreed with the Alliance. The executive steps down bi-annually to encourage new members and can only serve for a second term if re-elected.

> " Kildare Older Persons' Council is at the heart of how we consult and deliver key services to allow people to age in place and make Kildare a great place in which to grow old. Putting the voice of the older person first allows us to do just that
>
> **Kildare Age Friendly Programme Manager** "

Who we work with and what we do?

Our Partners	What We Do
Kildare Age Friendly Alliance	• We bring the voice of older people to the table. • Support current initiatives of the Alliance and help identify gaps. • Two members sit on the Alliance and the Communications Sub-group. • Produce Terms of Reference sanctioned by Alliance. • Devise & agree annual work plan with Alliance.
Joint Policing Committee	Represent the needs of older people in Kildare in terms of safety and security.
Local Community Groups	Continue working and liaising with groups we represent in the local community and ensure every voice is heard.

Our Partners	What We Do
Kildare County Council Departments Community	Work closely with the Programme Manager & support worker assigned. Age Friendly towns • Walkability Audits • Make submissions to the County Development Plan • Make submissions to the Local Economic and Community Plan • Age Friendly roadshows • Members of the Public Participation Network • Link with Local Community Development Committee through the Age Friendly Programme Manager
Kildare County Council Library Service	• Help design, promote and participate in the **O**lder **W**iser **L**aughter **P**rogramme.
Age Friendly Ireland	• Attend National Older People's Council Network meetings • Attend National Convention of Older People's Councils • Participate when required in policy development & disseminating information
New Primary Care Centres	• Are the consultative body at planning stage and, when the centre is constructed, they take part in a walkability audit
Policy platform	• Promote and attend consultation research events for new strategies • Make submissions on the County Development Plan & Local Economic & Community Plan.
Kildare Sports Partnership	• Involved in Countywide Wellbeing Days • Help promote & Participate in Fit Stix & Activator programmes • Promote & Participate in 'Go for Life games'

Our Partners	What We Do
Kildare Older People's Council general activities	**Countywide** • Bi-monthly executive meetings • Host Annual General Meeting • HSE Listening meetings • Older Population in Kildare / involvement in own groups. • Consult other groups and individuals at local level • Create workings groups as needs arise • Research / Assist with designing and distributing questionnaires • Educating wider older population of results. • Positive Ageing Week / Host events in all Municipal Districts

Photo: Members of Kildare Older People's Council at a training day in Palmerstown House, County Kildare.

**Running the Annual General Meeting
of the Older People's Council**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Older People's Council should take place once a year. It gives members an opportunity to understand what is going on in their local Age Friendly Programme, and to learn about opportunities to get involved. It will also give people a chance to meet each other again as influencers of policy and practice in service provision in their local authority area. The Age Friendly Programme Manager will work with the Older People's Council to devise the agenda for the AGM (see sample agenda on page 26 below). It's important to include time for a presentation on the local Age Friendly Programme to set the context. It is recommended that members of the Age Friendly Alliance should present on the actions they are delivering in the local Age Friendly Strategy. It is usual for Alliance members to have an information stand at the AGM, with leaflets and information on their services and actions. This is a good opportunity for older people to meet with the service providers. Elected members and media contacts should be invited to hear about Age Friendly initiatives in their local area.

Following presentations, the members of the newly formed Older People's Council can elect members to the Executive Committee.

Election of Executive Committee members is usually done on a geographic basis to ensure there is balanced representation across the catchment area. Through consultation for this document, the subject of co-option and members of target groups has arisen. Co-option of members can be used at local discretion up to a maximum of three members at any given time. However it is important to make sure that positions rotate so that diverse voices are represented.

Some Executive Committee members will then go forward as representatives of the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Alliance. It will be their responsibility to report back to the wider Older People's Council on progress in the Age Friendly Strategy.

The AGM is also a critical event to attract new membership to the wider Older People's Council. Expression of interest/registration forms should be handed out to all older people who attend the AGM.

To guarantee that our Older People's Councils are wholly representative it is critical to ensure we have members from the following key groups:

- Members of community and voluntary groups
- Individual older people
- Representatives of older people living in residential care homes
- Representatives of more vulnerable older people who can be advocated for by formal/ informal carers and/or public health nurses.

It's also important to invite new groups as they form, for example a group representing people with dementia living in the community.

Catherine McGuigan Chief Officer,
Age Friendly Ireland

Tips for ensuring diversity on Older People's Councils

To be really effective in representing the voice of all older people in the community, Older People's Councils should aim to have a wide reach and involve members from different types of backgrounds. Public Participation Networks have been very effective in reaching older people to invite them to participate in the Older People's Council.

Consider approaching the following types of groups to invite members to become involved in your Older People's Council:

- Alzheimer's / dementia groups
- Day care services
- Different religious groups, Muslim community
- Ethnic minority communities including the Traveller community
- Farmers Marts
- Groups supporting adults who were institutionalised as children
- Intergenerational Meetings
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Support Group
- Local community & voluntary groups such as Active Retirement, Irish Countrywomen's Association
- Meals on Wheels

- Men's Sheds and Women's Groups
- Nursing homes / sheltered housing
- People with disabilities and mental health groups
- Public Health Nurses
- Residents Associations especially in older people's housing developments
- Retired professionals (eg nursing, teaching, legal)
- Society of St Vincent de Paul
- Sports Partnerships
- Tidy Towns
- Travellers / Traveller Movement groups
- Voluntary Housing Associations / Supported housing residents
- Widows / Widowers Associations

Continuity and Succession Planning

It is important to consider 'succession planning' for Older People's Councils, as they are designed to have rotation of members. Succession plans means helping to identify new Executive Committee members who can replace outgoing members. Given that the term of office for Executive Committee members is two years, the Programme Manager works with their OPC to help identify potential older people who are interested in going forward for election and provide supports such as training and information. OPC members in positions of office, such as the Chair, can help incoming members to learn what's involved with the role. Succession planning helps with knowledge transfer from outgoing to incoming members and allows outgoing Age Friendly champions to play a mentoring role to potential new members.

Local Political Engagement

Elected members across Ireland have played a key role in the development and success of the Age Friendly Programme over the last decade. In signing the Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Cities and Communities (2011, 2013 & 2014) Mayors and Cathaoirligh have pledged that their cities and counties will ensure that "structures and processes of citizen-centred engagement are developed so that older people have an adequate involvement in decision making and are actively involved in the design and creation of innovation and change." While elected representatives are not direct members of Older People's Councils, they do work very closely with them and are supportive of Age Friendly objectives. At local level, the Age Friendly Strategy, and annual updates on progress, are presented to Council meetings to keep elected members abreast of activity. Elected members have facilitated the engagement of older people in their communities, through raising awareness of the age friendly programme and consultation opportunities. This unique ethos of partnership and mutual respect between the elected members and the Older People's Councils has been significant in improving service delivery for the ageing population.

Membership & Representation

It is widely recognised that older people are not an homogeneous group. In order to ensure that the diverse voice of all older people is wholly represented, members of Older People's Councils come from many different backgrounds, sharing the common principle of representing the authentic voice of the older person. It is general practice that members are not staff members of agencies or services, however practitioners and staff may attend meetings on occasion to support information sharing on services. In some cases an employee (such as a Public Health Nurse, Garda, Occupational Therapist) may facilitate the inclusion of the voice of marginalised older people in the community who are themselves unable to attend meetings. Where this arrangement is in place, the agency representative participates in the Executive Committee to represent the voice of the older person, rather than in their capacity as an agency representative.

Funding for Older People's Councils

Funding for Older People's Council activities comes through the Age Friendly Programme. Older People's Councils do not generally need to apply for external funding because they are part of the programme and resources are committed by Alliance members to delivering the actions in the Age Friendly Strategy. For this reason, Older People's Councils should not need to set up their own bank account.

If an Older People's Council wishes to secure funding for a particular project, they can generally apply through the local authority. In certain cases, an individual older people's organisation which is a member of the Executive Committee could apply for funding for the project on behalf of the Older People's Council.

Case Study : Running an Annual General Meeting

Older People's Council Information Day in County Longford

County Longford Older People's Council believes that sharing information empowers and is the key to creating an Age Friendly County, so in partnership with Longford County Council and Longford Age Friendly Alliance we organise an annual Information and Networking Day for the older people in the county.

Our Programme Manager, Mary C Reynolds is the chief organiser ably assisted by the voluntary commitment of our Older People's Council members.

It coincides generally with Positive Ageing Week and includes a strong focus on celebrating the very positive contribution older people make to their local community while showcasing the opportunities there are for older people to get involved in volunteering etc.

The day provides an opportunity for older people to meet with agencies and service providers who are based in the county and who provide a wide range of services to our older citizens. The informal setting enables the information to be distributed in a trusted manner. We aim to provide physical, mental and social health and safety information informally in a socially conducive environment.

We begin with a short address from the Chief Executive / Chair of Longford Age Friendly Alliance, Mr Paddy Mahon, followed by a welcome by the Chair of Longford County Council and then the Chair of the Older People's Council who each outline their work and vision to make County Longford a better place in which to grow older. All of the service providers including the Health

Service Executive, Local Authority – Housing Grants, Citizens Advice, Gardaí, Rural Link, make a short (5 minute) presentation and invite those present to come individually afterwards for further information to their stands. We blend in one or two lighter moments in the schedule and invite all present to fill an evaluation form at the end of the day.

Since its inception we have built on the success of previous Information Days blending this feedback from participants with topical issues that impact on the lives of our ageing population. The audience consists of a mix of older people from urban and rural backgrounds with a wealth of life experience and skills.

However, each stage of life brings new challenges hence information and education assists participants in planning for today and the future.

It is a day of two halves, starting at 11am in the Longford Arms Hotel with emphasis in the morning on the information stands. This is followed by a guest speaker, one year we had a SAGE advocate speak on promoting the rights, freedoms and dignity of older people. Last year it was Nutritional Therapist Laura Thompson who spoke on theme 'eating well as we age'.

The guests are then served a light lunch which is much appreciated whilst enjoying the company of old friends and new and they also take time to interact individually with the various service providers.

To round off the day we have some entertainment. The children from Longford Primary School Choir came in delightful costumes this year, creating a wonderful intergenerational experience singing songs old and new.

What is a Public Participation Network?

A Public Participation Network (PPN) is a local network that allows local authorities to connect with community groups in their geographic area. Community groups register to join the PPN in their local authority area. The network gives citizens a greater say in local government decisions which affect their own communities. PPNs are set up under the remit of the Department of Rural and Community Development. Each local PPN nominates community representatives to different structures, such as the Local Community Development Committee, Strategic Policy Committee or Joint Policing Committee. In this way, the community has a voice at the table where decisions are being made. PPNs work with three types of group. These are general community and voluntary groups, environmental groups, and groups supporting social inclusion.

Sample Agenda for the Annual General Meeting of the Older People's Council

- Refreshments and Networking
- Opportunity to view information stands (such as Citizens Information Centre, Education and Training Board, Local Sports Partnership, Local Authority Housing Department)
- Introduction by an older person from the county or the Age Friendly Programme Manager
- Presentation by Chair of Alliance
- Presentation by Alliance members on actions in the strategy
- Presentation by the Chair of the Older People's Council
- Election of an Executive Committee of the Older People's Council (every two years)
- Consultation with older people (please see note below)
- Local entertainment and refreshments
- Closing remarks and expressions of thanks

The Annual General Meeting generally starts at 11 o'clock in the morning (with refreshments available at 10.30am). The AGM can run over a morning or over a full day. Lunch is provided for the older people and speakers who attend.

Some local authorities feel it is important to make the AGM and other Older People's Council events as enjoyable for all as possible. This can be done by including time for people to network, providing refreshments and sometimes light entertainment at the end of the event. Some older people may need transport to and from events. It's important to choose a venue that is the most accessible for people in the area, possibly one that there is public transport links to. It's also useful to suggest that people can share lifts or organise themselves to get to the venue together. Use the event as an opportunity to spread the message of the Age Friendly programme in your city or county. Invite members of the press and local photographers to attend. Write an advance press release on the event and follow up with local media outlets on their interest in covering the event.

The Older People's Council AGM can be used to consult with older people on a new draft Age Friendly Strategy, and to hear their views on how well the outgoing strategy was implemented. While the AGM is important as an event for the members of the Older People's Council themselves, it is also an opportunity for the Age Friendly Programme Manager to ensure that the older person's voice is at the heart of the Age Friendly Strategy. For this reason, it's crucial that a clear presentation on the draft strategy is given. It also gives older people a chance to give their initial feedback on the recommendations and priorities set out in the draft strategy. Full details of how this form of consultation is carried out with older people are provided in the Age Friendly Programme handbook.

Chapter 2 Running an Older People's Council

In this section, we will look at ways to run an Older People's Council. The effectiveness of any Older People's Council is enhanced if they are run in a consistent way, with regular meetings, good communication, and clarity on roles.

The Older People's Council is not a campaigning or lobby group. Instead, it is an active and equal partner in raising issues of importance to older people that can go on to inform and influence the work of state and voluntary agencies. The issues that older people have raised in consultations for Age Friendly Strategies in local authorities range from a lack of supported accommodation to poor local infrastructure to poor transport links and concerns about personal security.

The Age Friendly Strategy developed by the Age Friendly Alliance is the mechanism through which concerns and issues can be raised and solutions found. It's a rolling process of development, implementation and review. As explained in the previous chapter, the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council have an active role on the Age Friendly Alliance. These members act as a conduit of information and influence, bringing the concerns of the Older People's Council to the Alliance and returning to the Older People's Council with updates on progress made at the Age Friendly Alliance.

This monitoring role of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council is crucial to the working of the Age Friendly Alliance and the ongoing development and review of the Age Friendly Strategy. The Older People's Council also has a strong role in co-designing of solutions and providing leadership in advancing certain action points within the Age Friendly Strategy.

The Role of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council

The Executive Committee of the Older People's Council is a representative group elected by the members of the broader Older People's Council. The size of the Executive Committee will be determined by the population and geographical spread of the County or City. It should include people from as wide a geographical area as possible so that issues of importance to older people in rural and urban areas are covered. Oftentimes, an Older People's Council will be comprised of members representing different Municipal Districts (local authority administrative areas), to ensure a balanced geographic representation. The Executive Committee of the Older People's Council meets every six to eight weeks.

A smaller group from the Executive Committee (usually two people) sits on the Age Friendly Alliance to represent the Older People's Council. Their job is to monitor the progress of the Age Friendly Strategy and to report back to the Older People's Council. They contribute to the agenda of each meeting and report back to the full Executive Committee after each meeting. They also report back to the entire Older People's Council at the council's Annual General Meeting.

The Age Friendly Programme Manager in each local authority will keep in close contact with the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council. The Programme Manager sends members advance notice of the Age Friendly Alliance meetings and any information required before each meeting. The Age Friendly Programme Manager will also ensure that members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council have opportunities to participate as equals at the Age Friendly Alliance meetings. Their role is key as their views are essential to inform how policy can be best developed to suit older people. The Programme Manager manages the local age friendly programme, including the Older People's Council, on behalf of the local authority.

Members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council also join other decision-making groups within their counties or cities. For example, the Older People's Council may represent the voice of older people on the Local Community Development Committee or Joint Policing Committee. Sometimes these nominations will come through the Public Participation Network, which is one of the reasons Older People's Councils are advised to link in closely with their local Public Participation Network.

Case Study: Representing Older People on Local Community Development Committees

When the Local Community Development Committee was being established in County Cavan, the Older People's Council proposed to have a seat on the committee to represent older people. Nominations for the community representatives came through the Public Participation Network. Since the Older People's Council were linking closely with their PPN, they were able to secure a seat on the LCDC for older people's interests. This was agreed as a rotating seat, shared with the representative for people with disabilities interests. By sitting on the Local Community Development Committee, the OPC representative is able to contribute to decision making about funding streams available in the county, such as LEADER and SICAP funding, and was able to ensure that age friendly objectives were clearly embedded in the Local Economic and Community Plan.

Bob Gilbert
Chair of Cavan Older People's Council

1

Establish administrative support for the Older People's Council.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Older People's Council will need administrative support to organise meetings, plan events and keep older people informed about developments in the Age Friendly programme. Under the Memorandum of Understanding with the Age Friendly Shared Service, the local authority should provide this administrative support. As the members of the Older People's Council are volunteers, it is essential that the key administration is provided to the Older People's Council, so that they can run effectively and efficiently and be sustained. The local authority hosting of the Older People's Councils ensures that existing resources can be used such as venues, email and posting, and secretarial support.

The Executive Committee of the Older People's Council will meet every six to eight weeks while the Older People's Council itself will often only host one large get together. The event doubles as a social occasion (an annual tea dance, for example) and the Annual General Meeting of the Older People's Council. The Age Friendly Programme Manager of the local authority will assist with the organisation of this annual event.

2

Elect Officers on the Executive Committee

Each Executive Committee elects a Chair and a Vice Chair. The role of the Chair is to chair the Executive Committee and any meetings of the full Older People's Council. The Chair sets the agenda for the meetings, by working with the Age Friendly Programme Manager. They facilitate other members to contribute to meetings and help the group to arrive at decisions. The Chair should be mindful of their role in representing the views of all older people when acting as a spokesperson for the group. The Vice Chair stands in for the Chair when the Chair is not available and supports the Chair to lead the group.

Each Older People's Council should have a Terms of Reference which will outline the purpose of the group, the membership, the executive members, term of office, and roles.

It is recommended that officers on the Executive Committee serve a minimum of a two year term. Local decisions about extensions to the timeframe of the term of office should have a specific rationale and be approved by the Age Friendly Shared Service.

Older People's Council Executive Committee

- Chairperson (elected by executive, bi-annual)
- Vice chair (elected by executive, bi-annual)
- Nominate 2 representatives to the Age Friendly Alliance (in general one is the OPC Chair)
- Members serve a two year term
- Officers may serve two terms consecutively (local discretion)
- Quorum is half the membership plus one

While there is a national Terms of Reference, each Older People's Council is at discretion of the local committee regarding decisions on term of office.

Insurance for Older People's Councils

Older People's Councils are insured under each local authority's insurance policy with Irish Public Bodies [IPB] Insurance. The policy will indemnify any Older People's Council hosted by the local authority, in respect of its legal liability arising solely out of or in connection with its activities as a council for older people provided such activities are declared to and authorised by the local authority. The insurance policy relates to Professional Indemnity and Public Liability.

It is important to note that this insurance does not cover other older people's networks or groups which are not hosted by the local authority.

3 ## Developing an annual work plan

The Older People's Council decide how often they wish to hold meetings and what they wish to achieve in a year. In some counties, such as Cavan, the Older People's Council hold monthly meetings in the public library. They invite members of the Gardai, the Health Service Executive, Local Sports Partnership and voluntary groups providing services for older people to give presentations to members. They have an annual work plan that lists the tasks they wish to achieve each year. The Executive Committee of the Older People's Council continues the work of the Older People's Council throughout the year and reports back to the Older People's Council at the Annual General Meeting.

It is important for the Older People's Council to have a plan of activities for its year ahead. This plan is linked to the local Age Friendly Strategy, with the Older People's Council being the lead group for certain actions. The role of the Older People's Council is one of implementing change through collaborative leadership, so it does not have to directly deliver services. Many Older People's Council do get involved in delivering projects and activities, such as information days, intergenerational work, walkability audits, and awareness raising.

Older People's Council events should be organised in co-operation with the Age Friendly Programme Manager. No activities should take place without being notified to the Programme Manager. Events that are not notified to the Programme Manager are not covered by the local authority insurance.

4

Working with the Age Friendly Alliance

Two members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council sit on the Age Friendly Alliance. As explained in the previous chapter, the Age Friendly Programme Manager links with members on meetings and agendas for the Age Friendly Alliance. The members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council have a key role in monitoring progress on the Age Friendly Strategy. The members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council bring a citizen and service user voice to the Age Friendly Alliance. By sitting as equals to senior stakeholders responsible for health, transport, housing and policing issues within the city or county, this voice is crucial to raising issues and co-designing appropriate solutions for our ageing population.

5 **Participating in Age Friendly initiatives in your city/county**

Members of the Older People's Council are perfectly placed to get involved in the Age Friendly initiatives held as part of the Age Friendly Strategy in your county or city. These initiatives range from Age Friendly walkability audits of the infrastructure and businesses in the Age Friendly towns in your county to assessing the age friendliness of hospitals, airports and universities. Partaking in these projects will give members of the Older People's Council a keen sense of how to instigate and implement change as part of a partnership process.

Connecting with other local government initiatives is also valuable. For example, members of the Older People's Council can attend briefing meetings, presentations and submissions on housing, roads and other civic initiatives.

Members of the Older People's Councils also get involved in other aspects of civic and community life. These include joining Joint Policing Committees, Local Community Development Committees, Local Economic and Community Planning processes, the Public Participation Network and other bodies. Age friendly principles need to be incorporated into all aspects of our society and having members of the Older People's Council on these committees can contribute significantly towards this goal.

Ethos of an Older People's Council

Older People's Council executive members are expected to treat each other, and programme staff, with dignity and respect. The committees should operate on the basis of transparency and fairness. Members should be aware of their obligation to represent the views of other older people. OPC members should respect the role of the chair in ensuring a balanced discussion and as spokesperson for the group. OPCs are equal partners in the Age Friendly Programme and co-design solutions to issues identified.

Communications

The National Age Friendly Shared Service provides support to Older People's Councils around communication. Age Friendly Ireland has a Communication Strategy for the programme, and can provide templates and guidance on any communications required by Older People's Councils, for example, in relation to Annual General Meetings, consultation, or strategy launches. Extensive communication support is provided to whichever local programme is hosting the National Convention of Older People's Councils or the National Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement Awards. There are opportunities for Older People's Council members to undertake communication training through the national office, and to become spokespeople for the programme. Speaking guidelines along with some communications do's and don'ts are provided.

Each local Age Friendly Programme has its own website, where information on local Older People's Council events can be posted. Age Friendly logos for each local programme are designed centrally so there is a consistent design across all programme areas. Local Age Friendly Programmes are also active on social media, another avenue for OPCs to promote their activities. Top tips, guides and training on how to use social media is provided by the national office.

Older People's Council Chairs are advised to share minutes from the National Network of OPC's meetings with their local Executive Committee and are encouraged to provide a communiqué at least twice a year to the broader local membership base updating them on the work of the local Older People's Council.

Older People's Council representatives who sit on various committees at national or local level are expected to provide a report back to their Executive Committee and/or the National Network of Older People's Councils. The role of Older People's Council members in policy development is significant, and it is important to share information with other older people about policy changes and other developments.

Age Friendly Programme Managers communicate regularly to the wider Older People's Council on national items, updates, policy developments, opportunities, and events.

Case Study : Roscommon Older People's Council Research on Banking

Roscommon Older People's Council [ROPC] is a representative group of older people in the county. The group identifies priority areas of need, raises issues of importance and informs and influences the decision making process of the county Age Friendly Strategy

One of the areas identified by ROPC as needing action was banking and telecommunication services. Therefore Roscommon Older People's Council, in conjunction with Roscommon LEADER Partnership and Roscommon Citizens Information Service, came together to work on the topic of older people and their everyday experiences of the financial institutions and the telecommunication providers they encounter on a daily basis.

A working group was established and came to the conclusion that a piece of research needed to be completed to ascertain the real experience of older people and their interactions with both the financial institutions and telecommunication providers. The steering group developed a project proposal to seek funding from the Citizens Information Board Social Policy Grant and Community Foundation of Ireland to enable this work to be undertaken and a report finalised. The main objective of the project was to undertake research, hold a seminar and identify any social policy issues in relation to the experience of older people in relation to banking and telecommunication providers in County Roscommon.

To this end a survey was distributed to older people aged 55+ throughout the County of Roscommon. As a result of the survey, a banking and telecommunication seminar was held at the Percy French Hotel in Strokestown in April 2016. There was an attendance of 140 people and the event also included participation in a number of focus groups. A report was produced that detailed the findings of the research. This was launched in May 2017 by Minister Naughten in the Trinity Arts centre in Castlerea. There were speakers from Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Bank as well as the Roscommon LEADER Partnership, Citizens Information Service and ComReg. The work is quite significant and is relevant to the entire country.

Just one final thing to stress, this entire exercise was not an attempt to 'get at' or punish the banks and telephone service providers rather, it was an attempt to document facts and seek methods of improving the services for older people. In so doing it was envisaged to have an improved and user friendly service for everyone. Achieving this improvement was not a simple task but required initially an acknowledgement that there were problems.

There were ten actions outlined in the report and all of these were linked to the themes in the Age Friendly strategy. All been achieved, the most recent one being the delivery of an AgeWise training day for the local AIB staff.

Out of interest, ComReg have announced that the cost of calls to 1890; 1850; 0818 and 076 numbers will be no more than the cost of calling a Geographic number and while we don't claim that this was our doing, it is certain that our research contributed.

Margaret Mulligan
Chairperson Roscommon Older People's Council (ROPC)

Chapter 3 Looking Ahead

The Way Forward for Older People's Councils

There are five key points that Older People's Councils should keep in mind when planning for the future.

Purpose

The purpose of delivering Age Friendly work in Ireland is to support society to prepare for population ageing. Ensure that members understand the challenges and ambitions of the Age Friendly Programme.

Ireland's Age Friendly Programme is Ireland's adaptation of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Cities and Communities model. The entire programme is a process-driven initiative which encourages both bottom-up and top-down leadership to make Ireland a better place to grow old in. It's very important that the members of the Older People's Council are briefed fully on this programme. The Age Friendly Ireland Regional Managers are well placed to explain the aims and process of the Age Friendly programme at each AGM so people can refresh their memories of the approach. It's also very important that members of the Older People's Council have adequate time for questions and answers at each AGM. This is crucial to keep the voice of the older person central to the Age Friendly process. It also gives the members of the Older People's Councils a good basis to spread the message about how to make Ireland a better place to grow old in.

Collaboration

Ensure that members understand the role of the Older People's Council in collaborative leadership. The central role of Older People's Councils is to collaborate with voluntary and state agencies to embed age-friendly thinking into policy making and decision making at a local level. Older People's Councils

are not lobby or campaigning groups. Members are instead encouraged to bring issues to senior managers through the Age Friendly Alliance. The role of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council is to ensure all policies and decisions at a local level have an age friendly dimension. Keeping the full membership up to date with progress and indeed, lack of progress on actions in the Age Friendly Strategy is key to this process.

Diversity

Ensure that members understand the importance of maintaining an Older People's Council representative of the diversity of older people in the county or city. The central aim of Older People's Councils is to represent the diversity of older people in their membership. The reason for this is to make sure all issues relating to older people's needs are brought to the decision-makers on policy and planning into the future.

As mentioned earlier, keeping the database of older people and representatives from agencies working for older people up to date and inviting all these individuals to the annual general meetings of the Older People's Council is a key to maintain inclusivity and diversity going forward. This form on ongoing recruitment of new people is crucial. It allows a sharing of the workload and planning for new members to succeed those on the Executive Committee when individuals feel they can't continue with the voluntary commitments required.

Keeping a space free on the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council for new members of as yet unidentified groups of older people is another way of promoting inclusivity.[3]

Positioning

Ensure that members understand that the Older People's Council is a partner with state and voluntary agencies on the Age Friendly Alliance.

Solution focused co-decision making is the approach to embedding age friendly thinking into our counties and cities. Having members of the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Alliance is the key way to ensure that older people are co-decision makers in what is decided for older people in to the future. The Age Friendly Strategy becomes the key document through which change is implemented. Involving the Older People's Council in the monitoring and subsequent review of this strategy is a key aspect of the process.

The central aim of the Age Friendly Programme is to embed age friendly thinking into the state and voluntary agencies that make decisions on all our futures. While some agencies will have their own Age Friendly strategies, the key to the Age Friendly Alliance is to pool resources so that shared decisions can prevent repetition and ensure efficient spending. This facilitation of common agendas also means that goals are more likely to be achieved within reasonable time frames.

SAMPLE EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM

Older People's Council
Expression of Interest Form

I, _____, would like to express my interest in being part of the _____ Older People's Council.

I understand my details will be included on a mailing list for information circulated in relation to _____ Older People's Council.

I consent to my name and contact details being used and stored by

_____ County/City Council.

I consent to my photograph being used in information and publicity in connection with the Older People's Council.

Signed   _____

Name (Print)   _____

Address (Print) _____

Telephone   _____

Mobile number _____

Email   _____

SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR AN OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

Aim	The Older People's Council is a key part of the structure of the local Age Friendly Programme. It brings the concerns and experiences of older people to the Age Friendly Alliance and the voice of the older people to the decision making process in both the Age Friendly Programme and in other fora.
	The Older People's Council is a two tier structure that comprises a wide membership base of individual older people and older people's groups, and also an Executive Committee of elected individuals.
Purpose of the group	• To ensure that older people in _____ participate in decisions which affect their lives
	• To provide an active channel of communication between the Older People's Council and the Age Friendly Programme.
	• To provide the opportunity to comment on and influence local Age Friendly strategies, plans and projects.
	• To work cooperatively and represent the views of older people at local, regional and national level
	• To identify and inform key actions for implementation with the local Age Friendly Alliance and strive to achieve a number of the objectives in the local Age Friendly Strategy.
	• To monitor the implementation of the Age Friendly Strategy in the local authority area.
	• To represent the views of older people and keep older people up to date on key Age Friendly initiatives and structures.
Membership of the Older People's Council	• Membership will be made up of individuals and group representatives who submit a membership form and will be representative of the city or county as a whole; both rural and urban and strive to achieve a gender balance across the county.

Executive Membership	
Chair	**The Chair of the Group should be:** • Independent of the agencies involved with the Age Friendly Alliance. • Elected by members of the committee and re-appointed bi-annually • Supported by a formally elected Vice Chair (who must likewise be independent of the agencies involved with the Age Friendly Programme) **The Chair is responsible for:** • Chairing both the Older People's Council and the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council • Ensuring the needs of all ages are addressed through the agenda and conduct of the meeting • Facilitating consensus decision making amongst members as best as possible. • Representing the collective views of the Older People's Council on the local Age Friendly Alliance.
	Secretariat support will be provided by the Age Friendly Programme Manager. The purpose of the Secretariat is to: • Build, maintain and support the Older People's Council. • Take responsibility for general administration for meetings, booking venues, preparation of minutes, agenda etc in consultation with and having approval of the Chair.

Executive Committee of the Older People's Council	
Purpose of the Executive	• To actively organise meetings and ensure widespread participation of older people within the Older People's Council. • To attend the Age Friendly Alliance meetings and report back to the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Strategy. • To organise Annual General Meeting(s) and ensure all members receive updates and information in relation to the Age Friendly City/County Initiative.
Membership of Executive Committee	• The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson will be key members of the Executive Committee. • The Chairperson will convene meetings with the support from the secretariat. • The appropriate number of Executive members ranges from 12 to 20 members, depending the population of the county and other relevant considerations. This is generally at the discretion of the local groups. • Members may be elected from geographic areas (Municipal District level) or co-opted from particular sectors to represent the voice of older people.
Meetings of Executive Committee	• Meetings of the full Older People's Council will take place at least once a year (Annual General Meeting) • Meeting agendas to be sent out prior to the meeting for comment by members. • The Chairperson can convene a meeting outside of these annual meetings if deemed necessary. • The Executive Committee will meet at least four times per year

Terms of office	• Members of the Executive serve a minimum term of 2 years to ensure that there is consistency in work undertaken for a period of time.
	• At the end of this term, all of the Executive Committee members will step down and the Older People's Council will nominate new Members.
	• If a Member fails to attend three meetings of the Executive Committee without any correspondence, it will be assumed that they are no longer able to commit to being on the Executive Committee.
Quorum	Half the membership plus one

I (name) _____ Chairperson of _____Older People's

Council, have read the Guidelines for Older People's Councils including the Terms of Reference

Signature _____ Date _____

I (name) _____ Vice Chairperson of _____ People's Council, have

read the Guidelines for Older People's Councils including the Terms of Reference

Signature _____ Date _____

Glossary

PPN	Public Participation Network
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation (for example, a National Charity)
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
CCMA	City and County Managers' Association
LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
OPC	Older People's Council

REFERENCES

Department of Health (2013a) Positive Ageing Starts Now! National Positive Ageing Strategy. Dublin, Department of Health.

World Health Organization (2017) Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health.

Committee on the Future of Healthcare: Slaintecare Report, May 2017. Houses of the Oireachtas.

Government of Ireland (2019) Housing Options for an Ageing Population. Prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health.

Case Study: Linking with the NGO sector through the Failte Isteach Programme

Fáilte Isteach is a community project involving volunteer tutors welcoming migrants through conversational English classes. Our groups provide a space for those who are isolated to connect; for perspectives to evolve; for attitudes to change. The informal, relaxed approach to learning allows the most marginalised in our society to engage with others and truly integrate into our society here in Carlow. Fáilte Isteach embraces a relaxed, unstructured learning environment.

Our classes are tutored entirely by volunteers and who are encouraged to welcome participants to their community through language; identify needs through conversation and focus primarily on fluency and building confidence. Flexible classes allow our volunteers to support participants in their immediate language requirements while offering a warm welcome.

In County Carlow, the programme is coordinated by Carlow County Development Partnership through the SICAP programme and is delivered in two venues in the county, Tullow and Carlow town. The venue in Carlow town is the Carlow Older Person's Forum premises. The classes are delivered every Thursday (Pre Covid-19) morning at 10am for a duration of two hours. The classes have been running out of the Carlow OPF buildings for the last 18months. On a weekly basis we see between 15 and 20 students come together for classes being divided into three groups, Beginners, Intermediate and Advanced students. In late 2018 a call was made for volunteers through the Carlow Older People's Forum and a training day was organised where eight volunteers received training and support. Failte Isteach currently have five volunteers working with groups out of the Older People's Forum in Carlow.

Joe Butler

Carlow Older People's Forum

Case Study: Age & Opportunity - Supporting local Age Friendly Programme

Our vision at Age & Opportunity is an Ireland where all older people are more active, more visible, more creative, more connected, more often. Our mission is the best possible quality of life for people aged 50 to 100+. Our three programmes promote participation in the arts and creativity, physical activity and sports and active citizenship and lifelong learning.

- Age & Opportunity Arts provides opportunities for us to engage more in arts and cultural events and initiatives.

- Age & Opportunity Active is designed to get us more active and participate in recreational sport and physical activity.

- Age & Opportunity Engage offers a range of workshops and learning initiatives for our own personal development as well as opportunities for us to play an active role in our community.

In Engage we believe that people who work directly with older people - or whose work affects the lives of older people - should be conscious of the needs of older people and value our participation as older people in society.

With this in mind it has been a privilege to work with Age Friendly Programme Managers and the structures at county level in the Age Friendly Programme over the past number of years.

Touchstone is an 8-session course that was developed in partnership with NUI Galway to promote active citizenship and develop the skills of participants in bringing about change in their communities.

Participants

- Explore wider societal issues and how they impact on communities

- Understand how policies at county and national levels influence their lives and lives of communities

- Explore and understand how the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme contributes to this process

- Be motivated to bring about change/contribute to a more age-friendly Tipperary

- Have a greater understanding of the relevant roles between elected representatives/public sector officials and the Age Friendly structures in their county.

In County Clare, this course was delivered to a group of 22 participants, 8 of whom were already members of the Older Person's Council. Following the training, other people joined the Older People's Council. Of the 22 participants taking part the majority rated all sessions as being "excellent" while the remainder rated them as "very good". See the table below to get a sense of how relevant the material was:

We have seen how effective our interventions are in developing confidence and group cohesion among participants, leading to greater levels of participation and, ultimately, active citizenship.

At the end of the course we asked participants about their level of motivation about being involved in active citizenship: the findings were encouraging: of the 22 participants, 10 were very motivated, 9 were moderately motivated and the remaining 3 were somewhat motivated. The course is a useful way to harness community engagement.

We have been working with local authorities over the past ten years. Building on from our "Get Vocal" granting programme, where we funded community networking projects we have been collaborating with the Age Friendly programme since its inception. While a lot of our work focuses on our active citizenship courses we also deliver bespoke interventions at community, county level and regional levels. One of our other offerings is a half-day workshop on ageism. AgeWise looks at the prevalence and impact of ageism and how, often sub-consciously, negative portrayals of ageing and older people affect us, both personally and as a society.

We are currently building on the success of Touchstone by developing an updated course called "Get Engaged". We would be happy to talk to you about how we can deliver it to support your age-friendly programme.

Ciaran McKinney

Age & Opportunity

Your Local Information

You can use this space to write in your local information:

Name of your local Age Friendly Programme Manager

```
```

Your Current Older People's Council Chair

```
```

Chair of local Age Friendly Alliance

```
```

Name of Age Friendly Housing Advisor

```
```

Local Age friendly Strategy

Valid from [year]   To   [year]

Key local priorities and solutions proposed by your local Older People's Council:

```
```