Making our communities safe for older adults in Cavan and Monaghan

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

"Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be." Robert Browning (1812-1889)

Feeling safe and secure at home is important for people of all ages but it becomes particularly important for people as they grow older, offering them “peace of mind” in the face of increasing vulnerability. In 2002, the United Nations (UN) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was adopted. The concept underpinning it encourages active ageing by optimising opportunities for promoting health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age (WHO, 2007). To this end, the drive to establish ‘age-friendly’ communities commenced in 2006, when the WHO developed the ‘Global Age-Friendly Cities Project to bring together communities’ from around the world that were interested in supporting healthy ageing by becoming more age friendly. The underlying rationale prompting the movement was that rendering communities more age-friendly would be an effective local policy approach for responding to the challenges of demographic ageing.

As part of this movement, counties Cavan and Monaghan are taking steps to become more age friendly and one part of this process involves carrying out research to investigate older people’s concerns about their safety and security. For this, questionnaires were used to collect data from 382 respondents in order to give older people an opportunity to voice their concerns. This also allows them to be included in the decision-making process that will affect them and other older people well into the future, particularly in the context of increasing levels of demands on services due to the ageing profile of the populations in both counties.

Fear of crime among older people varies hugely in degree. Nevertheless, it is clear that it can have far-reaching implications for an individual’s health and well-being and that ultimately it can be detrimental to quality of life. The findings from this research suggest that the quality of life of the majority of respondents has not been adversely affected by crime. However, a quarter of all respondents gave evidence that they avoid travelling after certain times of day, which suggests the existence of social anxiety and the use of avoidance strategies among this group.
The recommendations derived from this study are set out below:

**Recommendation 1**

It is recommended that community safety schemes should be supported at a local level to empower people with knowledge on how to keep their personal belongings and property safe. This is particularly important given that half of all respondents stated they did not attend any meetings concerning the discussion of safety issues.

**Recommendation 2**

It is recommended that leaflets providing information on safety should be left in churches, shops and GP surgeries where the general public can easily access them as the majority of respondents visited these places on a regular basis.

**Recommendation 3**

It is recommended that the Gardaí should continue to encourage older people to register their details on the Older Persons Register. It is operational in each of the Garda Districts and there is the opportunity to expand on this initiative through on-going consultation with older people. This register is also useful in providing information on the geographical spread of where older populations are concentrated.

**Recommendation 4**

The Councils should explore opportunities for providing people living in counties Cavan and Monaghan with a mobile library as the majority of respondents never visited their local library and this is a service that can be utilised to enable people to feel connected with their community.

**Recommendation 5**

It is recommended that transport in rural areas continues to be a priority for agencies involved in the Cavan and Monaghan Alliance. Special efforts should be made to extend the hours and routes of services to meet the needs of isolated older people.
Recommendation 6

It is recommended that older people are made aware of the possible dangers of cold calling and frauds, such as emails requesting bank account details, since a high number of respondents stated that they have access to the internet and a telephone.
Introduction and scope of study

The *Irish Age Friendly Counties Programme* is an initiative of Age Friendly Ireland (originally named the Ageing Well Network (AWN)¹), an independent network of leaders, heads of organisations and strategic thinkers who share a vision of “making Ireland one of the best countries in the world in which to grow old”. The programme is aligned to the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) *Age Friendly Cities Programme*, which is operational in 33 towns and cities across the world. This global initiative developed in response to changing demographic trends and a desire to be more inclusive of the growing cohort of older people in our population and to be prepared for increasing future demands on services.

In Ireland, county-level structures for ‘age-friendly’ work take the form of Alliances between statutory agencies, older peoples’ community groups and non-government organisations. These Alliances work together to research local needs, identify solutions, develop a local action plan and jointly implement actions, a process that relies on the participation of older people at every stage. Alliances operate using a sub-group structure, which incorporates experts from diverse fields who are invited to support the work on a thematic basis.

The delivery of local-level strategies is also supported by an Older Person’s Forum in each county. This representative group comprises of both older people and spokespeople from other sectors. The Forum nominates representatives to constitute the Alliance and its members are also involved in the Alliance sub-groups. These structures facilitate the identification and delivery of priorities and actions at local level and support the development of national policy debates.

In Ireland, the *Age-Friendly Counties Programme* has been adopted by 18 counties so far and the Age Friendly Ireland network aims to secure a commitment from every county in Ireland to become age-friendly. While each county follows the eight themes of the WHO Cities and Counties programme, the priorities may differ from county to county.

¹ The Ageing Well Network has changed its name to Age Friendly Ireland in 2013
This report is concerned with the Age-Friendly Programmes in Cavan and Monaghan. It stemmed from a consultation process with the forums established in both counties to engage older people in policy-making and implementation. Through this consultation process, older people identified the need to explore issues around safety and security both in the home and in the wider community. Cavan and Monaghan Alliances subsequently commissioned this study and requested that it included recommendations based on its findings.
Review of literature

Research shows that older people report more crime-related anxieties than younger people. In practice, however, statistics based on age reveal that older people are less likely to be the victims of crime than members of other age groups. Farrall et al. (2009) speculate that the reason older people have greater crime-related anxieties may be attributed to their sense of physical vulnerability and the resultant fear that they may not be able to defend themselves against attack. This is described by Garland as ‘the fear paradox’ (2001, as cited in Farrall et al. 2009). Older people’s fear of crime may therefore constitute an expression of the anxiety they feel about living in a risk environment. Their fear of crime might also relate to broader concerns about the health of society and its overall perceived social and moral decline (Farrall et al. 2009). Evidence also points to the relationship between fear of crime and lack of sufficient resources to equip the home with even modest safety features.

There are inconsistencies between Irish people’s concerns about crime and the actual corresponding statistics for crimes committed. The figures show a discrepancy that indicates the public have excessive concerns about their personal safety and security. Furthermore, O’Connell (1999) highlighted that the Irish public have a high level of fear of crime even though crime rates in Ireland are relatively low when compared with other European countries. A study conducted by Reese (2009) using a sample of 1,800 people living in Ireland, which, at that time, had a crime rate of just over 20%, found that the number of people reporting fear of crime was just over double the actual crime rate (42%). In this context, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) has implemented a household survey that includes a Crime Victim Survey. This survey was developed to counteract the problem of non-reporting of crimes. The household survey carried out in Ireland in 2010 found that a very high proportion, 83%, of people reported that crime in Ireland was both a ‘serious’ and a ‘very serious’ problem. According to the National Crime Council statistics gathered in 2010, there is a significant contrast between the younger and older age groups in relation to the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. Less than 2% of older people have been the victim of crime, with those aged between 18 and 24 years were more than four times more likely to fall victim to crime. While the figures confirm that older
people are less likely to be the victims of crime, they were most likely to report fear of crime.

The relationship between fear of crime and actual crime is complex. Irish crime rates began to fall in 2007 and 2008, coinciding with the economic downturn. Yet, in the Cavan/Monaghan Garda divisional region, burglary rates have increased by 26% (CSO, 2011). This is in spite of the fact that Cavan and Monaghan have the lowest property crimes nationally (CSO, 2010). *The Statistical Yearbook of Ireland* states that, in 2009, nearly 40% of burglaries were recorded in the Dublin Metropolitan region, which is a substantial proportion in comparison to the rest of the country. The decrease in crime rates may in reality reflect lower detection rates or it may be due to non-reporting of crimes to the Gardaí. The high increase in property crimes may indicate that there is no longer a geographical boundary in relation to crime. Increased accessibility via motorways has made it possible for criminal gangs to target rural areas. Increasing the Garda presence in such areas may have a role to play in alleviating the fear of crime. In this regard, research carried out in European Union member states found that ensuring that law enforcers have a strong visible presence in the community reduces crime-related anxieties (Building Research Establishment Ltd, 2004). In relation to the property crimes perpetrated, it should be noted that the regions with the lowest rates were the Border, the West and the South-West, each at a figure of 6% (CSO, 2010).
Description of methodology

An application for ethical clearance to carry out the field research was sent to the Ethical Committee in Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) and was subsequently approved. The period of data collection was mid-September 2013 to January 2014. Questionnaires were used to facilitate the gathering of information from older adults regarding their experiences and concerns about crime. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of items relating to details of both direct and indirect prior experience of crime and also their fear of crime. The final questions consisted of items relating to socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender, level of education etc. A question on income was included to explore the relationship between income and factors of household security (e.g. whether an alarm has been fitted to the home) and the implications (e.g. how safe respondents feel in the home). The researcher took time to explain why this question was included in the survey and to assure respondents that this information was being kept strictly confidential and would be reported anonymously.

Data collection was organised in advance by grouping the older people participating and took place at the most suitable time for each group. The researcher informed them personally that there were no right or wrong answers. The information was collected with the knowledge and expressed willingness of the participants because an information sheet was included with each of the surveys. This explained what the information would be used for and gave assurances that the personal information they provided would remain anonymous and would only be used for research purposes. Participants were invited to express their views at the end of the survey. To protect the privacy of each participant, the consent form was separated from the questionnaire, which was facilitated by coding the surveys to the corresponding consent forms. The responses to each question of every questionnaire were analysed with the aid of the Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 20).
Research findings

Table 1, below, presents information on respondents by gender, age, marital status, education, and income. Socioeconomic information is particularly important for development of strategies of that seek to improve life across a broad range of areas for all older people, including the most vulnerable.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of sample

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<tr>
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<td>60-69</td>
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<td>70-79</td>
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<td>90-99</td>
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<td>Widowed</td>
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<td></td>
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[Note: Missing one respondent's age].
Socio-economic characteristics

The sample was largely female, comprising 261 (69%) older women. While this is not surprising as women tend to live longer than men, it does point to a gendered dimension which should be considered by both Alliances. For example, for those women who live alone, particularly the ‘oldest’ old, there is a body of evidence which suggests they are more likely not to drive and to experience financial hardship. Gender should therefore be considered by both Alliances in the implementation of any initiative which flow from this research. Indeed, gender differences in the needs of older people in both counties should be considered for further research in the future.

A question on income was included to explore relationship between income and factors of household security (e.g. whether an alarm has been fitted to the home) and the implications (e.g. how safe respondents feel in the home). Analysis revealed that the majority of respondents had taken safety measures to protect their homes, with just 11% having no safety equipment fitted in the home. For this group however, affordability may play a role as nearly three quarters (71%) had an income of less that €20,000 per annum. In relation to respondents’ sense of safety, income was not found to be statistically significant.

Money, while it cannot buy happiness, is an important means to reaching higher living standards. The relationship between income and married couples versus widows was analysed. Widowed participants accounted for 30% while over half of all respondents were married (52%). There is a considerable income gap between married couples and widowed people.
Education

During the 1900s most people lived in the countryside and were very poor. Only a small number of families could afford to send their children to study in secondary schools and less still went on to study in third level. In 1932, the Irish government introduced a marriage ban which required females to resign when they married. This ban remained in place until 1958. Most children only went to primary school because free education was not introduced until the 1960s. Many women married young and large families were common. Women were expected to stay at home and rear children. As a result very few women had careers outside the home. From the 1970s onwards large numbers of female students began to further their education by enrolling in third level education.

Sense of community and neighbourliness

Table 2, below, demonstrates how reliant people felt on their neighbours to report suspicious behaviour. This is important information because it can be used to establish the quality of personal relationships and social networks which may differ depending on geographical location.

Table 2: Perceptions of neighbourliness

![Bar chart showing perceptions of neighbourliness](chart.png)

The majority of respondents live in the countryside (65%), with 20% residing in towns and just 11% in villages.² Just over 40% of respondents living in the countryside felt

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² Location of residence was defined by each respondent
that their neighbours would notice if strangers entered their property. People living in
towns and villages were less certain about whether their neighbours would report
suspicious activity to the Gardai, with figures equating to 16% and 7%, respectively.
A small number of participants (10%) did not think their neighbours would notice
strangers on their property while a quarter of all respondents were unsure if they
would detect the intrusion.

In terms of how dependent people felt on their neighbours to report suspicious
behaviour, nearly a quarter (70%) of all respondents agreed that their neighbour
would report suspicious activity to the Gardai. Furthermore, very few felt unsure of
how their neighbour would react (5%) in this situation. It seems then that
neighbourliness is still evident in rural Ireland, which is the cornerstone of creating a
real sense of community. Nearly half of the respondents believe crime has
increased.

Health and wellbeing

The majority of older people living independently with or without support, or in
residential care described their health as excellent, very good or good (n=315). Only
a minority described their health as poor and these respondents needed assistance
walking and getting around (n=4). Despite many respondents having a limited
income, their levels of wellbeing and self reported health do not appear to have been
adversely affected.

Transportation

Transport is a fundamental feature of everyday life for older adults, accessible
transport services can help alleviate social exclusion and support independent living.
The majority of respondents used their own transport or had someone else who was
able to provide transport.

Neighbourhood watch

Table 3, highlights the views and experiences of older people in relation to the
impact and effectiveness of Neighbourhood Watch in their area.
Neighbourhood Watch was introduced three decades ago to increase security in urban areas. It operates as a partnership between An Garda Síochána and the public. Our findings reveal that just 20% of respondents are involved with their local Neighbourhood Watch. Nearly half of these respondents said that joining a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme increased their sense of security. In this regard, there was a perception that their involvement did not influence their sense of security. For instance, very few people who live in an area where there is a Neighbourhood Watch scheme (3%) consider it to be ‘very safe’. Yet nearly a quarter (22%) of those living in an area without a neighbourhood watch scheme felt safe. These results suggest that their feelings of safety may be linked to either the geographic area they live in, the sense of community in that area or other factors. Very few respondents reported feeling very unsafe in their area (3%). Almost half (49%) of respondents believe that crime has increased in their locality over the past decade yet this does not appear to have altered their perceptions of their personal safety. Where there was no active Neighbourhood Watch scheme, half of respondents stated that they would like to be involved in one if it was started in their area.
Community Alert

Table 4, is concerned with the impact of participating in a Community Alert scheme has had on peoples sense of safety.

Table 4: Participation in Community Alert and sense of local safety

Community Alert Scheme was introduced three decades ago to increase security in rural areas with particular emphasis on the safety of vulnerable and older people. Community Alert is a partnership programme between An Garda Síochána and Muintir na Tire. A similar picture emerges for the Community Alert Scheme to that of Neighbourhood Watch. A quarter of respondents are involved in a Community Alert Scheme. However, again, it appears that there are no significant feelings of safety and security generated by participation in such a scheme. For instance, of those respondents who perceived their area to be ‘very safe’, 4% had a local Community Alert scheme but 21% did not. An overall total of 3% of respondents felt ‘very unsafe’ and 18% felt ‘somewhat unsafe’ in their locality, regardless of whether there was a Community Alert Scheme in place or not. There is a clear need for better information to be distributed regarding the existence of these schemes since only one-fifth of respondents were involved in their local scheme.
Just over 20% of respondents did not know if their area had a Community Alert Scheme. While nearly three-quarters of all respondents were not involved in their local community safety scheme, half of respondents expressed willingness to get involved. Community Safety schemes could be used to empower local communities to address crime and safety concerns.

The majority of respondents who received details of safety information received it from the Gardaí, older people’s groups and Community Alert and home security companies. Over half of all respondents had never attended a meeting about safety issues. On this point, a small number of respondents indicated that they felt too old to participate or that they had mobility issues which would prevent them from getting involved with any such scheme but these were a very small minority (N=3).

**Experience of crime**

A significant number of respondents have been victims of crime (20%), which is not consistent with national statistics indicating that older people have a lower risk of crime than other age groups (1.7%). Over half of all respondents (54%) have a reduced quality of life because of fear of crime and for a minority of participants (11%), crime and fear of crime had significantly affected their quality of life. The impact on quality of life resulting from fear of crime was evident, with a quarter of respondents avoiding travelling after certain times at night and 12% reporting that they never went outside after dark. The data reveals how respondents’ fears altered over the course of the day. Nearly all respondents reported feeling ‘very’ or ‘somewhat safe’ in the period between early morning and the afternoon. The majority (80%) of respondents felt safe during evening time but a small number reported feeling ‘very unsafe’ at this time and, for these people, their quality of life has been particularly damaged by crime and the fear of its occurrence (n=7). Just over a quarter of respondents reported feeling ‘somewhat’ or ‘very unsafe’ during the night.

Table 5, displays the respondents’ perceptions of crime and the extent to which they are concerned about crime in their locality. The information revealed in the analysis is important because it shows how perception of crime can negatively impact their quality of life.
Participants were asked whether they believed crime had increased or decreased in their area over the past decade. A small number felt that it has decreased in their area (9%) but many (42%) had no opinion on whether it had increased or decreased. Approximately half of all respondents’ believed crime had increased.

**Types of crime related anxieties**

Nearly three-quarters of all respondents were afraid of an intruder breaking into their home when they were present. This fear of crime spills over to life outside the home, with half of respondents afraid that their homes may be burgled while they are away. A quarter of respondents are afraid of being mugged on the street while a further 20% were afraid of being physically or verbally attacked on the street. One person described being verbally abused by a drunken young woman on the street. As a result, she now keeps all her doors and windows locked during the day and she remains fearful of being attacked.
Nearly three quarters of all respondents were ‘somewhat’ or ‘not at all’ worried about being robbed and one fifth were ‘very worried’. Nearly one-fifth of all respondents were ‘very worried’ about being physically assaulted. This contrasted with the 80% of respondents that were ‘not at all’ and ‘somewhat worried’ about physical assault. The vast majority (59%) of respondents were ‘not at all worried’ about being sexually assaulted, compared to 12% who were ‘very worried’. A question about teenagers was included in the survey because physically vulnerable people may be intimidated by groups of youths on the street. This may be because there is a possibility that an older person may be knocked over and also that they may not be able to identify a young person because they are disguised by a hooded jumper and this in itself could be seem to be very intimidating for an older person walking by a group of teenagers. While a quarter of respondents stated that they never saw teenagers loitering on the streets, nearly 20% saw them frequently while 41% saw them ‘sometimes’ on the streets. Over half of all respondents ‘sometimes’ saw drunken people in public places. Over half of respondents indicated that they never saw people using or selling drugs in public places. However, nearly 10% of all respondents reported seeing graffiti and vandalism on a frequent basis.

Given that counties Cavan and Monaghan are predominantly rural and that agriculture is important to the economy, it is not surprising that some concerns about agriculture crime were highlighted in returned surveys and also by farmers attending the Irish Farmers Association (IFA) meetings. Some participants at the IFA meetings highlighted the high numbers of cattle and sheep being stolen, arguing it is easy for thieves to transport them across the border. They also expressed a concern about farm machinery being stolen (n=4).

The importance of the environment

Evidence suggests that the physical environment has an important role to play in alleviating crime-related anxieties. Buffel et al. (2012) argue that when physical barriers are removed and services are more accessible, people have more opportunities to engage in their communities with the result that older people will report lower levels of fear of crime. These changes can also counteract feelings of loneliness among older people due to isolation by building their self-confidence. In this context, safety should be a feature integrated into town planning, redevelopment
and design. For example, our findings reveal that the majority of respondents had never visited their local library. This is an important finding because the library is a local service that can facilitate people in feeling connected to the wider community.

**Evidence from focus group conversations**

The focus group conversation highlighted a concern around reduced Garda presence in some areas, caused by the closure of Garda stations. This emerged as a sense of hopelessness, with people in Manorhamilton in Co. Leitrim having to telephone Ballyconnell Garda station, which is approximately 58km away, to request Garda assistance, rendering it potentially meaningless due to the necessarily protracted response time. Other respondents drew attention to the border and its impact on Garda mobilisation in Blacklions. There was the perception that Gardaí may not be able to respond due to having to cross the border into Northern Ireland and, in addition, that there may not be a Garda car available in the event of an emergency. Through correspondence with a member of An Garda Síochána, the following information was acquired:

‘As with all border counties, An Garda Síochána (AGS) is restricted by jurisdictional issues. Some roads straddle the border and in this regard AGS have to utilise the road network within our own jurisdiction when attending to calls. The Blacklions area is well serviced by a network of minor roads, however this may contribute to a longer than normal response time in certain cases. The crime rate is relatively low in this area which can be borne out by the crime statistics published by the CSO’. (Personal communication with Garda Member dated 22/03/2014)

In response to requests for suggested improvements to reduce crime one person felt that the Gardaí should provide information on what is done when suspicious activity is reported to them and hence make it a two-way process. Another respondent expressed that they would like longer sentences for criminals and this sentiment was shared by many in attendance.

One respondent suggested that the Text Alert system was better than Community Alert in terms of preventing crime, however, they argued that there were insufficient signs to inform the general public as to what number to contact for the particular area in which suspicious activity is observed to be taking place. This respondent also
suggested that all areas need to be covered by the scheme since criminals are able to travel easily between regions. It should be acknowledged that there are some logistical issues with the Text Alert scheme as many older people cannot text, though the majority own mobile phones (n=337). In addition, poor signal coverage for mobile phone networks in certain areas may mean that they do not work consistently. Most respondents felt that cutting the telephone allowance in the budget was a poor decision taken by government, both because older people depend on their telephone to communicate with others and also because a landline is needed in order to connect an emergency panic button system. Some respondents acknowledged their reluctance to use the panic button as they felt they would be wasting Gardaí and their neighbours’ time. The Gardaí are raising awareness among the general public of the need to ask callers for identity cards and to confirm the validity of this by ringing their nearest Garda station. This has been effective since January 2014.

The participants were asked for suggestions on how to combat crime in their locality. One of the solutions suggested to prevent young people participating in crimes was that there should be access to investment loans for education so that young people can improve their employability. Although the following solution may not be an option for everyone, one respondent’s suggestion was to put pebbles down on the driveway so that the occupant in the house will hear anyone that enters the property. Some respondents felt it was important that others should be made aware of scams on the internet and via telephone. The total number of respondents that had the internet was 217 (n=217) and 349 had a telephone landline (n = 34)
Analysis and recommendations

There are several important findings that emerge from this research. Firstly, burglaries increased in Cavan and Monaghan by 26% in 2007-2008 (CSO, 2011) the respondents, therefore, had a legitimate fear in relation to their homes being burgled. It is also important to note that 11% of respondents did not have security devices installed in their homes and nearly three quarters (71%) were living on an income of less than €20,000. This raises a number of issues for service providers and older people themselves as home security devices may increase feelings of security but will require a certain cost that may be beyond the reach of the low incomes of many older people especially widowed people.

Social isolation caused by the fear of crime needs to be examined in greater detail as this is likely to exert a negative impact on an older person’s quality of life and well-being (Bruffel et al. 2012). Local government is faced with the challenge of engaging older people and of supporting them in the community by encouraging them to forge links with other local people. To facilitate this, suitable social amenities need to be provided. The Cavan Local Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy (2011) revealed that older people reported an increased level of fear of anti-social behaviour at night. This is because some have witnessed groups of young people involved in various types of anti-social behaviour and, when young people congregate in large groups, they have the potential to intimidate a frail older person.

Recommendation 1

A report published by the Department of Justice examining the fear of crime in Ireland and its impacts on quality of life found that those who participated in Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch schemes were not any less fearful of crime than those who did not join the schemes (Department of Justice, 2009). In particular, a significant number of people felt that these schemes made no difference in crime prevention (Reese, 2009). The study also found evidence to suggest that participants in both schemes are no more likely to report crimes to the Gardaí than non-participants. It seems then that the schemes do not make participants any less likely to become victims of crime than non-participants. Both the Department of Justice and Reese (2009) state that that they could not attribute any benefits in crime
prevention to either scheme for instance, in reporting suspicious activities to the Gardaí, feeling safer overall, taking precautionary measures or leading to a reduced risk of victimisation. Although there are no benefits associated with Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert Schemes in that those involved feel no safer than those who are not involved, there may, however, be other advantages as indicated by the fact that half of all respondents stated they would like to get involved in such schemes.

It is recommended that these schemes should be supported at a local level because they could be used to empower people with knowledge on how to keep their personal belongings and property safe. This is very important as half of all respondents stated that they did not attend any meetings concerned with discussing safety issues.

**Recommendation 2**

There are high levels of burglaries in counties Cavan and Monaghan and, consequently, there is a clear need to make property more secure. Gardaí are the main providers of safety information through distribution of leaflets about how to effectively protect private property, counteract bogus callers and elder abuse and how to keep safe when out in public.

It is recommended that these leaflets be left in churches, shops and G.P surgeries where the general public may easily access them as the majority of respondents stated that they visited these places on a regular basis.

**Recommendation 3**

The Gardaí are already registering older people on the Older Persons Register, which forms part of An Garda Siochana’s Older Persons Strategy. The Register itself was completed on a Garda District basis for the entire of the Cavan/Monaghan Division at the end of December 2012 and it is reviewed on a regular basis. The objective in implementing the scheme was to establish a database capturing the information details of older people residing within each Garda District (Monaghan, Carrickmacross, Cavan and Bailieboro). It is operational in each of the Garda Districts referred to and there is the opportunity to expand on this initiative through
on-going consultation with older people. This register is also useful in providing information on the geographical spread of where older populations are concentrated. The Gardaí are hoping to build on this information into the future.

It is recommended that the Gardaí should continue to encourage older people to register their details on the Older Persons Register.

**Recommendation 4**

The Councils should explore opportunities for providing people living in Counties Cavan and Monaghan with a mobile library as the majority of respondents never visited their local library and this is a service which can be utilised to maintain a sense of connection between older individuals and their community.

**Recommendation 5:**

Public transport is vital in counties Cavan and Monaghan as it enables all people living in the region to stay connected. The majority of respondents had their own form of transport or knew someone who was able to take them into town to run errands. Many respondents praised the rural transport initiative as it provides a door to door service.

It is recommended that transport in rural areas continues to be a priority for agencies involved in the Cavan and Monaghan Alliance. Special efforts should be made to extend the hours and routes of services to meet the needs of isolated older people.

**Recommendation 6**

Due to the high numbers of respondents who have access to the internet and a telephone, it is important that they are made aware of the possible dangers of cold calls and internet fraud, such as emails requesting bank account details. The delivery of information sessions is recommended as a strategy for addressing these issues.
Concluding comments

Evidence from the analysis of the 382 questionnaires gathered in this study points to several opportunities for addressing crime through a number of key strategies. It must first be recognised that, since there is no one source of crime, there is no one solution. The Cavan and Monaghan County Age Friendly Alliances are working to engage older people in the context of community development and building age-friendly communities. However, the creation of age-friendly environments is a complex task. Some techniques that could be used to assist older people in feeling safer are obvious, such as security devices that can be installed in the home, while some are less obvious, such as establishing whether one’s neighbour notices strangers on one’s property.

Affordability could be the main reason why 11% of respondents do not have any safety devices installed in their homes, given that nearly three quarters of respondents stated their earnings to be less than €20,000 per annum. Furthermore, many respondents were not aware about the existence of a community safety scheme in their area and this may be the reason why so many expressed a desire to become involved in a community safety scheme, as they realised that they could not control everything in their environment. Community safety schemes could be used in conjunction with An Garda Siochana to provide older people with safety information and the potential for this is supported by the research conducted for this report.

Half of all respondents believe crime has increased in their area and 11% believe that this has significantly impacted on their quality of life. What has become apparent during the course of this research is that older people who limit their social interactions with other members of their community can be left feeling lonely and this can, in itself, increase their risk of isolation. Accessibility of public space is important in creating a feeling of safety for older people by building communities based on inclusiveness. Bruffel et al. (2012) identified this process as leading to greater participation and social inclusion of older people, which helps older people to feel safer in public spaces.
References


4. Cavan Age Friendly Strategy

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