



Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme

Step-By-Step Guide

Could you use **a few more**
customers?

How about **one million more?**





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We really started focusing on the older consumer market several years ago and since then we have changed how we do business. Through focus groups and mystery shoppers we stopped guessing what the mature consumer wanted and started asking them. This knowledge allowed us to create a better service, without doubt we have seen a marked increase in our business in this market.

Colin Ahern, General Manager, Kilkenny Ormonde Hotel

Contact Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme at:

agefriendlyireland@meathcoco.ie
or find your local co-ordinator on our website

www.agefriendlyireland.ie

Make your business Age Friendly and watch it grow!



60 somethings are the **wealthiest age group**, many have had time to accumulate savings, pensions and property

There are **more than 1 million older (60+) people living & shopping in Ireland.**

Are you doing **everything** you can to **capture their business?**

It's easy to make your business age friendly. Most age friendly practices are low or zero cost and can mean a big difference to your bottom line. Simple changes such as making your business easier to find, enter, move around and make purchases in are good for your customers and better for your business.

By advertising yourself as an age friendly business, you are letting older people know that you value their custom and you are committed to serving them. Becoming an Age Friendly Business community will help you attract and retain this powerful customer base.

Here are examples of what some businesses in Ireland have done to become more age friendly

- Providing customer seating
- Making toilets available to customers
- Having clearer signage
- Offering smaller portions or special offers for the older customer
- Provide reading glasses of various strengths.

What is Involved?

In four simple stages, you can become an Age Friendly Business

Nationally, Age Friendly Business Recognition is a growing brand, supported by Chambers Ireland and the Age Friendly Programme. This recognition allows customers to identify you as an Age Friendly Business, and publicises your business to older customers.

You can be identified by;

- We aim to be Age Friendly' window stickers
- A listing as an Age Friendly provider on our national website; **www.agefriendlyireland.ie**
- Age Friendly Charter displayed in your business
- Age Friendly logo for display in premises, online and on your print materials



Stage 1

Identify a member of staff to act as a champion for age friendliness and older customers

Stage 2

The champion participates in our Age Friendly Business workshop, and starts to develop ideas

Stage 3

Ask your older customers what they like, what could be improved?



Asking your customers

Asking your older customers what they think, is the best way to find out how Age Friendly your business is.

Method

How do you currently collect data from customers, the usual low cost methods are:

- customer feedback forms
- informal conversations
- checklists

What you can do?

1 Collect customer feedback

Use existing data as outlined above

- Identify the older customer's feedback from your data?
- Add questions to inform you about your older customer's opinions?
- Adapt what exists if necessary, and get staff to target your older audience.
- Ask additional questions, and use trigger questions to get more ideas.

Use checklist overleaf

- Keeping it behind the counter is an easy and useful way of collecting information.

2 Review data

Identify changes from the customer suggestions

- Review the data and note what changes to make to improve the experience for your older customers.
- Often Age Friendly practices will improve the experience for all your customers.

Over 50s
account for **more than**
47% of consumer spending



Three basic questions usually get the kind of information that is helpful.

- 1 Is this a good place to shop?
2. Why is it a good place to shop?
3. What could we do to make it easier to shop here?

Older Consumers
will **double** by
2051 and those
over **80** will quadruple

Checklist for Survey

1 Is this a good place to shop?

Yes

☐

No

☐

2 Why is it a good place to shop?

3 What could we do to make it easier to shop here?

Also if you have time you could ask the following questions:

1 Are staff here helpful?

Yes

☐

No

☐

2 Can you move around the business free from obstructions?

Yes

☐

No

☐

3 Is our business very noisy?

Yes

☐

No

☐

4 Can you read the labels and signs?

Yes

☐

No

☐

5 Will you come back?

Yes

☐

No

☐

Thank You!

Stage 4

Develop actions and get recognised as an 'Age Friendly Business'



Decide the most useful things you can do to make your business Age Friendly

1 Survey

Complete our short survey during the workshop. This gives an idea of where to focus effort to maximise the impact of actions on your turnover and profit.

2 Ask Your Customers

Review the information you got from asking your customers about your business. This will help you decide what changes you can make to improve the experience for your customers.

3 Age Friendly Guides

Go through the checklists in this resource guide to get ideas of actions to take, based on the customer need from your consultation and the survey ideas.

4 Actions

Decide the three maximum impact actions you can afford.

5 Result

Put the sticker on your window. Your Age Friendly Charter will be awarded after this stage at a launch event, to promote your business.

You are now aiming to be age friendly and have joined a community of businesses that are great places to shop for older customers.

You will also get listed on our Age Friendly Business directory at the national website,
www.agefriendlyireland.ie

Older customers spend locally, have a lot of purchasing power, and have the time to shop.



Resource Guide

Welcoming your older customers: Some free & low-cost tips

Your older customers are a diverse group. They might be still raising teenagers, or they might be pushing their first great-grandchild in a buggy. They may have travelled the world or they may find it difficult to leave the house.

While they are a varied group, many share certain physical restrictions. One in three older people is affected by hearing loss. Almost two-thirds of older people wear glasses or lenses. Significant numbers have some physical restriction caused by conditions like arthritis or diabetes or perhaps a bad hip or a knee that is giving them trouble.

Knowing this, and making small changes in the areas of sound, sight and mobility, can give your business the edge it needs.

The following pages are a checklist of Age Friendly practices. Go through each guide and see what simple actions would make a difference in your business.



Age Friendly practices improve
the experience for **all your** customers,
Age Friendly is people friendly.

Customer Service and Respect

Customer Retention

Research shows that the most effective way of retaining and increasing your older customers is by individual customer service. The social interaction involved in shopping is very important. If a person feels they are genuinely welcomed and valued as a customer, they will be loyal and give good recommendations to your business.

Think about what quality of customer service you offer your customers? Often it can be common sense but sometimes it can be more than that.

Zero Cost Improvements

- ☐ Speak clearly but do not 'elder speak', i.e. talking in exaggerated tones and with simpler words. Shouting will also not help an older adult hear you and can simply cause embarrassment.
- ☐ Ensure older adults are not treated impatiently or dismissively.
- ☐ Address people's needs without stereotyping based on age or other characteristics.
- ☐ Ensure your staff know how to recognise common customer concerns and needs, such as mobility or illness issues.

TIP!

Ensure your nominated staff champion mentors other staff in sharing what they learnt at our workshop.

Increase Business by Offering Alternatives

- ☐ Delivery options are highly desirable to older adults who are homebound or find it difficult to get around.
- ☐ However, people value the social aspect of shopping, so a designated person to assist a customer in the store is a good option too.
- ☐ If you do not offer delivery services, consider doing so for older customers or work with a courier service. Accept orders by phone, in person, and on-line when possible.

Product Development and Market Segmentation

Reviewing the data from your customer consultation may help you come up with a new product offering for your older customers e.g. free top up coffee/tea or something else.

As we know older people are a very diverse group and it is important to separate the group you want to target and create offers for them e.g. some people love discounts, others are put off by discounts.

Advertising

Use multiple advertising formats/media to effectively capture the older persons market, including local 'free papers' and radio stations that target an older audience in their profile.

Include images of older people in promotional material and product displays.

Significant numbers of older people use public transport. Consider placement of your advertising material on buses or bus stop shelters to attract older customers.

TIP!

If it's easier to use your business, people will come more often and spend money. The goal is to be a welcoming and pleasant place to come back to.

Sound Advice

Speaking Clearly

Zero Cost Improvements

Do you:

- ☐ Get your customer's attention before speaking. Tap or touch them on the shoulder lightly or say "excuse me".
- ☐ Repeat yourself when necessary. Customers with hearing loss may want you to repeat a question, but may be too shy to ask.

TIP!

People with difficulty hearing can understand lower-pitched voices easier. Use lower tones when speaking to older customers. Remember that pitch is not the same as volume.

Music

Zero Cost Improvements

- ☐ Is the music in your business loud, or are the acoustics harsh, this can quickly turn older customers off.
- ☐ Will music hinder conversations with and between older customers? Background music is often just "background noise". Consider having certain music free hours or spaces in your business that are quieter.

TIP!

Have quiet areas - such as specific tables in your restaurant - that can be reserved for older customers.



TIP!

If you are playing music, include some music that your older customers will know and love.

Sound reduction & absorption

Zero Cost Improvements

Can you

- ☐ Lower the noise level
- ☐ Close doors and pull curtains on noisy areas.
- ☐ Turn off or remove noisy equipment such as humming computers or loud air conditioning when it is not necessary.

Low Cost Improvements

Can you

- ☐ Absorb noise within the space. Install carpet or rugs, hang tapestries, upholster furniture.

TIP!

Consider adding acoustic ceiling tiles and installing soundboard walls or partitions, if making improvements to your business.

Print & Web

Make Information Easy to See

Is your printed material clear and easy to read, are you using the following?

Zero Cost Improvements

Spacing

Leave 1-inch margins and single spacing between lines of text.

Font

Use a clean sans serif type like Helvetica that does not have small features at the end of strokes, unlike Times New Roman, which is considered a serif font with decorative end-strokes.

Size

The body copy of this document is set at 12 point.

This is an example of 16 point size

This is an example of 18 point size

Use a large font size, which is more readable for everyone. Never use a font size smaller than 12 point.

Colour

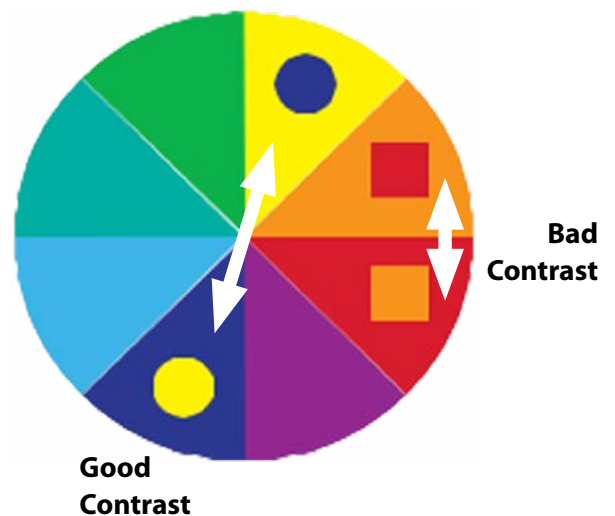
Is your design simple with sharp contrast and does it avoid patterned backgrounds.

Good Example

Bad Example

TIP!

Avoid using colours that are in close proximity on the colour wheel. Design colour materials with strong contrast.





Web Site Design: Easy to See, Understand and Use

Zero Cost Improvements

Do you

- ☐ Use shorter video segments and other media so they will load more quickly on older computers.
- ☐ Include easy-to-find instructions for web users who are less technologically savvy.
- ☐ Include an easy text resize option on web sites:
A A A

Ensure Information is Available in Different Formats

Low Cost Improvements

- ☐ Offer audio recordings or Braille in offices, room numbers, building notices, lift call buttons, and the panels by the lift door that indicate the floor number.

Multimedia

Zero Cost Improvements

Do you

- ☐ Offer large, clear subtitles for videos, music, and other multi-media that is important to your business.
- ☐ Provide written instructions in addition to verbal instructions. See Age friendly Print and Web materials for guidance.

Over 50's take on average
almost **three trips a year** in
Ireland, staying three nights away.

Good Lighting is Inviting

Keep your Local Services Building Well Lit

Zero Cost Improvements

TIP!

Consider the potential for some fluorescent lights and dimmer switches to interfere with hearing enhancement equipment.

- ☐ Is there enough light, if not the eye must work harder.
- ☐ Is the person's face well lit at reception or counters, where communication is important.
- ☐ Are all rooms and surfaces evenly illuminated.
- ☐ Have you avoided the use of strobe lighting, and uplighters positioned at floor level.

TIP!

Use lighting as close to natural light as possible, this enhances colour and visual contrast of surfaces, important for people with hearing difficulties and for those who have cognitive, mental health, or visual difficulties.

Avoid Glare

Fact:

Older adults require three times the light to see as younger people, but are more sensitive to glare.

If using downlighters, have you incorporated diffusers to minimize glare. Have you positioned windows or lights at the end of a corridor or behind a person at a reception desk, these place people in silhouette, which creates difficulties for people who lip-read. Does your lighting create strong shadows on floors and walls. Strong shadows can mask step edges or give the impression that there is a step when in fact there is not. Do you use sun-shading devices and blinds to reduce glare from direct sunlight.

TIP!

If you sell products on shelves, do not place items any higher than arm's length, or ensure that staff are available to assist older customers in reaching high up items.



Physical Environment

Universal Design

Zero Cost Improvements

- ☐ Are your interior floors wide and spacious.
- ☐ If your business involves seating, such as a restaurant, can several tables make room for a wheelchair.

Fact:

The minimum clear floor required to accommodate a single, stationary wheelchair and occupant is 900mm by 1400 mm.

TIP!

Consider installing automatic doors, or place a staff person in charge of opening doors for older adults who find it difficult to or are unable to open it themselves.

Low Cost Improvements

- ☐ Do you have seating available to older customers that need to rest or do you have a comfortable waiting area if required? Build a bench or two outside your business to give older people a place to rest and a support to grab onto - this gesture may win you a faithful customer!
- ☐ Is seating (e.g., a folding chair) available to older customers that need to rest, or do you have a comfortable waiting area at a restaurant or office that cannot serve customers right away.

Some Cost Improvements

- ☐ If your entrance has a step, consider installing a portable ramp to improve access for those using a wheelchair or walker.

Basic Access Guidelines

The minimum clear width for single wheelchair passage is 800mm at a point and 1100mm continuously; the space required for a wheelchair to make a 180-degree turn is a clear space of 1800mm in diameter or a T-shaped space.

Build continuous, easy to reach handrails on either side of staircases and ramps.

Build at least one check-out counter not higher than 760mm inches off the floor.

Since stairs create a barrier to access, build a ramp or consider the expense of an elevator.

Provide seating in all waiting areas.

Prevent Falls

Fact:

Many falls can be prevented. Environmental factors are involved in 30% - 40% of falling accidents with older people.

Zero Cost Improvements

- ☐ Is the floor of your business free of obstructions, smooth and even.
- ☐ Do you clear puddles, snow, and ice from outside your business.

Low Cost Improvements

- ☐ Are there rugs that could catch feet and cause someone to trip; if you must use rugs, secure them to the floor with strong tape or glue.
- ☐ Do you have bright lights in your business, especially in darker hallways or on staircases.

Toilets

Zero Cost Improvements

- ☐ Ensure that puddles are wiped up to prevent slips.

Low Cost Improvements

- ☐ Are your toilet paper dispensers within easy reach.
- ☐ Is the lighting in the toilet and washroom bright enough.

Some Cost Improvements

Do you

- ☐ When designing a new toilet, ideally one sink and hand dryer should be low enough that an older adult in a wheelchair could easily wash and dry their hands, and one cubicle should be large enough to accommodate a wheelchair.

TIP!

Install automatic flush controls or mount manual controls on the wide side of toilet areas that don't need one finger or fine motor control operation.



Older people are **loyal customers**
and **outspend**
younger shoppers.



Our Business is aiming to be Age Friendly

Our **champion** for age-friendliness and older customers is:

This Commitment lists the first three actions that we are taking:

1. **Example: Providing customer seating**
2. **Example: Having clearer signage**
3. **Example: Providing a magnifying glass**

Talk to our champion or email **business@agefriendlyireland.ie** if you have any suggestions or comments.

Older Persons Champion

Age Friendly Programme Manager

What's next?

Older people own up to **75% of the wealth in the EU** and account for up to **50% of consumer spending.**

1. Launch Event

A key opportunity to promote the Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme is when participating businesses receive their framed Charter which lists the three actions and commitments the business are taking.

A launch event is organised and held locally. Previous launches have included the local Mayor, older customers and other officials in attendance.

This is a great opportunity for participating local businesses to promote what they do and their town.

Local press are invited to attend and avail of the opportunity to talk to business owners, their customers and publicise their place of business.

2. Mystery Shoppers

The Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme encourages businesses

- to make their business 'age friendly'
- to understand the older consumer and their potential as important customers
- to begin a conversation with their older customers to find out just how 'age friendly' their business is.

So who better to give us feedback on the participating businesses than the older consumer?

Locally we work with Older People's Councils to organise a visit to all participating businesses.

This is a fun event with older people going around the town, spending money and letting us know if a business is on its way to being an Age Friendly Business.

3. Awards

The inaugural Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement Awards 2014 recognised the great innovative and creative work achieved nationally to make Ireland a great innovative and creative work that had been completed nationwide in making Ireland a great place in which to grow old. Ever since then, this work is having a sustainable impact to the lives of older people.

The first Age Friendly Business Award was won by Cavan town for their Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme. Over 35 local businesses participated, undertaking to make small changes including; providing customer seating, making toilets available to customers, clearer signage, smaller portions and special offers for the older customer.

The awards are held annually. Keep an eye on our website and join our mailing list on

www.agefriendlyireland.ie for up to date information.

Keep in touch with us

Once you have started, we'd love to hear how you are doing. Please go onto our website www.agefriendlyireland.ie and leave a comment/suggestion or email business@agefriendlyireland.ie

You are now aiming to be age friendly and have joined a community of services that are great places to visit and use for older customers. A list of Age Friendly Services in your area will be featured on our website, along with hints, tips, and any events that are happening in your area.

www.agefriendlyireland.ie

Notes

[illegible]



Ireland's National Age Friendly Programme is an appointed shared service of local government, hosted by Meath County Council on behalf of the wider local government sector. The national Age Friendly Programme office brings together, supports and provides technical guidance to the 31 local authority led, multi-agency, Age Friendly City and County Programmes across Ireland.

Age Friendly Ireland is a statutory cross departmental programme, supported by the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, the Department of Health, the HSE and all Local Authorities.

The national Age Friendly Ireland Programme leads in preparing for the rapid ageing of our population by focusing on environmental, economic and social factors which influence the health and well-being of our ageing population. The aim is to equip these communities to become great places to live, work, participate in and grow old.

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