Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme: Ireland’s Age Friendly Journey So Far

Introduction

The Central Statistics Office has predicted that over the next 30 years, the number of people over the age of 65 in this country will double and the number over 80 will quadruple. We know that these changes are a result of the huge improvements in our standards of living and also the developments in and access to advanced and quality healthcare. Consequently, more people in Ireland will continue to live for longer. Ireland is not unique in this respect - this is a global phenomenon and is referred to as population ageing.

It is true to say that in the past, as a society, we have tended to view older people as a burden, both on our public services and finances. The Age Friendly Cities and Counties (AFCC) Programme takes a very different approach – we see the huge benefits and opportunities in viewing our ageing population in a different light.

The overarching goal of Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme is that every county in Ireland will be a great place in which to grow old. Underpinning the AFCC Programme is the core principle that older people are a valuable resource to their communities and to our society in general. The voice of the older person is at the heart of the AFCC Programme.

At city and county level, the Programme is developed and implemented by older people working side by side in partnership with service providers and other relevant stakeholders. There is no doubt that the aims of the AFCC Programme are ambitious and require a change in how we think about ageing. The Programme also asks us to imagine new ways in which service providers and other organisations can work together to deliver improvements in supports and services that not only benefit older people but the community as a whole.

This document will give readers an overview of how the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme has developed and grown in Ireland since its inception in 2009. It also provides a catalogue of Age Friendly initiatives and projects from across the country, which help to bring the programme to life and illustrate the creative changes that can be brought about by adopting the Age Friendly approach.

An Age Friendly City or County is a place where a person’s age doesn’t affect their chance of having a good quality of life.

Why Age Friendly?

Simply put, the age friendly approach is a proven way to improve the lives of older people living in your city or county. But not only does becoming age friendly make a difference to older people, it enhances lives across the community. Age Friendly also promotes positive relations across the generations.

An Age Friendly City or County is a place where a person’s age doesn’t affect their chance of having a good quality of life. The people living there are happy to bring up children and to grow older – because the services, infrastructure, housing and public spaces are designed to meet everyone’s needs, regardless of how old they are.

Furthermore, there is growing recognition that decisions made at local level have the greatest influence on the quality of life of older people, so therefore it makes a lot of common sense that local government work in close partnership with other local service providers, community groups and older people’s organisations, to plan for the future of the older population in their area.

This collaborative approach to local planning can bring about changes which have a huge impact on the lives of older people while at the same time providing services in a more effective and cost-efficient way, avoiding gaps or duplication. A very simple example illustrates the point: when local hospitals liaise with transport providers to ensure buses stop outside health centres and hospitals, the number of missed
appointments can drop dramatically. It is this type of simple, joined up thinking that can make a big difference.

The benefits of this collective approach will ensure that those who are responsible for jointly developing and overseeing the implementation of a prioritised agenda for improvement will engage with older people and the organisations that represent them and that the service providers will, in consultation with those older people’s organisations, map current services with a view to ensuring that resources can be targeted at those most needing them, particularly those living in isolated communities and those, who through illness or disability have been deprived of a voice at the decision making tables. It will also help focus the interagency approach and how they can engage most effectively together in ensuring that their combined resources are used optimally in delivering necessary services to older people.

**What is population ageing?**

Population ageing has been described as the greatest challenge facing the developed world today. Across the globe we are seeing a shift in the distribution of population towards older ages and this has huge implications for the way that society works, the services that will need to be provided and the relationship between young and old.

The United Nations has recognised this global phenomenon and the challenges it presents, noting that population ageing was one of the most distinctive demographic events of the twentieth century and remains a priority throughout the twenty-first century. “For the near future, virtually all countries will face population ageing, although at varying levels of intensity and in different time frames.”

So what does this mean? The shift in age structure, as more people live for longer, means that retirement, pensions and other social benefits, along with healthcare, tend to extend over longer periods of time. In short, our society needs to plan for the needs of a much larger older population. This is not something that can wait. This is a pressing challenge that requires a thoughtful and comprehensive response. Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme is now playing a key role in responding to this challenge.

**How can Age Friendly meet this challenge?**

The challenge for the future is “to ensure that people everywhere will be enabled to age with security and dignity and continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights”. At the same time, “the rights of older persons should not be incompatible with those of other age groups, and the reciprocal relationships between the generations must be nurtured and encouraged” (United Nations, 2001a, paras. 9 and 14).

And this is exactly what being Age Friendly is all about. Not only does this approach ensure that older people can live full and healthy lives, participating in and contributing to their communities, it also facilitates better relations between the generations. Most importantly, the priorities for an Age Friendly Programme are decided by older people themselves. It is not based on assumptions made by bureaucrats or service providers, it is based on first hand information from older people in the community.

Furthermore, in straitened economic times the AFCC Programme establishes ways of working that are more efficient, eliminate duplication of work, save scarce and valuable resources while at the same time providing more accessible and better planned services, improved and safer public places, and opportunities to socialise and participate in the community in a real and meaningful way.

**How the AFCC Programme developed in Ireland**

**Co. Louth: Ireland’s test bed for the Age Friendly Counties Programme**

The Irish Age Friendly story began in County Louth in 2009. Dr Rodd Bond Director of the Netwell Centre at Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) had already been spearheading groundbreaking work on age friendly environments in Dundalk in 2005/2006 and so it...
was a natural fit that the town act a test bed for the age friendly approach in Ireland. Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) consequently participated in the World Health Organisation project for age friendly cities, piloted in 33 locations in 22 countries around the world.

The project was hugely successful and came to the attention of the then Louth County Manager, Mr Conn Murray, who felt that Louth would benefit hugely from becoming Ireland’s first Age Friendly County.

**The Ageing Well Network**

The Ageing Well Network was founded in 2007 as an independent coming together of leaders and strategic thinkers in the field of ageing who share a vision of Ireland as the best country in the world to grow old in, and are committed to achieving it.

The 75 members are CEOs and heads of organisations and units across public, private and voluntary organisations, Secretaries General and Assistant Secretaries of relevant government Departments, the Director of the Office for Older People and leading academics. Their expertise relates to all aspects of older people’s lives: health and medicine, community services, transport, the built environment, housing, education, employment, pensions, social welfare, civic participation, new technology, sporting and cultural activities, and older people as consumers.

Early on, Network members identified the potential for a national Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme to create a place where older people are more empowered, enjoy good health, live securely and continue to participate fully in society. The Ageing Well Network worked in partnership with Louth County Council, with funding from the Atlantic Philanthropies, to make County Louth Ireland’s first Age Friendly in 2008. Since then, the Ageing Well Network has continued to support the roll out of the AFCC Programme across the country.

On the closure of the Ageing Well Network at the end of 2013 the AFCC programme is set to be funded independently by Atlantic Philanthropies and to be hosted by a lead local authority.

**Links with the World Health Organisation (WHO)**

Ireland’s AFCC Programme is affiliated to the World Health Organisation’s Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities. This is part of an international effort by the WHO to address the twin global challenges of demographic ageing and urbanisation by focusing on the environmental, economic and social factors that contribute to active and healthy ageing in societies. The WHO has developed a Framework for assessing and developing age-friendly communities comprising eight interrelated elements. Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme has been developed using this framework.

Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities and Counties become affiliated to the WHO Global Network as they reach particular milestones in their age friendly journey.

**Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities & Counties**

There are now Age Friendly Cities and Counties in all four provinces in Ireland, all at varying levels of implementation: some are holding the first meeting of their Age Friendly Alliances, others are supporting creative Age Friendly projects. Although the AFCC Programme has a common structure that is used across all cities and counties, it is adapted to meet the very specific needs and aspirations of the local older people and therefore has developed in different and interesting ways across the country.

**Age Friendly In Action**

This section details a selection of initiatives and projects at work across the country bringing the Age Friendly concept to life.

These vibrant and innovative projects provide proof that becoming Age Friendly really does make a difference to the lives of people in the villages, towns and cities across Ireland. In the following pages you will find information on a selection of projects, groups and partnerships that all fall under the Age Friendly banner and are making a real difference in the lives of older people in cities and counties across Ireland.

These projects are grouped under nine key headings or Age Friendly Outcomes. Having heard the voices of thousands of older people to date, we have developed these outcomes based on what these older voices have told us matters most to them. In every city and county, the AFCC Programme strives to deliver change under each of these outcomes.
What was done

The Louth Citizen’s Information Service developed a booklet on services for older people, utilising an easy to use format that presents important information under key headings such as Supports for Living at Home, Supports for Nursing Home Care and Transport.

In addition, the Louth Age Friendly Communications Group was set up to take the data from the booklet and develop a website and communications model that would assist older people in accessing information easily and from their own homes.

This group consisted of key IT personnel from Louth County Council, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Louth Leader Partnership, HSE North East and older people. The website was designed to be used by older people, their families, frontline services and public services for older people (a “no wrong door” approach).

Older people were informed about the service via a business card with the Louth Age Friendly website address and a local phone number, as well as other key phone numbers, such as the Good Morning Call Service, Senior Help Line, HSE Lo-call and the CIT Information Line. To date, over 1000 cards have been distributed.

In addition, the Louth Older People’s Forum produced posters to promote the website and distributed them to GP waiting rooms, HSE outlets, Garda stations and churches. The use of photographs was instrumental in engaging older people to access the website.

The process was facilitated by the Louth Age Friendly Project Manager and older people were heavily involved at each stage. Older people developed content for the website, such as photographs and case studies to ensure a real world, user friendly style. The information from statutory agencies was validated by appointed people within the different agencies.

Finally, the website was tested with 70 older people in two IT classes for older people in Louth Leader Partnership and in DkIT Age Action classes. The website is now on the curriculum of all IT classes for older people delivered by LLP and Age Action in Louth.

Key achievements

The website has been recognised as a success to such an extent that other counties are planning to replicate it. The website is scalable due to the similarity in data content across the country and the simplicity of design and user interaction.

Through this initiative, strong connections have been developed across the private, public and educational research sectors which in turn have prompted extensive consultation with older people on a wide range of topics. Louth Age Friendly stakeholders are often approached for guidance on making a place age friendly.
In Kilkenny City and County, older people recognised that they did not have a formal collective voice, a platform for civic participation or a vehicle to influence local planning and other areas which affected their lives.

What was done

The group have been mandated by the Alliance to take responsibility for a number of commitments contained within the Age Friendly County strategy. They have championed a number of projects to date, including Victim Alliance and Senior Help Line. Over 80 older adults have signed up for membership of the council from all areas of the city and county, from both genders, and various socio-economic groups. The elected Executive of 14 people represents the views, priorities and needs of older people through continual consultation and engagement.

Key achievements

To date, the group has made a submission to the County Development Plan, consulted with Senior Planners and Access Officers, represented the views of older people at the Kilkenny Age Friendly Alliance, the Service Providers Forum, the Housing Action Group, and the City Planning Group.

Members have received a number of awards including Kilkenny Person of the Year. The Council has been the voice of Kilkenny’s older people at both local and national levels, and members have participated in a number of national TV and Radio programmes.

The Older People’s Council has provided a representative and knowledgeable voice to inform the Kilkenny Age Friendly goals and objectives. The Council has also ensured that a county strategy was developed with older people rather than for older people.

“I was very excited to be involved, it has re-ignited the fire in my belly”
Issue/Opportunity

Initial consultation found that there is a clear desire for improved accessibility and facilities for older people in Castleblayney. Issues with the built environment were highlighted, such as footpath widths, lack of rest areas and difficulty crossing at certain junctions. General speed of vehicular traffic within the town area was also cited as a problem, as was the use of mobile phones by motorists. Discussions have also revealed a concern with the general lack of appropriate signage, which can create confusion among older persons accessing the town by car and when attempting to locate essential services.

What was done

During the inception period, the team collated and reviewed the available background information, such as Census data and Development Plan strategies and policies. All essential services were identified through desktop research, confirmed on the ground and mapped. A walkability audit was completed by volunteers and has revealed specific issues that older persons face on a daily basis.

Key achievements

The Castleblayney Age Friendly Town Strategy aims to ensure that the Castleblayney town develops in a way that will enhance the quality of life for older people through a multi-agency approach. This joined-up approach prioritizes the delivery of a safe, secure and accessible built environment and facilitates access to essential services and supports for older people, while putting the person at the centre of Community Support and Health Services.

THE KEY OBJECTIVES IN CASTLEBLAYNEY:

- The provision of more accessible routes for older people
- Improved integration of public transport systems
- Intergenerational learning initiatives and activities
- Community participation by older people
- Campaign aimed at raising awareness of ageing in society
- Improved links with the business community in Castleblayney

”Locally the Older People’s Council are working to get the whole community involved in the process. We are also heartened to note that Castleblayney Urban District Council is endorsing the process. Patsy McArdle is promoting the activities as well which is encouraging. Altogether it is leading to a much greater pride of place within our community.”
Intergenerational Parks - Con Smith

REACH
☐ National
☒ Local

COUNTY Cavan

THEME
☒ Lead healthier & active lives for longer
☐ Stay living in our own homes and communities
☐ Get to where we need to go, when we need to
☒ Be enabled by the built and social environment
☐ Feel and be safe at home and out and about
☐ Have the information we need to live full lives
☐ Be truly valued and respected
☐ Participate in social, economic and public life
☐ Continue to learn, develop and work

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"Myself and few of the ladies from our knitting group walk around the track and then we use the Adult Exercise Equipment every week. My children are grown up now and they take their children to use the play park. It is a marvellous facility"

Issue/Opportunity
Initially, there was a lack of suitable amenity space for all ages, presenting the opportunity to develop a park to encourage greater physical activity in the local population.

What was done
Cavan County Council undertook phased development of Con Smith Park in Cavan town to meet the needs of all age groups in the community. Older people were consulted during the planning process for the park, which features an outdoor gym. This outdoor gym section for adults and older people won the Taoiseach’s Public Service Excellence Awards in 2010.

The development was co-funded through the Department of Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs as a pilot project (RAPID Areas). Other partners include HSE Health Promotion, Positive Age/ICA/Tullacmongan Golden Oldies, Cavan Sports Partnership, and the Cavan Lions Club.

The park also includes a children’s playground and accessible paths. It is within walking distance of the town and also features a 2km Slí na Sláinte Walk. The park was the site for a Family Fun Day in 2012 during the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann.

"The Older Women’s Network is delighted to endorse this initiative which provides older people with an opportunity to exercise in a healthy and innovative way and which also has the added bonus of providing social interaction and an opportunity to provide friendship and support"

Key achievements
- An amenity space was developed that is appealing to all age-groups.
- Facilities are now provided that encourage older people, and all adults, to be physically active.
- Each item of equipment is designed to improve coordination, heart rate and posture. All muscles within the body can benefit due to the variety of available equipment.
- It is easily accessible and has become a social outlet where families and neighbours utilise the equipment.
“I like the things here, I like the way you press a button and the cooker comes down to the level you want. I would love it to become my home”

**Issue/Opportunity**

Most older people wish to stay living in their own homes while having good access to health, social & community services. This access can be facilitated by equipping homes with smart technologies linked to services and providers.

**What was done**

Driven by a Working Group established under the Louth Strategic Alliance, a period of consultation was followed by a detailed process of development and fund-raising.

**A purpose-built development of sixteen ‘smart’ apartments to enable independent living and enhance quality of life.**

Sixteen apartments were designed and constructed specifically for Ambient Assisted Living (AAL) applications. Each apartment has 100+ sensors, connected TV’s, touch screen devices and a core network infrastructure throughout. It is also a research project: the Netwell Centre examines the impact of the housing on quality of life, and CASALA manages the technology, collates the data and adapts the systems to meet the unique needs of individual occupants. One apartment is maintained as a demonstration and transitional unit for people moving from acute based care, back to their homes.

**Key Achievements**

Fifteen of the apartments are occupied, with residents actively involved on research projects.

The development is a reference site for Irish, European and Global visitors. Ongoing research will inform national policy in relation to services for older people, and will offer a wide range of commercial applications.

The project was short-listed for the Engineers Ireland Excellence Awards 2011.
Louth Community Men’s Sheds

REACH
☐ National
☐ Local

COUNTY Louth

THEME
☐ Lead healthier & active lives for longer
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☐ Continue to learn, develop and work

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“The Men’s Shed gives you a great outlook on life. It has great activities. You get a chance to make new friends and there is no pressure whatsoever to participate - only if you want to. If you want you can just have a cup of tea and a chat. I’d encourage anyone to participate and give it a thumbs up all the way. Men only, of course!!”

Issue/Opportunity

Through consultation with older people, men were highlighted as a key group at risk of being vulnerable or isolated. The Louth Men’s Sheds project was initiated under the Louth Age-friendly Initiative to target men at risk of isolation or experiencing major life changes. The project is very simple and has one focus - men.

What was done

The ‘shed’ environment encourages men to share skills and learn new ones, for example, skills in wood turning, mechanical work and horticulture, to name but a few. Socialising is a large part of the project too, providing opportunities to develop new friendships, as well as renew old ones.

Under the age-friendly initiative, funding was sought from the International Fund for Ireland (IFI), allowing the shed programme to appoint a coordinator. They are now moving to a sustainable post-funding model that involves working in partnership with the key agencies to identify and access relevant supports.

Key achievements

- Three sheds across Louth have been developed to date with the support of a full time coordinator.

- The Dundalk shed is frequented by a close-knit group, ranging in age from 60 to 87 years. Although these men tend to be less physically active, they find great enjoyment in spending time together and working alongside each other.

- There are great social entrepreneurial activities going on in this shed, with the men generating a regular income from the sale of their goods.

- Each shed runs FETAC accredited courses in partnership with the Vocational Education al Committee (VEC).

- In total, approximately 200 men are attending sheds across the County.
Older people in the Fingal area made it clear when consulted that they want to stay fit and healthy for as long as they can, using local facilities to do so. As a result, we developed the Health, Fitness and Well Being Initiative.

Under the banner of the Fingal Age Friendly Strategy, the Sports Development Department in the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown worked in partnership with Fingal County Council and the members of the Fingal Senior Citizen’s Forum to develop this initiative.

What was done

The first phase of the initiative saw 50 older people from Dublin attend a 10-week course on health, fitness & well being. The course was designed by 4th Year sports students in consultation with older people, and as part of the course, each participant was challenged to follow an exercise regime tailored to their own needs.

For the second phase of the initiative, the 4th Year students developed a two-day course for 45 older people from around the county. This “taster day” course offered sessions on nutrition, horticulture and computers, as well as instruction on how to use gym equipment safely and demonstrations on using the Tone Zone equipment in local parks.

Key achievements

Not only has the programme improved the health and fitness levels of those who took part, but it provided a great social and intergenerational opportunity, as participants got to meet new people from all around the county, sharing in the fun and socialising together.

Participants also learnt how easy it is to exercise and keep fit with as little equipment as your kitchen chair or two bottles of water!
Issue/Opportunity
Westmeath Older Person’s Forum highlighted the need to address the risk of isolation and disengagement that a number of older people faced every day. Isolation could be caused by living alone, being confined at home due to illness or disability, living in a remote rural area, or lack of transport.

What was done
An inter-agency committee was formed to develop a response, which ultimately resulted in the formation of Cairdeas, a home visitation service. Launching the service involved comprehensive consultations, the development of a communication model, the recruitment and training of a corps of volunteers, and formation of a panel of older people who were interested in the project. Athlone Town was the first target area.

The service is partnership-led and involves the collaboration of a group of agencies, including Meals on Wheels, Helplink South, Westmeath County Council, An Garda Síochána, Athlone Community Services Council, Athlone Chamber of Commerce and Westmeath Community Development.

What is the Cairdeas Visitation Service?
The service offers a supportive friendly weekly visit to any older person over 60 years who is interested. To date participants value the weekly call which has helped improve feelings of self-worth and wellbeing and has helped develop social connections across the local community.

Key achievements:
The Cairdeas Visitation Service is an important example of successful inter-agency collaboration, and delivers a crucial support for older people at risk of isolation and disengagement. This has allowed some of these at-risk older people to remain living in their own homes, improving the social connections within the community and fostering an atmosphere of support and respect.
Issue/Opportunity

In the Fingal area, most of the bus and train routes are designed to take passengers to and from Dublin City Centre, and there are very few transport services that bring people to hospitals and health centres. As a result, many older people in the area often miss their hospital appointments, which presents a health risk for the older person and effects the smooth running of the hospital service.

What was done

This problem was highlighted during consultations with older people under Fingal’s Age Friendly County Programme. An innovative response was designed, which saw Fingal County Council partner with transport provider Vantastic Ltd to pilot a Door to Door Health Route for people over 65. This is a free local transport service for older people living in North East and South East areas of Fingal that offers transport to and from hospital and other medical appointments.

Key achievements

The service has been extremely popular, offering older people a stress-free way to travel to and from their appointments. The hospitals in the area have also benefited greatly from the service as there has been a notable reduction in missed appointments resulting from the service. It has improved well-being as well as health, since the older people using the service have no need to worry about getting the medical attention they need.

“If the Fingal Health Route pilot ended it would have drastic effects. I would not be able to attend my hospital appointments. Taxis cost up to 100 Euro. This service has taken a lot of worry off my mind.”
Crime Prevention Ambassadors

REACH
☑ National
☑ Local

COUNTY
Cavan, Meath & Monaghan Pilot

THEME
❑ Lead healthier & active lives for longer
❑ Stay living in our own homes and communities
❑ Get to where we need to go, when we need to
❑ Be enabled by the built and social environment
☑ Feel and be safe at home and out and about
❑ Have the information we need to live full lives
❑ Be truly valued and respected
❑ Participate in social, economic and public life
❑ Continue to learn, develop and work

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“It is great to able to help reduce the worries of the more vulnerable older people in my area”

Issue/Oppportunity
Many older people want to remain living in their own homes but fears around safety and security (whether in towns and villages, or more rural areas) can be a barrier to doing so. A suggested solution was the roll out of the Crime Prevention Ambassador programme to allow specially trained older people to visit and connect with more vulnerable older people.

What was done
The Crime Prevention Ambassadors initiative is essentially a peer program sharing crime prevention information that was developed at the National Community Policing Office. The volunteer Ambassadors provide information, give advice and raise awareness, thereby reducing any unwarranted fears. The initiative aims to support and empower older people to make greater use of available Garda resources, and so feel and be safer at home and in their communities.

To accomplish this initiative, the national Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme has had the full support of their partner, the National Community Policing Office. Assistance with volunteer recruitment and training has been given by Gardaí, Local Authority, Muintir Na Tire, Neighbourhood Watch, Older People’s Councils and other community organisations.

Key achievements
Between 10 and 20 volunteers are trained at a time, and then they visit as many older people in their communities as possible over a 6 month period, informing them on the best ways to stay safe and secure in their homes and who to contact if they have concerns.

This valuable initiative provides increased levels of awareness among older members of the community, improving their safety and wellbeing.
Text Alert Scheme

REACH
- National
- Local

COUNTY South Kildare

THEME
- Lead healthier & active lives for longer
- Stay living in our own homes and communities
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- Continue to learn, develop and work

CONTACT
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“I now feel I can do something about it if I have a concern”

Issue/Opportunity

Widespread concerns regarding security and safety in the home were found among the older people consulted, and particularly for people living in isolated, rural areas. In County Kildare, it was felt that more needed to be done to support older people to feel safer in their own homes.

What was done

With the support of the Kildare Age Friendly County programme, a Text Alert System was established to alert older people in rural areas to potential security issues in their locality and allow them to take necessary precautions. The system is run by a group of volunteers with the support of the local Gardaí.

When a member notices suspicious behaviour, they can alert other members and the Gardaí via text message. The system operates from 8 am to 10 pm, and outside of those hours if a serious incident has occurred.

Key achievements

Over 500 older people have now signed up to the alert system, and the system has yielded some great results so far. Specifically, a number of crimes have been prevented by Gardaí based on information received through this initiative, stolen materials have been recovered, and several arrests have occurred.

Older people using the system feel empowered to take action if they have a security concern.
Issue/Oppportunity

Through the 050 Network’s work plan, older people in Cavan identified a lack of information as a problem that limited their access to services and supports.

What was done

Cavan 050 Network worked with Cavan County Council and Cavan Citizens’ Information Service to develop an information booklet that catered specifically for the needs of older people in County Cavan. This booklet was distributed at a cross border conference for older people and through local networks.

This booklet incorporated a wide range of relevant information from both the Citizens’ Information Service and the Council. Information covered includes grants for housing, libraries, cultural services, planning information, road safety, pensions, and welfare entitlements such as Carer’s Allowance.

Key achievements

- A wealth of relevant and valuable information was disseminated in a useful and easy to use format.
- Cooperating on the booklet strengthened relationships between the 050 Network and other organisations, such as the local authority and Citizens Information Service, improving the prospects for future collaborations.
- Older people have improved access to helpful information that can help them lead full lives.
Issue/Opportunity
Consultation for the Fingal Age Friendly County Strategy revealed that many older people in Fingal had access to or owned a computer but were unsure how to use it for anything other than solitaire. While children of older people had bought them laptops to help them keep in touch, many were not being used for this purpose, and some older people were too nervous to even turn them on.

Other older people could already use computers but were keen to expand their knowledge, and learn how to carry out banking transactions, upload photographs and keep in touch online with friends and family living abroad.

What was done
Computer training courses tailored to the needs of older people were rolled out by Fingal County Council and Fingal Senior Citizen’s Forum in association with Digitise the Nation.

Digitise the Nation provided a mobile classroom with a tutor and 10 computers on board, while community centres and GAA clubs provided their car parks and electricity.

Over 120 older people availed of the computer training in Portmarnock, Skerries and Mountview over a three week period.

Key achievements
Participants learned how to get started with email and the internet, making it easier for them to stay in touch with family and friends. They learned how to use the internet to search for jobs, news and other information, and even to save money.

The course was designed to help build confidence and feel more included. Feedback from the participants following the training indicated that these objectives were achieved to the full. Not only did the participants learn a great deal about using computers, but they also had fun.
Clare Memories Project

REACH
- National
- Local

COUNTY
Clare

THEME
- Lead healthier & active lives for longer
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"By recording, the memories, experiences, customs, traditions and practices of the county from the local people’s own perspective, we are motivated by a sense of urgency, mindful that our current elderly population may represent the last link to an older way of life in Clare"

Issue/Opportunity

The current generation of older people are the last link to a vast wealth of Irish history and we realised that if we do not record their experiences and stories now, we risk them being lost forever.

What was done

Cuimhneamh an Chláir is an independent community-based organisation that records, archives and shares the memories, experiences and traditions that characterise County Clare. The group are motivated by a sense of urgency, mindful that our current elderly population may represent the last link to an older way of life in Clare. Cuimhneamh an Chláir provide a platform for the dissemination of the material they collect through co-operation with community groups, schools, third level institutions, and the broader public.

Cuimhneamh an Chláir works with local community groups to further develop their folklore collection and add to the archive. The next stage involves working with the Clare Older People’s Council and local schools to train them in digital media recording and thereby allow members of the Council to record the memories of older people in their local areas.

Collected material will be made available to current and future generations both in Ennis and with online content at www.clarememories.ie.

Cuimhneamh an Chláir believes that Clare’s oral traditions should be made available to the people of Clare and they hope to become a part of a broader national programme to record the voices of older people.

“When an old man dies, a library burns”

Key achievements

Since the establishment of Cuimhneamh an Chláir, over 475 of Clare’s older people have participated by sharing their memories and stories with this entirely voluntary group. This process has respect for older people at its core and fosters a culture of truly valuing each member of the community.
In My Shoes -
Arts Project

REACH
☐ National
☒ Local

COUNTY       Kildare

THEME
☐ Lead healthier & active lives for longer
☐ Stay living in our own homes and communities
☐ Get to where we need to go, when we need to
☐ Be enabled by the built and social environment
☐ Feel and be safe at home and out and about
☐ Have the information we need to live full lives
☐ Be truly valued and respected
☐ Participate in social, economic and public life
☐ Continue to learn, develop and work

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“I care for my elderly Mum who has Alzheimer’s dementia - having her involved with me in the project has created some wonderful memories, for which I am very grateful”

Issue/Opportunity

These are the words of one of the participants in the hugely successful ‘If you were in my shoes’ project, an arts project run by Nas Na Riogh Housing Association and other partners under the Kildare Age Friendly County banner.

What was done

The project brought together 50 participants from a range of backgrounds, older and younger, carers and school children, who worked together over a year to create a pair of bespoke felt slippers customised by each participant. Each pair of decorated slippers embodied the vitality, aspirations and creative talents of the individual participants.

In tandem with making the slippers, participants also shared their stories, observations and opinions on the world around them and a fascinating collection of knowledge and experience was created.

The participants were involved in both felt-slipper-making sessions with artists, and sharing work with a writer, and a ‘community of interest’ was formed over time.

“My husband and I have no family and therefore no grandchildren, we really enjoyed the whole process and it’s great now that when we meet the young people we can stop for a chat.”

Key achievements

The project had a huge affect on those who took part, many of whom had never realised that they had a creative side. The project was also a very emotional experience for many of the participants as the process of telling their story brought to mind treasured memories. The intergenerational aspect of the project created many lasting friendships between the young and the not so young, and even often forgotten carers could get involved.
Many older people feel that the generation gap between young and old is growing. They feel that they don’t have many opportunities to interact with younger people and as a result there is a lack of understanding and empathy between the generations.

In Ennis, Co. Clare, a group of enterprising Transition Year students took action to close this generational gap through a range of creative activities.

The students first carried out extensive research into the needs of the town’s older population, and as a result, set up a number of initiatives to help address those issues.

The pupils’ survey showed that 85% of older people felt unsafe crossing the road, so the students secured high-visibility jackets from the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to distribute to older people in the community.

In addition, the students provided computer lessons for the older people in the town in a programme called Log and Learn, and ran a grave-cleaning service for older people who are unable to tend the graves of their loved ones.

The work of the students has made significant changes for the older people in their town, while at the same time creating a strong bond between the generations. Not only did the pupils help to improve the town for older residents, but the process also brought about a heightened sense of respect and value, within the wider community, for the older population.

The students were nominated for the Young Social Innovators national award in 2012.

“Being a part of this project has really opened my eyes about what it means to get older. I never used to give it much thought, but now I am always on the look out and I’ll point out to whoever I’m with -‘look that pavement’s not very age friendly’ or ‘wouldn’t it be good if there was a bench there.’”

Issue/Opportunity
Representation of Older People

REACH
- National
- Local

COUNTY   Cavan

THEME
- Lead healthier & active lives for longer
- Stay living in our own homes and communities
- Get to where we need to go, when we need to
- Be enabled by the built and social environment
- Feel and be safe at home and out and about
- Have the information we need to live full lives
- Be truly valued and respected
- Participate in social, economic and public life
- Continue to learn, develop and work

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“It is great to know that my voice will be heard and acted upon at local level”

Issue/Opportunity
Older people in Cavan were not formally represented on local planning or decision making structures and had no representative voice at local level.

What was done
Cavan 050 Network secured nominations for older people onto the Cavan Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) Group and the 050 Chair is also now represented on Cavan Community Forum. This now means that older people are formally represented at policy level, via the SIM Group for example, and at community level, through Cavan Community Forum.

Key achievements
Older people are now formally represented in Cavan in a variety of committee structures.

The Cavan Older People’s Council has been established, facilitating the representation of a large number of older people and stimulating even more activity under the Age Friendly programme.

Cavan has hosted a cross border conference on older people’s issues, contributing to the discussions and informing the policy debate at national level.
The Age & Opportunity ‘Ageing with Confidence’ programme offers a self-development, holistic approach to ageing issues for older people. The programme cost of €3000-5000 can, however, be prohibitive for some older people groups. Kilkenny Age Friendly County developed a new social model for the delivery of this learning and development programme, after examining its key benefits for older people and their communities.

**What was done**

Kilkenny Age Friendly County Programme recruited and trained 15 older volunteers to deliver the programme to groups of older people. Over an eight week period, these volunteers completed the training provided by Age & Opportunity. Using a new model of delivery, the volunteers undertook to provide and deliver the programme free of charge to groups of older people, building confidence, exploring their own ageing and considering their next phase.

**Key achievements**

To date, fifteen volunteers have been trained and eight group programmes have been delivered. As a result, some 80-100 people have benefited from taking the Ageing with Confidence training.

Both the participants and the volunteers have benefited by becoming more proactive and engaged in their local communities and the Kilkenny age friendly programme, and the volunteers have continued to learn and develop as part of a national network of trained facilitators.

More courses have been requested for 2013.

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"Ageing with Confidence made me realise that I am in charge of my life, nobody else, and I should get out there and try new things."
Capacity Building for Older People

REACH
- National
- Local

COUNTY
- Cavan

THEME
- Lead healthier & active lives for longer
- Stay living in our own homes and communities
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- Be enabled by the built and social environment
- Feel and be safe at home and out and about
- Have the information we need to live full lives
- Be truly valued and respected
- Participate in social, economic and public life
- Continue to learn, develop and work

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"Older People are now being given more opportunities to engage with each other and to participate more meaningfully in public life."

Issue/Opportunity
In County Cavan, older people made it clear when consulted that they wanted to get involved in advocacy work and promote the Age Friendly approach. But to do this type of work they would need support and training to develop the necessary skills.

What was done
The Cavan 050 Network, which is the Older People’s Council in County Cavan, working with Age and Opportunity’s ‘Get Vocal’ Programme, were able to employ a support worker and offer a range of training sessions to interested local older people.

Older people received training in areas such as communications, media awareness, age friendly auditing, team building and planning, setting up a website, and listening skills. They also received training from Citizens Information Service on being an information provider.

Key achievements
The older people who took part in this training programme found that it gave them an opportunity to engage with their community on issues that concerned them on a local level.

Older people organised and took part in various types of training to help strengthen their capacity to carry out Age Friendly work in the county.

The training led to some very practical outcomes, such as Age Friendly Audits of local towns.
Working towards an Age Friendly County

REACH
- National
- Local

COUNTRY Cavan

THEME
- Lead healthier & active lives for longer
- Stay living in our own homes and communities
- Get to where we need to go, when we need to
- Be enabled by the built and social environment
- Feel and be safe at home and out and about
- Have the information we need to live full lives
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“This innovative approach gives older people a voice in the decision-making process”

Issue/Opportunity

A long held objective of the Cavan 050 Network has been to remove the physical and social barriers that prevent the full participation of older people in the social, economic and cultural life of their communities— in other words, to make Cavan an Age Friendly County.

What was done

Firstly, it was necessary to determine how age-friendly our communities were and to identify the main issues. Needs analysis research was conducted by the 050 Network in 2008, followed by the ‘Working Towards an Age-Friendly County’ research. This informed the development and implementation of an Age-Friendly County Strategy, which was developed in close co-operation with Cavan County Council, Cavan Community Forum, Cavan Community Development Board and other relevant agencies.

As part of the research programme two pilot age-friendly audits were carried out in Kilnaleck and Killeshandra in 2011-2012, using the World Health Organisation’s Global Age Friendly Cities Guide and the Canadian Age Friendly Rural and Remote Communities Guide as a framework. Older people (network members and local older people) conducted the audits themselves, aligning with the age friendly ethos that older people participate at every level of society.

Key achievements

The completed report not only formed the basis for a development strategy for Cavan, but it can also be used as a toolkit to audit communities nationwide. It will be an invaluable tool for policy makers and planners alike.

In order to implement meaningful policies, strategies or programmes, it is imperative to accurately determine the specific needs of older people and this report has achieved this very effectively.