

social participation

communication & information

civic participation & employment

community support & health services

respect & social inclusion

housing

transportation

outdoor spaces & buildings

meath
Age Friendly County

Meath Age Friendly

First Annual Report

2015



comhairle chontae na mí
meath county council





Chair Michael Finnegan

Foreword

The Meath Age Friendly Alliance is delighted to introduce the first annual report on the Meath Age Friendly County Initiative. The report reflects a significant amount of achievements made within a short period of time showing evidence of the cooperation and support and continued commitment of the partners within the alliance.

The report details the development of the Age Friendly Initiative in Meath, the consultation process prior to the strategy development and the establishment of the Older Peoples forum now known as the Laterlife network. It is designed to reflect the achievements and performance under the eight framework programmes.

Underpinning the Age Friendly work programme are the thematic working groups comprising of representatives from the alliance who worked together with older persons to deliver a specific action, such as achieving rural transport efficiencies or training crime prevention ambassadors. The information and communication working group identified a new website for developing and populating of information that can be easily accessible by the older people.

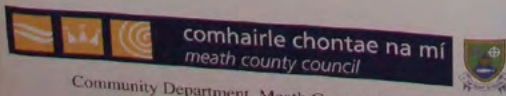
The alliance is confident that by listening to the voice of the older people, that agencies can work together on exploring and utilising existing resource allocation that will bring maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

Meath is proud to be part of the National Age Friendly Counties programme.



World Health Organisation Themes

- ✿ Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
- ✿ Transportation
- ✿ Housing
- ✿ Social Participation
- ✿ Respect & Social Inclusion
- ✿ Civic Participation & Employment
- ✿ Communication & Information
- ✿ Community Support & Health Services



Community Department, Meath County Council,

Meath Age Friendly County

Introduction

This is the first annual report of the Meath Age Friendly county alliance on the Meath Age Friendly county initiative. The initiative was launched in Summerhill community centre on 20th September 2011 by Mr Shane McEntee, T.D Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture. This launch followed the inaugural meeting of the Meath Age Friendly alliance. At this meeting the alliance gave a commitment to base the strategy on the eight themes of the World Health Organisation (W.H.O)

An Cathaoirleach Councillor Eoin Holmes on behalf of Meath and its citizens signed the Age Friendly communities declaration at City Hall, Dublin on Wednesday 28th September 2011. This declaration now known as the Dublin declaration was endorsed by the World Health Organisation.

The Age Friendly programme is based on the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age-Friendly cities framework and guidelines global study in 2006/2007 which was developed by 33 cities across the world and involved major consultation with older people in each of those places. Following the establishment of the WHO global network of Age-friendly communities, the national organisation (the national programme) was tasked with delivering a national programme in Ireland - the Age Friendly county initiative. Louth became the pilot under the guidance of Louth County Council. This pilot was adopted as the initiative with a view to using the model in other counties.

The **World Health Organisation** (WHO) defines an 'Age Friendly' community as:

“ one in which service providers, public officials, community leaders, faith leaders, business people and citizens recognise the great diversity among older persons, promote their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life, respect their decisions and lifestyle choices, and anticipate and respond flexibly to ageing- related needs and preferences. In an age-friendly community, policies, programmes, services and infrastructure related to the physical and social environment are designed to enable older people to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate in society in a meaningful way.”

Meath Age Friendly County Strategy

The Meath Age Friendly county strategy document was launched by Michael O' Muircheartaigh in Trim on 16th July, 2012 following extensive consultation with the older persons around issues that affect them in Meath.

The vision outlined in this strategy and the actions to deliver on the vision will require commitment by the alliance members in the coming years to ensure the maximum can be achieved. The strategy recognises a need for improvements to outdoor spaces, buildings, transport and housing. Other areas also identified included respect, social inclusion, social participation, civic participation, employment, community support and health services. The strategy was based on consultation with the Older People so we need to continue listening and communicating with them to ensure achievement of the strategy.

Meath Age Friendly Alliance

The Meath Alliance consists of senior personnel representing the Local Authority, the Health Service Executive, Louth Meath Education Training Board, An Garda Síochána, Meath Partnership, NUI Maynooth, Netwell Centre, Dundalk, Flexibus, Ageing Well Network, Third Age Foundation and Older People's forum representatives. The role of the Alliance is to oversee the implementation of the county strategy.

Older People's Forum

The role of the forum is to create a place where the voices of older people are heard. The forum which is known as the Laterlife network is facilitated by Meath Partnership with an executive committee in place. Representatives from each electoral area sit on the executive, together with members from the Men's Shed, Active Retirement Ireland, Irish Countrywomen's association, the Carers association and Nursing Homes in the county. Two members of the network also sit on the alliance and members are also represented on the three working groups of the alliance.

1 Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

What you said were the challenges

- A lack of small parks or community buildings for holding social events
- Not enough resting areas or public toilets in towns and villages
- More public lighting within towns/villages and in public facilities
- Pedestrian crossings are lacking in towns/villages with timings at some crossings an issue
- A need for consultation between agencies when choosing and planning sites for purpose built buildings

There is ongoing progress with upgrading public buildings to allow for better accessibility to these. Automatic front doors have been installed in council district offices and a new lift was also provided in County Hall.

The libraries throughout the county are being upgraded with toilets, ramps with hand rails replaced and shelving and counters lowered in other branches.

As part of the council's annual road-works programme, footpaths are being made more accessible by dropping kerbs to provide and improve road crossing points for pedestrians.

A presentation has been given at each of the six municipal district meetings to raise awareness among the councillors of the strategy and how best they can get involved in their area.



2 Transportation

What you said were the challenges

- A need to extend the Flexibus service throughout the county
- Public transport can be difficult to access or don't go where we want it to go
- Public Transport can be expensive for the older person on a pension
- Service providers need to connect up all the rural transport routes in the county
- Transport service providers don't always understand the needs of older people

Conduct a Transport Survey

A sub committee consisting of representatives from the various transport service providers was set up to carry out a survey of transport needs in the county. The survey included identifying transport service needs, existing transport services and examined the integration and expansion of some of these services.

Flexibus has extended its service to link with the HSE hospital service originating from Cavan that serves Kells, Navan, Trim and Dunshaughlin to transport passengers with accessible needs attending the mainline hospitals.

In line with the Smarter Travel policy by government, Meath County Council is actively working with the National Transport Authority (NTA) to seek a new bus hub in Navan. This will improve accessibility to public transport and improve quality of life which is a key objective of the policy.

Progress has also been made over the last two years with twenty new bus stops installed by the council in conjunction with the NTA and Bus Éireann.

The Meath Road Safety officer along with the Gardaí and the Road Safety Association (RSA) continue to roll out presentations to groups which include the elderly. These are rolled out to over 10,000 recipients per year which includes over 1,000 elderly persons. This has resulted in a significant reduction in fatalities and injuries on Meath roads and the challenge now is to maintain and improve on these statistics.



3 Housing

What you said were the challenges

- Access to supports to help us remain and live independently in our own homes
- Information on grants to adapting the home as people get older
- A need for information to access reputable tradesmen to carry out home maintenance
- Older people need more choice of housing types
- Many older people do not feel safe in their homes with a need for information sharing on security systems
- A need for more integration of generations within purpose built housing estates

Community Safety

The community Gardaí continue to be more visible in the community and giving advice to older persons groups regarding security and safety in the home. They will continue to share this information through the community alert schemes and Muintir Na Tíre and it can also be progressed through the Joint Policing Committee (JPC).

The crime prevention initiative was rolled out by An Garda Síochána in 2013. The success of the pilot is attributed to An Garda Síochána engaging with local older people. Each of the crime prevention ambassadors were recruited and trained locally. In turn the trained ambassadors paired up to visit older people in their community on a peer to peer basis, with the objective of ensuring that older people can feel safe and secure in their own homes and continue living in their own homes. The key to this success has been working in partnership, led by An Garda Síochána and supported by Ireland's Age Friendly Cities & Counties programme, Muintir na Tíre and the older people themselves.

Over twenty two older people in Meath have been trained by the Gardaí as crime prevention ambassadors. The assistant garda commissioner awarded each ambassador with a certificate at a launch event on the 3rd December 2013. This event acknowledged the dedication of the volunteers involved in delivering vital crime prevention advice to older people in the community.

The scheme is currently being evaluated, and upon completion it is hoped that it will then be rolled out nationally.



4 Respect and Social Inclusion

What you said were the challenges

- Limited opportunities for older people to interact with younger people
- Older people want to take part and be recognised as having a valuable role within society and be equal to other members of society
- There is negative attitude or image of older people within society which needs to change

Age Friendly Initiatives run by the Library and Arts

The Library and Arts department run various initiatives ranging from knitting, gardening, drama to musical memories.

The 'Dawn Chorus' was an intergenerational choir event held by the council in May 2013. This was part of the Bealtaine celebrations and took place on the Hill of Tara. Over three hundred people participated in the event and the intergenerational choir was made up of the Third Age centre active retirement group, Navan male choir, Kilmessan church choir, St Joseph's NS, Navan, St Peters college, Dunboyne parents choir from St Oliver's NS, Navan, Scoil Colmcille NS, Skryne, Moynalvey NS choir and Meath County Council staff choir.

Older Persons Baseline Survey

In September 2011 Meath Partnership recruited local researcher's mainly older people to carry out a baseline study capturing the views and opinions of over 55's living in county Meath. The report titled 'Shaping the Future' identified a number of gaps in cultural, recreational and leisure facilities for older people in Meath. One of the key recommendations was to improve the range and type of activities available to older people through their local clubs and community centres. In direct response to this need, in 2012, Meath Partnership working with the Laterlife network applied for a LEADER grant and introduced 'On the Go.' This facilitated the purchase of a range of recreational and leisure equipment for groups and provided access to a variety of new recreational activities to the over 55's in the county.

Nineteen community locations across the county benefited from this equipment grant. The provision of this equipment encouraged older people to engage in local community-based recreational activities currently not available to them thus improving well-being, social interaction and addressing issues of isolation and inactivity. The types of equipment purchased included; board games, bocchia, yoga mats, bingo equipment, painting equipment, table tennis, bowls and pool tables.

Mens Shed's

Meath Partnership supports six Men's Shed projects in County Meath, namely in Moynalty, Summerhill, Navan, Broomfield, Dunshaughlin and Athboy. The Men's Shed members have ownership of the project and decide their own programme of activities. Members come together on a weekly basis to socialise, help their community and collaborate on projects. Some local initiatives that participants have been involved in, included projects to assist the local tidy towns committee with making flower boxes and bird houses, making props and painting backdrops for local plays or attending to the local community garden.

Laterlife Network

In 2012 Meath Partnership established the Laterlife network and hosts network events on an annual basis to consult with older people throughout the county. An executive committee of fifteen people has been elected to act in a representative capacity for older people in Meath. A facilitator assists in developing the capacity and skills of the committee and to guide and advise them in their activities. The committee meets on a monthly basis. Two members of the network sit on the age friendly alliance and thus have a direct role in advising and providing feedback and suggestions to the alliance members.

5 Social Participation

What you said were the challenges

- Removing services from villages and towns will isolate and reduce social interaction among older people
- Loneliness and isolation is common among older people where there is a lack of access to services and social events

Bealtaine Festival

The arts office and library services run an extensive programme to celebrate the Bealtaine festival each May with creative workshops, talks, music concerts, exhibitions, touring theatre and a flash mob dance project in many of their branches.

Intergenerational Initiatives

The Third Age foundation runs intergenerational initiatives with a number of schools. One initiative saw volunteers teach knitting to pupils in national schools. Another initiative was run in Kilcock with transition year students learning how to dance. This was so successful it was rolled out again in September. The 'Way We Were' programme is an initiative by older persons exhibiting artefacts in schools and nursing homes which is ongoing over the last number of years.





6 Communication and Information

What you said were the challenges

- Too much reliance on sharing computer based information which is
- inaccessible to many older people
- A communications strategy is required using local newsletters, local radio to ensure coverage across the county
- Information is complex and always changing and difficult to understand
- Care workers who are trusted by older people are a great resource for giving information on services if trained to do so

Communication through the Laterlife Network

The Laterlife network was set up following a study of older persons and their needs and issues. The committee have been proactive in communicating through their network meetings, newsletters, press releases and interviews on LMFM radio. The Laterlife network has a website: www.connectinlaterlife.eu and a facebook page.

Meath Partnership facilitates and co-ordinates the committee's activities and hosts an annual showcase event with agencies and service providers promoting a range of social, recreational and educational opportunities available to older people in the county.

IT Initiatives

The Library ran a number of IT courses in conjunction with Age Action Ireland and also with Google in which the 'Silver Surfer' was run to encourage older people to learn new computer skills. Google donated six notebooks which are available for use in the library to any group wishing to improve their skills.

Meath Partnership also provided beginner and improver computer training to older persons. In 2012, 408 persons received training, 137 in 2013 and 220 in 2014.

One issue that was identified amongst older people was an overwhelming desire for a central location for information. This therefore became an important deliverable of the Age Friendly programme. One of the first actions was to set up a working group who would facilitate the development of the Meath Age Friendly website. This would form part of the national website which had county specific pages already developed. The working group met to agree the functionality and assign tasks for the collation of information for the website as each county had to take responsibility for populating their own pages and to ensure their information is up-to-date. The aim of the website is to be the one-stop-shop for information for older people www.agefriendly.ie

The Crime Prevention Officer operates a slot on LMFm radio every week to give updates on what is happening throughout the county and a facebook page is in operation which reaches out to over 60,000 persons a week.



7 Civic Participation and Employment

What you said were the challenges

- Lack of a forum or a representative organisation to connect older people and problem solve
- A need to identify and include older people who find it difficult to engage especially men
- There is limited accessibility to physical activity programmes
- Training opportunities for older people following retirement are extremely important
- Many older people have good ideas and are interested in starting their own business but due to costs are not sure if it is worth it
- Older people are restricted in gaining employment or getting involved with voluntary organisations due to their role minding grandchildren
- There is a stronger need for inclusion of older people on decision making boards and all ages should be represented

Civic Participation

Laterlife executive committee members have undertaken a lot of training to support them in developing the required skills and knowledge to represent older people in the county. Training included, building media relations, age equality workshop, participation & leadership workshop, ageing with confidence training, change & social analysis workshop which focused on enabling social change, communicating with the media workshop, human rights workshop, public speaking, to name but a few.

The executive committee have participated in a number of consultations with the HSE including the HSE listening day in November 2014, the Beaumont Age Friendly hospital consultation and Our Lady's hospital Navan walkability survey in December 2014.

Members have attended a number of conferences including the 'Caring & Sharing Our Resources' conference in Drogheda and 'Only the Lonely' in Dublin. Some members also attended the launch of the Cavan Age Friendly strategy and attended the signing of the Dublin declaration on Age Friendly Cities and Communities in 2012.

The Executive Committee has also undertaken a number of study visits to the Netwell centre at Dundalk Institute of Technology, to the MacAuley Place in Naas and visited Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Older Persons forum. The Laterlife network also hosted a visit from PAUL partnership in Limerick in relation to establishing an older person's forum there.

Older People's Local Sports Programme

Meath Local Sports Partnership endeavour to support the increase in participation in sport and physical activity of older people in Meath. In 2014, 1,575 older adults participated in the following programmes.

Mature movers is an eight week programme that includes activities such as movement for life, resistance training with resistance bands, core stability, balance, fall prevention, seated pilates and bowls.

The Games for Life programme is to provide boccia, kurling, flisk, bowls and box hockey equipment at a reduced cost and training in these games to older people, community groups, and disability groups.

Fitness Made Easy is a five-week gym based programme which will include an introduction to the easyline equipment and the cardiovascular machines like the treadmill, bike and cross-trainer. The programme is tutor led and participants will get the opportunity to exercise as a group within the gym environment.



8 Community Support and Health Services

What you said were the challenges

- There is a need to improve accessibility to hospitals and clinics
- With reductions in home help support, a need to make people aware of other supports to help remain living independently within their own home
- Adequate access to services with no delays in obtaining benefits e.g when a spouse passes away
- A need for older people to be educated by way of courses and information sessions on topics including housing, legal advice, fire prevention
- Breast check screening needs to be extended to include all ages
- In the event of severe weather vulnerable older people should have an immediate contact and be secure in knowing they have meals and heat

Health Services

There are five HSE day centres in Meath which are nurse led offering 115 day places with two of the centres offering a physiotherapy service.

Day care service provides assessment, health screening, care and support in order to promote and assist people living at home.

In Dunshaughlin day centre a multidisciplinary rehabilitation service for clients post a recent stroke or having a recent diagnosis of parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis or motor neuron disease was set up and opened in January 2013. The multidisciplinary team consists of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech & language therapy and nursing.

Meath services for Older People engage with voluntary organisations and state services that provide citizen information and crime prevention talks to clients that attend the day centres

The HSE continue to support community lead projects across the county such as advocacy services, local meals on wheels in a large number of local towns as well as the Alzheimer society with local arrangements in Navan and Oldcastle.

In November, 2014 the HSE appointed an integrated care clinical nurse specialist for diabetic patients to support local GP's in the care of diabetic patients in the community. In December 2014 two podiatrists were put in place to provide community based services to all patients with a high risk foot which eliminated the need for in patient treatment in a hospital.

Message in a Bottle

Message in a bottle is an initiative supported by the council. A small clear plastic bottle containing information on personal details and medical conditions is kept in the persons' fridge and a sticker is placed on an outside window or door to assist the emergency services. These bottles are also known as Personal Information Packs (PIPs) and are available at chemists and health centres.

The council has continued to distribute smoke alarms to the older persons under the Community Smoke Alarm scheme through the Fire Department and at Age Friendly events.



Kells Age Friendly Business Town

The alliance nominated Kells to be an Age Friendly Business Town in 2013.

The Economic section of the council along with Kells Chamber of Commerce progressed this initiative. 138 businesses were advised of the scheme with 33 businesses now signed up.

An Age Friendly business can provide a service such as home delivery, refreshments, discounts, wheelchair access and waiting areas.

A Kells Age Friendly Business Directory has also been compiled and distributed which identifies the businesses that are signed up and what they have to offer to the Older Person.

This scheme has been nominated in the 2015 Chambers Ireland Promoting Economic Development awards in the category of excellence in Local Government.

Trim Age Friendly Town

The alliance nominated Trim to be an Age Friendly Town in 2013 with a steering committee set up comprising of various agencies.

Age Friendly Ireland facilitated the process by supplying a planner to collate data, consult with older persons and agencies and carry out a walk ability audit of the town with wheelchair users, volunteers and carers.

An action plan was drafted in line with the data collated from audit with the committee progressing with the actions outlined in the plan.





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