



AGE FRIENDLY BUSINESS RECOGNITION SCHEME

A GUIDE TO AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION







Congratulations

You are part of an Age Friendly Business

Our Age Friendly Champions Are:-

Our Age Friendly Measures Include:-

For further information please contact www.agefriendlycounty.ie or email agefriendlycounty@gmail.com





INTRODUCTION



Kilkenny Age Friendly Seniors Forum welcomes the Kilkenny Age Friendly Business Initiative. By advertising yourself as an age friendly business you are letting older people know that you value their custom and are committed to serving them and meeting their requirements. In return, our older citizens will value you.

Older People accounts for 50% of consumer spend. They are loyal customers, have the purchasing power and time to shop. Kilkenny is ideally placed to attract and benefit from this loyal customer base with its broad array of high quality tourism attractions, business's shops and restaurants.

Kilkenny Age Friendly Seniors Forum is committed to supporting Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce and Kilkenny County Council in the promotion of this very welcomed age friendly business initiative.

John Coonan.

Chairman, Kilkenny Age Friendly Seniors Forum

The number of people over the age of 65 is expected to increase substantially, reaching 1.4 million by 2040. Within that period the number of people over 80 is set to quadruple. The implications for the business environment are significant. Currently there are more than 1.5 million people aged 55 and over living and shopping in Ireland and it is important to the economy of Kilkenny City and County that businesses can capitalise on this.

The Kilkenny Age Friendly Business Initiative will recognise those businesses that take the few small steps to make their businesses more adaptable to the requirements of our older people. Age Friendly business is a growing brand and is supported by Chambers Ireland.

I welcome the fact that Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce is driving this programme which will include a focus on communication with and understanding the needs of older citizens. The voice of our older citizens is ably represented by the Kilkenny Age Friendly Seniors Forum.

Kilkenny County Council, through the Kilkenny Age Friendly Programme supports this guide to Age-Friendly communication which provides practical tips and guidelines to businesses and their staff for communicating with older people.

Colette Byrne.

Chair, Age Friendly Alliance and Chief Executive, Kilkenny County Council.

I am delighted to steer the Kilkenny Age Friendly Business Scheme in conjunction with Kilkenny Chamber, Kilkenny Local Enterprise Office, Kilkenny Age Friendly and Kilkenny PPN. The simplicity of the training will enable your business to analyse areas you may need to focus on and give your staff skills to deal with situations they probably already encounter frequently in their interactions with customers. This gives many benefits for your business and your customers and will give Kilkenny huge advantages when being considered as a shopping destination.

Marion Acreman

President, Kilkenny Chamber of Commerce



WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

“Communication is the act of transferring information from one place or one person to another”

Information and communication are not the same.

Information is **“What”** we share,

Communication is **“How”** we share it.

When interacting with older people, it is important to be sensitive to how they prefer to communicate, learn and use information. Remember, the way you communicate and learn may NOT be the same as people from a different generation.

- Communication involves sending, receiving, understanding and utilising information.
- Attitudes, feelings and behaviours can cause breakdowns in communication between people of different generations.
- Miscommunication can cause people to respond or react negatively.



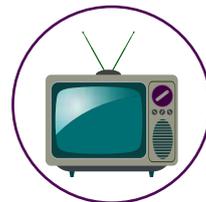
Communication

HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

There are many mediums we use to communicate with others:

Spoken or Verbal Communication:

Face-to-face, telephone, radio or television and other media.



For many people the telephone is a lifeline to basic services and information.

In rural parts of County Kilkenny access to services and information is crucial to combating social exclusion and rural isolation.

For many services in rural parts the provision of service over the telephone is central to the organisation.

For older people the telephone can be important means of getting services and information.

The manner in which you deliver services on the telephone can greatly improve the accessibility of your service.

Non Verbal Communication:

Body language, gestures, behaviour.

How we communicate with people can affect whether and how services are used or accessed by people. First and foremost we should always treat people with dignity and respect. Negative body language tells the customer you are not interested in helping them and for many older people this will prevent them from looking for the assistance they need.

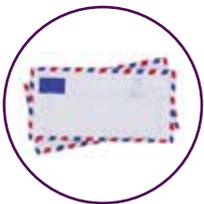


Written Communication:

Letters, emails, books, forms, leaflets and the Internet or via other media.

Written communication is one of the most important and useful methods of communicating information to the public. This method of communication used by organisations is often inaccessible to many other older people in the community.

Complicated language, jargon, small print and cluttered application forms all make your services and information very difficult for some people to access.



Visualisations:

Signage, maps, logos and posters communication messages.

Visualisations help people find services and supports with ease. Clear signage using contrasting colours, uncluttered notice boards and easy to read posters make it easier for your customer to see what services are available to them and where they can find them.





AGEING AND COMMUNICATION

There are many factors that lead to breakdown in communications. Some of these factors arise from changes associated with ageing. Many older people experience changes as part of the natural ageing process that can affect their capacity to receive and understand information.

Service providers should be aware of these changes and ensure the methods used to communicate with older customers reflect the barriers older people may experience.

Changes in vision and hearing can affect an older person's capacity to absorb information. A person may begin to have difficulty hearing clearly or reading small print.

Sensory changes are a normal part of ageing

Physical changes can include decline in flexibility, strength, fine motor control and hand-eye coordination, which can translate into difficulty manipulating control buttons or touch screens

Physical Changes

Changes in cognitive function, including memory, reasoning and abstract thinking can impact on how a person receives or understands information.

Changes in cognitive function

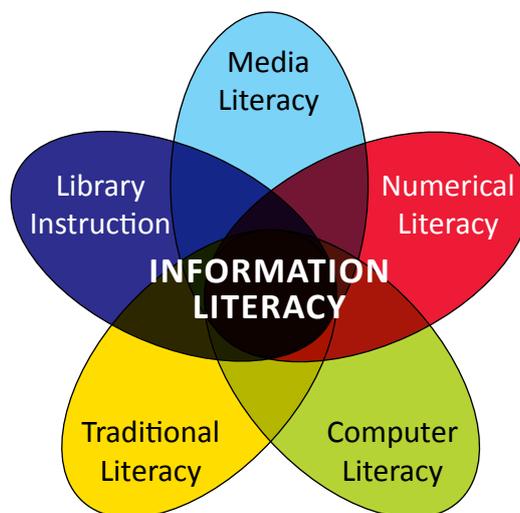
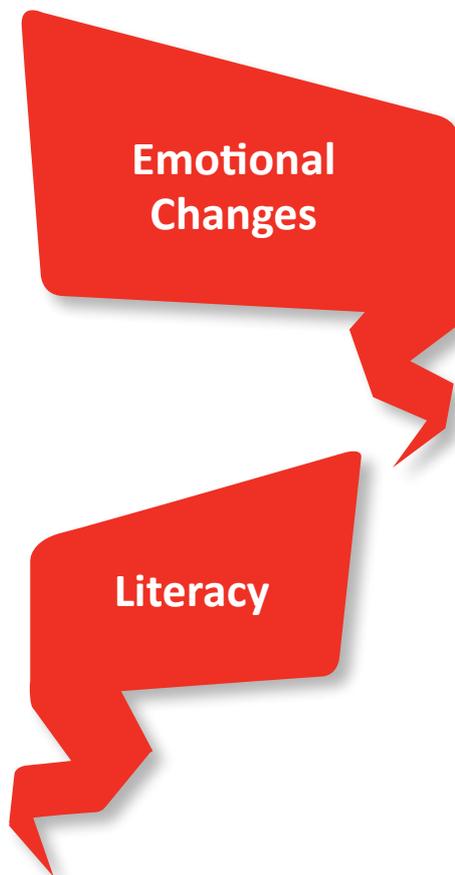
The impact of sensory, physical and social changes on an older person can also impact on their emotional well being.

Older people may feel an increased sense of loneliness, isolation, tension or worry and anxiety.

Support and understanding from service providers can help the customer to feel less anxious and worried and more supported.

While many older people today have achieved higher levels of education than previous generations, there are still many older people in our communities who experience literacy difficulties.

Limited literacy skills can impact on all communication forms that rely on the written word. Tasks such as filling out forms or reading instructions on leaflets, understanding information provided present significant difficulties for older people with limited literacy skills.



SECTION THREE

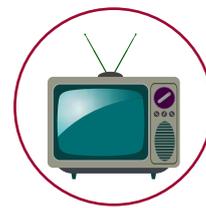


AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION IN YOUR SERVICE

HOW CAN SERVICE PROVIDERS COMMUNICATE IN AN AGE FRIENDLY MANNER?

Spoken or Verbal Communication:

Face-to-face, telephone, radio or television and other media.



Age Friendly verbal communication

You can ensure that you are providing information in an accessible manner by being aware of barriers people face in accessing information or services from your organisation. You can use simple techniques to communicate with people in an age friendly way. Dealing face to face with service users involves adopting courtesy and respect as well as taking note of some additional communications needs.

- Listen to the customer
- Maintain eye contact without staring
- Make the customer feel comfortable
- Treat the customer with dignity, respect and courtesy
- Ask the customer to tell you the best way to help. If unsure, always ask
- If offering assistance, wait until the person has accepted your offer or has given instructions before you help
- Deal with unfamiliar situations in a calm, professional manner
- Allow for extra time if necessary
- Be relaxed

Age Friendly telephone skills

For many older people the telephone is a lifeline to basic services and information. Poor telephone skills can create enormous difficulty and frustration for people trying to access services and information. For some people making a phone call may be a stressful and frustrating experience. As a service provider you should try to minimise that stress as far as possible.

- Speak clearly, and courteously
- Clarify what information/service they are calling about
- Offer information clearly and check the caller has heard everything
- Being helpful to the caller even if the subject of the call is not strictly speaking your field of responsibility. This means trying to find someone who can help now, or someone who can ring them back later
- Don't put the caller on hold and then leave them suspended there indefinitely.

Non-Verbal Communication:

Body language, gestures, behaviour

Age Friendly non-verbal communication

There are many different types of non-verbal communication. Together, the following non verbal signs and cues communicate.

Facial Expressions – Make eye contact during conversations and take care that your facial expression is one that shows you are listening and willing to help.

Gestures – Although not an actual “facial” expression, head movements such as nodding are also important visual cues that let people know you are listening, processing the information.

General Body Language – Crossing your arms over your chest signifies to a listener that you do not agree with them and you are closed off from what they are saying. Fidgeting while listening also imparts cues that you are not interested in what is going on. Keeping still while listening may not be easy, but it lets the speaker know that you care about what they are saying.

Written Communication:

Letters, emails, books, forms, leaflets and the Internet or via other media.

Age Friendly written communication

- Keep information simple and easy to understand
- Use familiar language and tone
- Highlight key points and repeat a number of times
- Use pictures to illustrate information
- Avoid jargon
- Avoid complex graphs/charts
- Include contact details for people who may require further information.



Visualisations

Signage, maps, logos and posters communicate messages.

Age Friendly visualisations communication

- Signage should be clear and easy to understand
- Signage should be located where it can be seen clearly
- Logos should be simple and uncomplicated
- Notice boards should be clutter free and easy to read.

SECTION FOUR



GENERAL TIPS AND ADVICE

AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNICATOIN TIPS AND IMPORTANT POINTS

1. Consider the needs of the audience to whom you are communicating your message
2. Don't assume the customer has an existing level of knowledge of the service
3. Always offer assistance to the customer
4. Use clear simple language.

Simple Language Checklist

- Use familiar words and a conversational, personal tone
- Be direct and specific
- Favour short words and short sentences
- Use short paragraphs
- Use pictures or illustrations to make the message easier to understand
- Highlight main ideas and important information
- Offer assistance
- Include contact details where you can.

Take this short Dementia Awareness course to learn more

<http://dementiaelevator.ie/training-programmes-old/dementia-awareness-training/>

