

Offaly Age Friendly County Strategy

Offaly; A great place in which to grow old

2018 - 2021



Our vision is that Offaly becomes a great county in which to grow old

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Foreword

The population of Offaly, as is the case with the rest of Ireland, is ageing. A population with up to 1 in 4 people over the age of 60 years in the very near future will have significant social and economic implications at an individual, family and societal level. The implications for policy makers and service providers across Offaly in areas as diverse as housing, health, urban and rural planning, transport, policing, education and the business environment are considerable.

This strategy is the result of a process which began when Offaly signed the Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe (2013) and in so doing committed itself to support the creation of an inclusive, equitable society in which older people across Offaly can live full, active, valued and healthy lives.

This was followed by the establishment of a multi-agency Age Friendly Alliance to bring key leaders from the County Council, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, NGO's, business and the third level sector together to plan collaboratively to share resources and to streamline their work, with the interests and needs of local older people and an ageing population at their core.

More recently very extensive consultation has been facilitated to identify the key issues relevant to older people across the county. This Age Friendly strategy sets out a range of practical actions and commitments in response to what was heard - addressing pillars spanning housing, participation, our health services, built environment, transport and employment.

The Age Friendly approach and this strategy demonstrate that social, economic and environmental factors are interconnected. Age friendliness is good for everybody, because what is essential for older people will generally be of benefit to all other people across Offaly too.

Everyone hopes that as they grow older they will be supported to stay in their own home, be listened to and taken seriously, be able to work or volunteer, enjoy a good social life, and have access to good information and healthcare. Neighbourliness, a sense of belonging, feeling safe, feeling valued...these are things that we all want in our lives. The development of Offaly as an Age Friendly County Programme provides us all with a practical, pragmatic and cost-effective means of making those things a reality for every member of our community.

The benefits of establishing an Age Friendly strategy for Offaly are wide ranging and significant. We all have a part to play in achieving the ambitious vision set out as part of this strategy. If we all work together we can do this.

Multi-agency working can, of course, be challenging, but the gains for us all as we age will be worth the effort. I want to commend all members of the Age Friendly Alliance for

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embracing the collaborative approach to establishing this strategy which enables Offaly to declare itself as a truly Age Friendly Community.

I look forward to working with you all to realise this most important vision for our county.

Anna Marie Delaney

Chairperson

Offaly Age Friendly Alliance

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Introduction

This is the first but very important Age Friendly Strategy for Offaly.

A successful Age Friendly County Programme:

works to create the kinds of communities in which older people live autonomous, independent and valued lives. Positive health and wellbeing as we age is fundamental to our vision for Offaly. A great deal of the Offaly Age Friendly County Programme will also focus on actions and developments in other areas; in creating walkable, attractive and accessible communities and age-friendly spaces, and by introducing actions to address participation and inequality. People of all ages across Offaly will be supported to enjoy healthier, more active and connected lives.

The Stakeholders

Collaboration is central to this: collaboration between agencies and organisations across Offaly, collaboration with older people themselves across our towns, villages and rural communities.

This Age Friendly County Strategy has been prepared by the Offaly Age Friendly County Alliance in consultation and cooperation with older people across Offaly. This Alliance is a senior level, cross sector group whose member agencies have formed an overarching strategic partnership to develop and oversee the realisation of the Offaly Age Friendly County Strategy. Member organisations include;

- Offaly County Council
- Health Service Executive
- An Garda Síochana
- Offaly Local Enterprise Office
- Offaly Older People's Network
- Local Link Laois Offaly Laois Offaly
- Laois Offaly Education and Training Board
- Midland Regional Hospital at Tullamore
- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Offaly Library Service
- Offaly Local Development Company
- Offaly Sports Partnership

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The Aim

The ultimate aim of the Age Friendly County Programme is to make Offaly a county in which;

- Older people are supported to influence the decisions that impact on their lives.
- Older people can exercise autonomy in relation to the systems, services and decisions which affect them
- There is real respect for older people and their contribution to the county and the communities in which they live is fully valued
- Older people are supported to live independently for as long as they wish to,
- Older people experience excellent quality of life
- Better integration of services reduces dependency and avoidable duplication and costs

This strategy will involve the implementation of real change - very often in a range of practical, imaginative and cost-effective ways. The strategy involves a commitment to action on the part of a range of agencies and organisations. We see this strategy document as a call to action to agencies and organisations in the statutory, community and business sectors from across the county to collaborate with older people and to work creatively together to make Offaly a great county in which to grow older.

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Background; Offaly an ageing county

Census 2016 counted more than 10,591 people in Offaly aged 65 years or older, an increase of more than 19% over the last five years, and now representing 13.5% of the population. By 2026 – only eight years from now – it is expected that there will be over 23,000 people in Offaly aged 60 or over, representing almost one out of every four people. The greatest increase will be in the population aged over 85, which is expected to reach 3,800, meaning that this age group will have more than doubled since 2006.

Co Offaly Demographic profile

Census 2016 Sap map Area: County Offaly Theme 1 Age.

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
55-59	2,364	2,207	4,571
60-64	2,031	1,956	3,987
65-69	1,739	1,798	3,537
70-74	1,293	1,332	2,625
75-79	902	1,024	1,926
80-84	624	761	1,385
85+	430	688	1,118

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A Collective Approach

Collaboration on the part of the relevant agencies will be central to the success of this strategy. The strategy and its actions have been based on the expressed views and consultation with older people across the county. Cohesive community responses will be created when the agencies take shared ownership and responsibility for the actions which we have committed to as part of this strategy.

Empowering local people to participate in the development of Offaly as an Age Friendly County will also be critical. The conduct of comprehensive and inclusive consultation exercises with older people across the county during the development of this strategy has helped to create a better awareness and understanding of the needs and requirements of the people of Offaly as they age. The establishment of an Offaly Older Peoples Network provides older people with opportunities to support the implementation of this strategy and to further inform local development and planning on an ongoing basis.



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Why an Age Friendly County Strategy?

Ireland, like Europe and much of the developed world, is getting older, faster. Offaly is no different.

The latest Central Statistics Office analysis of the Census returns shows that the group aged 65 and over in Ireland grew by almost one fifth, 19.1%, since the 2011 Census, making it the fastest growing sector, a faster rate of growth than that experienced in other EU countries. In its *Key Trends 2016* report the Department of Health said life expectancy increased by almost 2½ years in a little over a decade. A century ago it was about 50; today it is almost 77 for men and 82 for women. This trend is set to continue; Indeed, it is forecasted that there will be about 20,000 more people living in Ireland over the age of 65 *every year* until 2040.

Our ageing demographic has implications for public policy, service provision, long-term planning, and society as a whole. The factors that influence successful ageing are multi-dimensional. All sectors of society – government, business, voluntary groups, service providers, local authorities and the general public – therefore have a part to play in creating an age-friendly society.

The Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021 provides a roadmap for collective action in relation to local, economic and community development in County Offaly. The LECP contains a set of goals and objectives which specifically includes the goal of preparing an Age Friendly Strategy, in addition to a number of other objectives designed to improve the well being and quality of life of older people, in areas such as rural transport, safety and security, and housing requirements.

Healthy Ireland (2013) is the national framework to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Ireland. Within this Framework, the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013) sets out measures to support Ireland in becoming an age-friendly society. The Healthy Offaly Plan 2018 is the local framework through which a range of actions are supported to improve the health and wellbeing of older people in Offaly. Effective, local joint working structures are required to complement national-level activity, since many of the factors that contribute to a good quality of life for older people are community-based.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly Cities and Communities Guides provides an appropriate framework which helps communities to become more supportive of older people by addressing their needs across **eight themes**:

- **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**
- **Housing**
- **Social Participation**
- **Transport**
- **Respect and Social Inclusion**
- **Civic Participation and Employment**
- **Communication and Information**
- **Community support and health services**

In Offaly, we want to be prepared for this future. We recognise that our population of older people is increasing year on year, and that there will be increasing demand on services into the future.

The World Health organisation (WHO) which the informed Age Friendly Programme involves a multi-agency, multi-sectoral approach to age-related planning and service provision and provides us with an opportunity to develop Offaly as a place that celebrates older people and supports them to continue to live happy, healthy and fulfilled lives.

Working towards enhanced and improved outcomes for older people

Effective multi-agency working results in enhanced and improved outcomes for older people. Collaboration creates joined-up services which are readily available and easily accessed by older people. The multi-agency approach will enable us in Offaly to build further consensus, strengthen partnership and break down unnecessary professional boundaries. By pooling budgets and undertaking joint actions and projects, where relevant, the scale of sustainable service coverage will be enhanced.

Most importantly, the age-friendly multi-agency approach facilitates positive outcomes which benefit everyone - older people, participating agencies, professionals and the general public - because what is essential for older people tends to be good for everyone. For example, a built environment which meets the needs of older people is one in which everyone can be more physically active and engaged. Everybody likes to have easy access to services and leisure opportunities locally, near to where they live, and close to their social networks of family, friends and neighbours. Through inclusive, age-friendly approaches to planning people of all generations across Offaly can feel respected, valued and involved.

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The Age Friendly Programme provides a robust framework to pioneer and drive transformation, innovation and improvement. To date Age Friendly Programmes across Ireland have implemented real change in imaginative and cost-effective ways. The extensive track record includes home support services for older people, enhancement of public spaces, age-friendly transport services, senior enterprise and age-friendly business programmes, and enhanced community-level participation.

The Offaly Age Friendly Alliance will achieve targeted results through taking an outcomes-based approach, putting older people at the centre of the design process, starting with the end in mind and then working out the actions and activities which will make it a reality.

The county-wide consultation undertaken to inform this first Age Friendly Strategy has identified a wide range of 'good practice' services and initiatives which are already in place across the county. The challenge now involves embedding this pioneering and innovative work of recent years in the mainstream. The Age Friendly County Programme provides an opportunity to scale up these local pockets of good practice into the consistent application of proven Age Friendly initiatives across the county.

Most importantly the multi-agency approach and the engagement with older people which we have now committed to in Offaly provides a real opportunity for mutual learning about how best to improve older people's quality of life.

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Our Strategy: A collaborative, whole of Alliance response

In this Age Friendly County Strategy, the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance (The key Stakeholders from each organisation/service Provider/ organisation) sets out its goals and priorities for 2018-2021 and describes how it aims to help Offaly to become a great county in which to grow old.

The Offaly Age Friendly Alliance has sought to capture the focus of its work across eight high level strategic goals. These goals can be seen as the constant elements which drive and define how the Offaly Age Friendly Programme works to bring about a positive and enabling environment for an ageing population. Each of the eight domain areas contains a set of specific actions. All of these actions are of equal importance and are aimed at enabling the Offaly Age Friendly Programme to execute its mission and to contribute to the achievement of its vision.

The real value of the Age Friendly programme approach will be visible in the collaborative actions and the support which agencies and service providers give each other for the shared responses which have been framed as part of this strategy. Indeed, the successful implementation of the strategy will depend on how effectively the different statutory and non-statutory partners collaborate in pursuit of our vision for an Age Friendly Offaly.

Enhancing social connection and combatting loneliness and isolation on the part of older people who may be living alone has been put forward as a key priority issue by the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance. As implementation of this Strategy gathers momentum, the Alliance has committed to develop a needs-informed, collaborative, whole of Alliance response to involve the roll out of a significant neighbourhood based initiative to address this considerable challenge. The development of such a whole of Alliance response, to involve all Age Friendly Programme partners, will harness and underpin the many actions which have been framed under each of the eight age-friendly thematic goals.

Monitoring

On a yearly basis, the Age Friendly Programme partners – Alliance members together with members of the Offaly Older Peoples Network will come together to review progress and identify specific deliverables under each strategic goal to shape the Programme's annual work-plan.

Funding

Each year the Age friendly co-ordinator submits an estimate in line with the Age Friendly actions and work plan to be approved by Offaly County Council.

Implementation

The Age friendly co-ordinator will work with the alliance to move the actions forward.

The Age friendly co-ordinator will also be responsible for engaging other key supports to add value and ensure the Strategy encompasses the broader Community including the Offaly PPN (Public Participation Network), Comhairle na Nog, Chamber of Commerce & Community Alert and others.

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1. Theme One: Outdoor spaces and buildings

Our goal is to make our outdoor spaces and buildings across Offaly pleasant, accessible and safe for older people, creating walkable communities and Age Friendly spaces.

Why this is important;

The design and maintenance of a community's built environment can make the difference between a healthy and active lifestyle, or one characterised by limited mobility and high levels of social isolation. The way an area looks and how safe it feels has a big impact on older people's confidence and motivation. When the environment is attractive and accessible, people of all ages will enjoy more active and connected lives.

What older people told us;

- Need for walkable access to public and other essential services, recreation and amenities so that older people, together with people of all ages, can use them more readily
- Need for improvements in respect of seating, signage, pavements, parking, street lighting and pedestrian crossing points
- Need for development works to take account of the needs of an ageing population
- Need for greater access to and awareness of available green spaces and exercise equipment
- Need for greater awareness and familiarity amongst older peoples as to 'how to' make best use of available exercise equipment and natural amenities
- Absence of ready access to toilets can act as a barrier to getting out and about

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Action	Lead Agency
<p>1.1 Scheduled village and town improvement schemes across Offaly to be informed by joint walkability audits involving local older people together with relevant local authority officials such as the town engineer and/or planner. In particular, such walkability audits will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assess the quality and continuity of pavements, the number, safety and timing of pedestrian crossings and any barriers to mobility in the street - Identify the need for provision of additional or location specific age-friendly seating - Assess the need and feasibility for Age Friendly car parking spaces - Identify key accessibility related barriers including the placement of signage, hoarding, sandwich boards and other obstructions and obstacles 	Offaly Co. Co.
<p>1.2 Ensure that local elected representatives and senior decision makers in service providing organisations base their work on the concepts of age-friendliness and universal design.</p>	Offaly Co. Co.
<p>1.3 Ensure that the County Development plan, Local Area Plans, other key local authority plans together with planning guidelines incorporate relevant universal design and Age Friendly concepts and principles.</p>	Offaly Co. Co.
<p>1.4 Provide Age Friendly training on housing and the built environment to local authority planners, architects and engineers.</p>	Offaly Co. Co.

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<p>1.5 Promote the availability of existing recreating and green spaces across the county.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>1.6 Identify additional suitable areas for Age Friendly adult exercise equipment and tone zones.</p>	<p>Offaly Sports Partnership</p>
<p>1.7 Provide instruction for groups of older persons on how to safely use and enjoy available adult exercise equipment.</p>	<p>Offaly Sports Partnership</p>
<p>1.8 Examine UCD/OLDC Eco Health Research for inclusion of older people’s actions.</p>	<p>Offaly Local Development Company</p>
<p>1.9 Development of an Age Friendly Business Programme to support and encourage retailers, restaurateurs, hoteliers, business owners and other relevant service providers to introduce practical changes, including the provision of access to toilets, to their business to better meet the needs of an ageing population.</p>	<p>Local Enterprise Office Offaly</p>

Outcomes

- People of all ages have walkable access to public and other essential services, recreation and amenities, and so can use them more readily
- Older people feel safe when out and about, and so feel more confident to stay active and to participate in the wider community
- Enhanced awareness of the accessibility needs of older people in Offaly
- Future proofing of developmental works to help ensure our infrastructure and services do not become outdated or outmoded in the near future and that they do not require unnecessary and costly retro-fitting to take account of the needs of an ageing population

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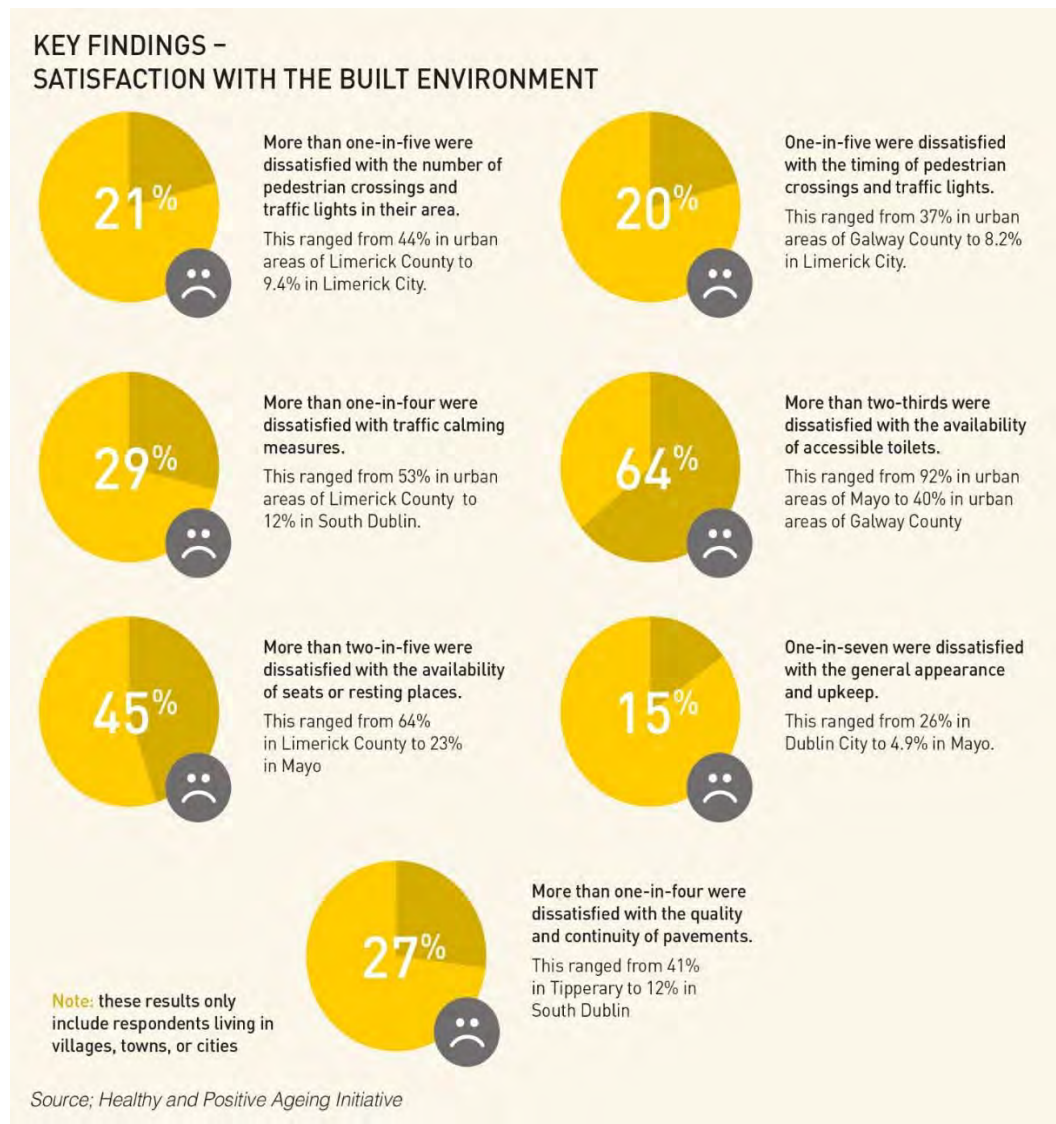
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- Improved access to key buildings housing health services, such as GPs' surgeries and primary care clinics, and to those which provide essential services, such as post offices
- Older people are enabled to stay more independent for longer
- People of all ages, across Offaly, are supported to enjoy more mobile, active and healthy lifestyles
- Older people feel safe when out and about, and so feel more confident to stay active and to participate in the wider community

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Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative survey, Department of Health. (2016)



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2. Theme Two: Housing

Our goal is to provide a more seamless and appropriate continuum of housing choices and options for people as they age in Offaly.

Why this is important;

As people age they spend more time in their own homes. This means that older people's quality of life, and thus their health, can depend on the appropriateness of their home environment and the conditions in which they live. For example, better heating systems are known to lead to improved breathing and mental health for some older people. For many, living in adapted or specialist housing reduces reliance on health and social care services and can contribute to a greater sense of wellbeing.

What older people told us;

- Need for a broader range of housing options which enable older people in Offaly to stay independent for as long as possible
- Need for greater awareness of good practice housing options for older people and their available benefits
- Concern, including experiences of isolation and loneliness, on the part of older people when living alone
- Limited availability of basic social and home care supports and assistance with simple household tasks to better enable independent living
- Limited awareness as to how to adapt one's home so as to make it more comfortable to live independently for longer
- Need for greater awareness of and flexibility within the available home improvement and home adaptation grant schemes
- Need for easier and more confident access to skilled and trusted tradespeople who can provide home maintenance services
- Need for older person accommodation to be located appropriately so that older people have walkable access to public and other essential services, recreation and amenities and so can use them more readily

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Action	Lead Agency
<p>2.1 Conduct of a review of relevant local authority grant schemes in respect of home adaptations and extensions to ensure schemes are fit for purpose and there are appropriate levels of awareness.</p>	<p>Offaly Co. Co.</p>
<p>2.2 Ensure that planning guidelines incorporate Age Friendly design and facilitate appropriate placement of older person accommodation so that older people have walkable access to public and other essential services.</p> <p>Promotion of lifetime adaptable and Age Friendly Housing design among planners and architects.</p>	<p>Offaly Co. Co.</p>
<p>2.3 Development, on a town by town basis, of registers of reliable, age-friendly contractors who can provide basic, cost effective home maintenance services.</p>	<p>Offaly Local Development Company</p>
<p>2.4 Development, with consent, of a district Risk Register of older people living alone in the community as a means of supporting engagement by community Gardaí, local authority and HSE staff during periods of cold and other extreme weather conditions.</p>	<p>Gardai Health Service Executive</p>
<p>2.5 Facilitation of a showcase event to demonstrate successful, good practice older person housing models already in place.</p>	<p>Offaly Older Peoples Network</p>

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<p>2.6 Provision of advice on ‘smart house’ technologies together with simple, accessible information and advice to older people about housing options, grants, services and personal alarms which can help older people to live independently for longer.</p>	<p>Offaly Local Development Company Offaly Co. Co.</p>
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Outcomes

- Older people are supported to age comfortably in the community they belong to.
- Available housing design and choices address a broader range of needs, aspirations and financial circumstances.
- Older people are able to be involved in the wider community, and to maintain and develop their social networks.
- Older people experience less social isolation and maintain greater autonomy, control and independence when living independently in the community.
- Older people are better informed and supported to participate in decision making about their own housing environment.

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3. Theme Three: Social participation

Our goal is to provide opportunities for older people to stay socially connected and to play an active part in social networks.

Why this is important;

Social connection - feeling part of a network of family, friends and community - is one of the main determinants of health and wellbeing. The health risks of poor social integration are comparable with those of smoking, high blood pressure and obesity. Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of depression and mental health difficulties, as well as cognitive decline. As part of an Age Friendly Offaly we want to support older people to participate fully in the social and cultural life of the communities that they live in through a diverse range of affordable, accessible, inclusive events and activities.

What older people told us;

- Older people, and particularly older men, can feel isolated and particularly so in the more remote, rural areas within the county
- It can be daunting for some to re-engage after being detached from community life for a period
- Older people play a very important role in encouraging and supporting their peers to participate in community life
- Transport can play a significant role in enabling older people to maintain social networks
- Many older people were prioritising requests for transport to essential appointments over transport to social activities
- Road speed can deter many older people from getting out and about
- There are a range of affordable and inclusive events and activities already in place across the county but these local pockets of practice and the awareness of same need to be scaled up
- There are a number of high quality community amenities in place, such as Lough Boora Park, and other 'assets', such as the Birr Tone Zone, but these are thought to be under-utilised and could be exploited further to promote greater social participation and physical activity
- Older people and younger people across the county have a lot to learn from each other

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Action	Lead Agency
<p>3.1 Support the introduction of a ‘buddying’ system linking older people as ‘buddies’ or companions with isolated older people and introducing or re-introducing them to relevant community activities.</p>	<p>Offaly Local Development Company</p>
<p>3.2 Host some Intergenerational skills exchange programme between younger and older people to provide opportunities for both older and younger people across the county to share their skills and learn new skills in return.</p>	<p>Offaly Older Peoples Network</p> <p>Laois Offaly Laois Offaly Education & Training Board</p> <p>Library Services Local Link Laois Offaly</p>
<p>3.3 Support the scale up of the now proven social prescribing practice hosted by Offaly Local Development Company.</p>	<p>Offaly Local Development Company</p>
<p>3.4 Undertake an audit of available local social and physical activities and community assets to support greater social participation and physical activity. The results of such an audit will then be promoted through accessible channels across the county.</p>	<p>Offaly Sports Partnership</p> <p>Laois Offaly Education & Training Board</p>
<p>3.5 Organise a number of park runs and park walks on a town by town basis throughout the year to support greater physical activity and social participation.</p>	<p>Offaly Sports Partnership</p> <p>Local Link Laois Offaly</p>
<p>3.6 Identify and appoint ‘Age Friendly Champions’ at town and village level who will act as key points of contact on key events such as the bi-monthly or quarterly Age Friendly park run / park walks.</p>	<p>OLDC</p> <p>Offaly Sports Partnership</p>

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Outcomes

- Older people have the confidence and capacity to maintain social networks and participate in all that is going on in their community
- Older people can access a broad range of affordable and inclusive events and activities
- People of all ages enjoy activities together
- Offaly enjoys a culture of multi-generational respect
- Older people experience less social isolation and maintain greater autonomy, control and independence when living independently in the community
- People of all ages can maintain and improve their physical and mental fitness

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4. Theme Four: Transport

Our goal is to promote safe, accessible, reliable and comfortable transport services for older people.

Why this is important;

Good access to transport makes it easier to participate in community life. People who depend on others for help with transport tend to prioritise essential outings, such as grocery shopping and medical appointments, and neglect their social and leisure needs. Our ambition is to provide an increasingly seamless and affordable public transport system, which may include affordable taxis, car-pooling and community car schemes, as well as making it possible for older people to more comfortably use personal forms of transport, such as bicycles and cars.

What older people told us;

- Road speed can very often deter older people from getting out and about
- Road users are not always aware and respectful of older people
- There is a strong sense that access to transport has improved considerably following the ongoing extension of the Laois-Offaly Local Link Laois Offaly service. However, older people often do not know what options and services might be available at given times
- There can be problems with the interconnectivity of key transport services. This can be particularly challenging for those older people looking to make it to important hospital appointments
- It can be challenging to safely cross busy town streets
- Parking within easy, walkable access of public and other essential services can be difficult and can deter older people from using such services more readily
- Public and private transport stops are often not sheltered or comfortable
-

Action	Lead Agency
4.1 Local Link Laois Offaly community bus journeys to be employed as a means by key agency personnel such as the community nurse, Garda and fire officer to disseminate key information to older people.	Local Link Laois Offaly

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<p>4.2 Identify suitable areas in towns and villages for the introduction of age-friendly parking bays.</p>	<p>Offaly Older Peoples Network</p>
<p>4.3 Older people to be involved, through walkability and consultation programmes, in planning the location of Age Friendly parking, bus stops, shelters and seating.</p>	<p>Local Link Laois Offaly Offaly Local Development Company</p>
<p>4.4 To undertake a survey of Stations, transport terminals and taxi ranks to determine supports required to incorporate Age Friendly design.</p>	<p>Offaly Co. Co.</p>
<p>4.5 Pilot the establishment of a community car scheme to support older people to stay active in the community.</p>	<p>Local Link Laois Offaly Offaly Local Development Company</p>

Outcomes

- Older people have walkable access to key public and other essential services and so can use them more readily
- Older people feel safe when out and about, and so feel more confident to stay active and to participate in the wider community
- People of all ages are fully informed about transport options, routes, accessibility, prices and schedules in the locality
- Specialised transport is more easily available to those who need it
- Road users are aware and respectful of older people
- There are more comfortable, sheltered social spaces which people of all ages can use when waiting for transport

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5. Theme Five: Respect and social inclusion

Our goal is to combat stereotypes, myths and negative views on ageing and prevent prejudice and discrimination against older people.

Why this is important;

Older people can be stereotyped and excluded. Widespread misinformation about, and fear of, dementia means that people who experience it are often at particular risk. Age Friendly Offaly will counter ageism and prejudice through promoting age awareness and informing the general public about the rights, needs and potential of the diversity of older people, and highlighting their social, economic and cultural contributions to the community.

What older people told us;

- Older people can, at times, feel stereotyped and excluded
- There is a need for improved age and dementia awareness amongst businesses and service providers
- There is considerable value to be gained from intergenerational activities with a number of such events held successfully in Offaly across recent years
- There is an extensive range of high quality community rooms across the county but awareness of and access to such important assets is thought to be limited
- There is concern that those older people who have returned to the county from the UK and elsewhere may be more at risk of isolation through an absence of established networks and dedicated supports and opportunities for social participation.

Action	Lead Agency
5.1 Support the development of the Offaly Older People's Network so that it is active, representative of the diversity of older people, and supportive of the most marginalised.	Offaly Local Development Company
5.2 Ensure that public, voluntary and commercial services involve the Older People's Network, and broad consultation with older people generally, in policy development and the planning of service provision.	All

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<p>5.3 Support the development of a regular older persons slot within local newspaper or radio in order to build awareness and spotlight issues of interest.</p>	<p>Offaly Older Peoples Network</p>
<p>5.4 A. Provide Age Friendly awareness training to the staff of local public, voluntary and commercial services.</p> <p>B. Support local public, voluntary and commercial services to appoint “Age Friendly Ambassadors” to undertake age proofing in their organisation.</p> <p>C. Support local businesses to adopt age-friendly practices, such as tailored customer service arrangements for older people.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>5.5 Set up practical intergenerational initiatives and link-ups between older people’s and young people’s organisations, which involve meaningful skills exchange.</p>	<p>Offaly Older Peoples Network</p>

Outcomes

- Offaly is characterised by a strong sense of intergenerational solidarity
- Local media depict older people positively and without stereotyping
- Local democracy and social cohesion are enhanced through the inclusion of the voice of the diversity of older people in the planning and delivery of services in the city or county
- All older people, regardless of income level, experience public, voluntary and private services as respectful and supportive
- ‘Family-friendly’ activities expressly include provision for older people

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6. Theme Six: Civic participation and employment

Our goal is to increase employment, volunteering and civic participation among older people.

Why this is important;

Continued mental stimulation in later life promotes good physical and mental health. Age Friendly Counties make economic as well as social sense. While keeping the brain active in later life is good for health, keeping economically active is also good for wealth. Studies of quality of life across a large number of countries consistently show that a person's level of income and material resources strongly affects their overall satisfaction with life and well-being.

What older people told us;

- Older people are very often the lifeblood of communities across the county; The relevance and value of the older person as a customer for retailers and other small businesses could usefully be further developed
- The awareness of the contribution and skills of older workers could be further promoted
- Many older people face long commutes to their work places which may often be outside the county
- Many older people across the county do not want to retire fully and instead would like to be supported to stay working and retire gradually
- Older entrepreneurs tend to enjoy noticeably higher success rates when forming new businesses
- Older business owners, professionals and entrepreneurs have developed a lot of skill and experience which would be of benefit to the local business and community sectors
- Older people would like to learn more about available and interesting civic engagement opportunities
- Some older people can be reluctant, through a lack of confidence, to engage in certain activities and events with suggestions that the diversity of older people is not always considered by service providers

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- Older people could be supported to develop social enterprises to support the delivery of low cost but critical housekeeping and home maintenance services
- A number of very good Trusted Tradesmen and Meals on Wheels schemes are already in place throughout the county and provide useful models of practice which would be scaled up across the county to enhance access and coverage to critical home supports
- Some older people would welcome training in the use of new technologies such as Skype and other online activity
- The considerable tourism potential of the county could be further enhanced and supported through further engagement with local older people

Action	Lead Agency
6.1 Develop Age Friendly shared workspaces and ‘hot desks’ to enable commuting older workforce to remain in work and/or retire gradually.	Local Enterprise Office Offaly
6.2 Develop an Age Friendly senior enterprise programme to support the intergenerational transfer of skills and experience in the business and community sectors.	Local Enterprise Office Offaly
6.3 Develop an Age Friendly ‘start your own business’ programme to support older entrepreneurs in identifying opportunities, considering and advancing their new business ideas.	Local Enterprise Office Offaly
6.4 Older people to be supported to set up social enterprises focused on the delivery of critical housekeeping and home maintenance services.	Offaly Local Development Company Local Enterprise Office Offaly
6.5 Training programmes to be provided for older people in the use of new technologies and social media.	Local Enterprise Office Offaly Laois Offaly Education &

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	Training Board Library Services Offaly Local Development Company
6.6 Panel(s) of Trusted Tradesmen will be set up on an incremental town by town basis to support older people in accessing basic, cost-effective home maintenance services.	Offaly Local Development Company
6.7 Assess the potential for the development of a Volunteer Ambassador Programme aimed at providing a warm and informed older person led welcome to visitors to key county attractions during the peak tourist season.	Offaly Local Development Company
6.8 Deliver Certificate in Volunteering reflecting the contribution Volunteers are making to society	Athlone Institute of Technology

Outcomes

- Barriers to older people’s participation in education, training, jobs and volunteering are removed, giving them enhanced access to opportunities for learning, working and social contribution
- Older people contribute their life experience and skills to the positive benefit of their communities
- Enhanced social status and sense of purpose result in measurable gains in physical and mental health among local older people
- Older people’s involvement in the local financial and social economy increases

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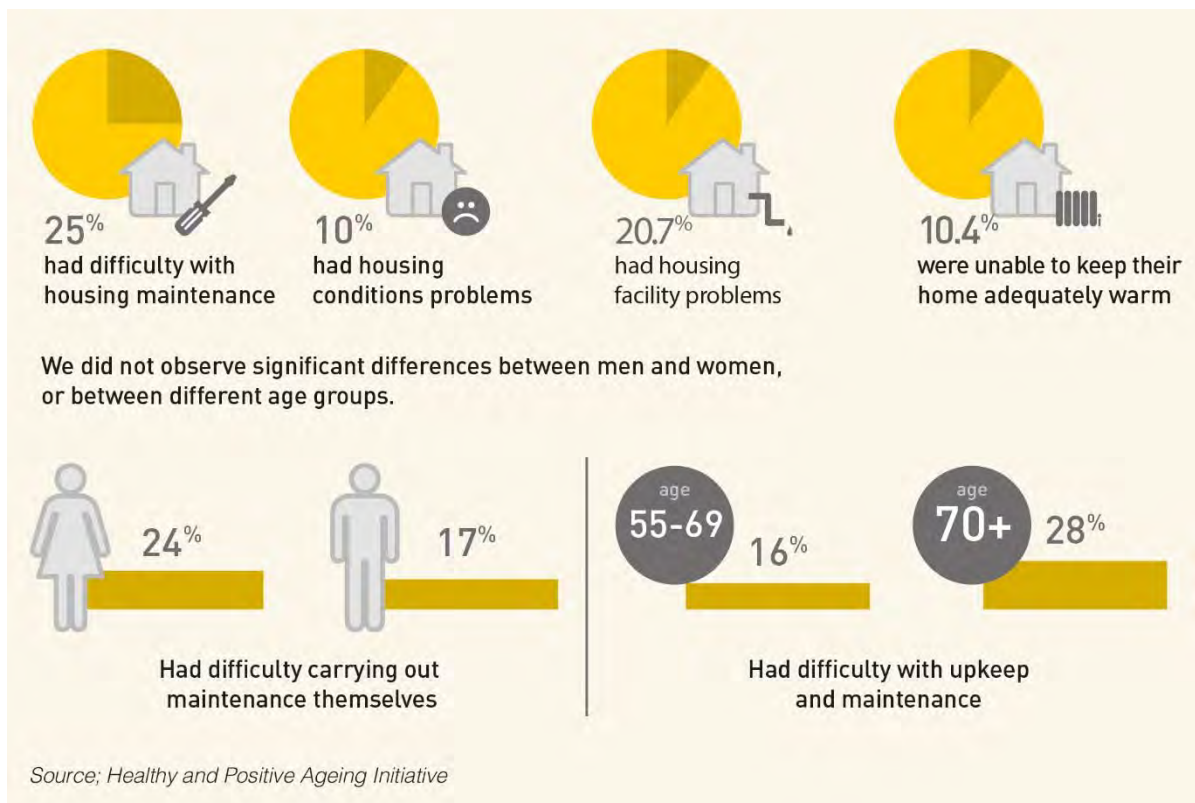
Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative survey, Department of Health. (2016)



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Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative survey, Department of Health. (2016)



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7. Theme Seven: Communication and information

Our goal is to ensure that older people can access timely, practical information about what is happening in their communities.

Why this is important;

Lack of awareness of what is on offer, or how to access it, can prevent older people from accessing useful services or resources. A reliable flow of accessible information about community news, activities and opportunities keeps older people active and involved, and is critical for those who have few formal or informal networks to call on. As more and more services and information move exclusively online, it is vital to make sure that older people stay connected through a range of communications channels and formats.

What older people told us;

- Although many valuable programmes, services, activities and entitlements are already available to older people across the county not everyone is aware of the range that does exist
- Older people are concerned about what they perceive to be a move on the part of many service providers to provide information exclusively online
- Need for a wider variety of communication channels and formats about what is going on
- Need for barrier free call-routing
- Need to facilitate person to person information on request
- Broadband can be very poor in certain areas

Action	Lead Agency
7.1 Develop a Directory of key Offaly services relevant to older people. Set up Facebook Page & Twitter Feed Explore the demand for a Communication system for people living alone manned by Volunteers	Offaly Co. Co.
7.2 The Directory of key Offaly services will also include means to develop a Register, with consent, of older people living alone.	Offaly Co. Co. HSE Laois Offaly Education & Training Board

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	<p>Offaly Sports Partnership</p> <p>Offaly Co. Co.</p> <p>Gardai</p> <p>Library Services</p> <p>Local Link Laois Offaly</p>
<p>7.3 Develop and disseminate guidance document for Offaly services on how to provide Age Friendly information and communication.</p> <p>Develop and disseminate regular, short updated reports by key service providers and the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance on key progress and any critical messages such as cold weather warnings.</p>	
<p>7.4 Host an intergenerational skills exchange to support and train older people in the use of smart phones and IT devices.</p>	<p>Laois Offaly Education & Training Board</p>
<p>7.5 Promote the provision of library based, free access to computers and the internet.</p>	<p>Library Services</p>
<p>7.6 Through the Garda Dedicated Community Unit, connect with the Local Link Laois Offaly community bus to disseminate relevant information to key older person groups.</p>	<p>Gardai</p> <p>Local Link Laois Offaly</p>
<p>7.7 Facilitate a training scheme to support the Older Peoples Network in the development of a bi-annual Age Friendly newsletter.</p>	<p>Laois Offaly Education & Training Board</p>
<p>7.8 Encourage statutory agencies, as part of a combined effort by all agencies across the county, to adopt a 'no wrong door' policy in respect of the provision of information to older people.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>7.9 Develop an Offaly Age Friendly website, Facebook page and Twitter account; to support the dissemination of Age Friendly information/news.</p>	<p>Offaly Co. Co.</p> <p>Library Services</p> <p>Local Link Laois Offaly</p>

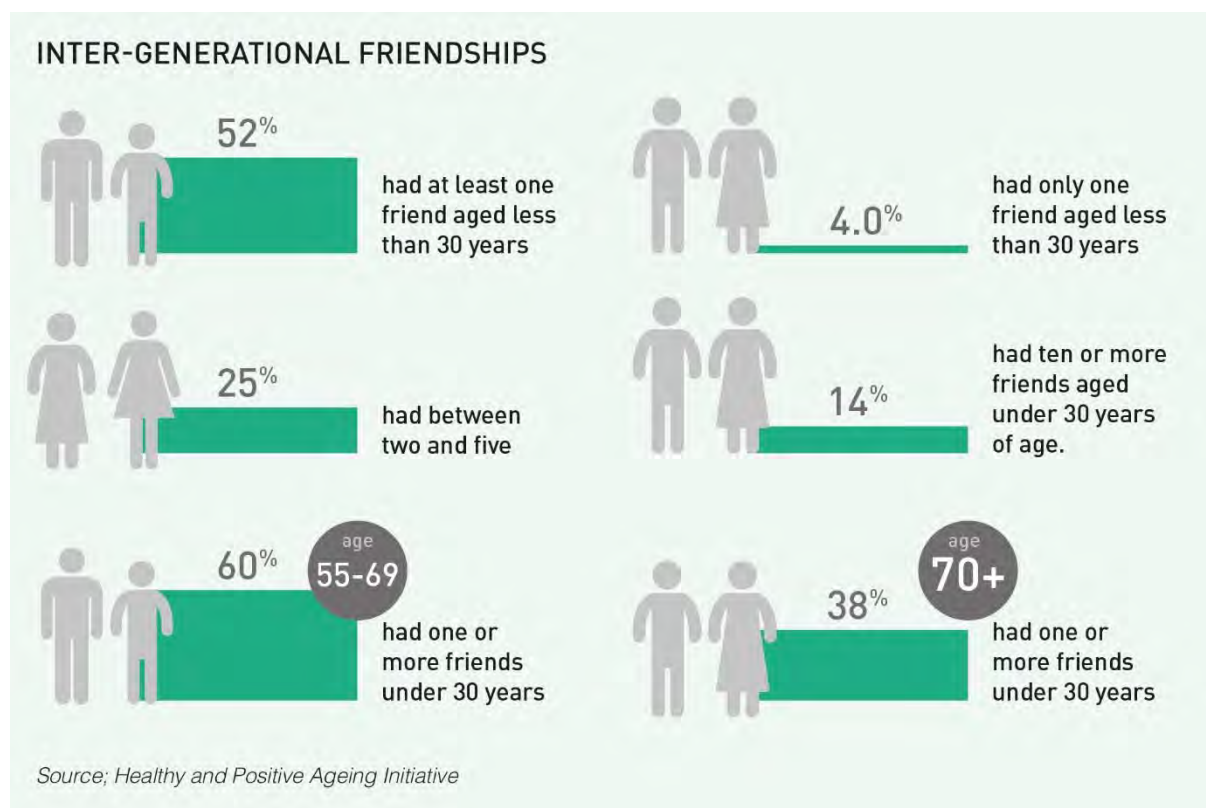
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Outcomes

- People of all ages can access information on services, entitlements, opportunities and activities easily, and through a variety of means
- Older people can make informed decisions and choices about what really matters to them

Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative survey, Department of Health. (2016)



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8. Theme Eight: Community support and health services

Our goal is to provide older people with easily accessible health and community services and with help with, and access to, everyday activities and high quality home care and residential facilities.

Why this is important;

Older people want to stay healthy and independent. Investment in quality community-based health services can keep older people healthy and reduce their use of in-patient and out-patient hospital services. Home support services and, at the end of life, compassionate outreach services, make it possible for older people to stay in their own homes. Older people want to exercise real choice and control through a comprehensive and integrated range of affordable, easily accessible, high quality, Age Friendly community supports and health services.

What older people told us;

- There is a tangible sense of pride in Tullamore Hospital which was frequently described, by older people, as a key community 'asset'
- One's health and one's housing in the eyes of many older people go hand in hand with appropriate housing often described as an enabler for good health
- The important role for prevention of falls and other injuries and the interest of older people in keeping fit, active and eating well and thereby reducing their use of in-patient and out-patient hospital services
- The need for more 'how to' information on and opportunities for keeping fit and healthy
- The role for community assets in supporting an increase in physical activity amongst older people
- Lack of confidence / awareness in how to use existing facilities such as the Birr Outdoor Gym
- The important role played by home support services in respect of very basic assistance with chores and housekeeping
- The difficulties which can be experienced in securing easy, accessible transport to hospitals outside the county
- The need for greater availability of respite care

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- The trauma and uncertainty that can be experienced by families following sudden admissions of older people to hospital or long stay care
- Challenges that can be involved in accessing and navigating one's way around key health services

Action	Lead Agency
<p>8.1 Support the local hospital and health facilities to adhere to Age Friendly standards and older person preferences through a programme of facilitated engagement involving Tullamore Hospital and local older people on 'walkability' and 'wayfinding' programmes.</p>	<p>Health Service Executive</p>
<p>8.2 Scale up and extend the proven social prescribing for health and wellbeing model.</p>	<p>Offaly Local Development Company</p>
<p>8.3 Support older people to exercise real choice and control by promoting the need to record and review their personal preferences for future medical, financial and personal care through the Think Ahead or other 'preparedness pack'</p>	<p>Health Service Executive</p>
<p>8.4 Explore the concept of an Offaly walking passport to support older people to enjoy a healthy and active lifestyle.</p>	<p>Offaly Sports Partnership</p>
<p>8.5 Support the development and promotion of a calendar of suitable events and activities for older people to, over time, include park runs, park walks, cycle and walk ways, Tai Chi in the park, signed walking routes, programmes on how to use public gym equipment, recipes for healthy eating etc.</p>	<p>Offaly Sports Partnership Library Services Health Service Executive</p>

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Outcomes

- Older people can make informed decisions and choices about what really matters to them
- Community support and health services are conveniently located and easily accessible
- Better preventative services increase wellbeing and reduce demand for acute care services
- Older people live independently for longer
- Family carers experience more support and less stress

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Glossary of Terms

Older People's Network

The Older People's Network represents the views of Older People to the Alliance and works with the Alliance to deliver the agreed strategy. It empowers older people to participate in all the working groups and address many of the issues identified through the baseline/consultation process. Members are drawn from Older Person's Group and individuals not affiliated to any group or organisation.

Age Friendly Alliance

The Age Friendly Alliance is the group of senior managers from local government, health, transport and voluntary services, the Gardai, third level institutions and other sectors dealing with older people.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) was created in 1948 by member states of the United Nations (UN) as a specialised agency with a broad mandate for health. The WHO is the world's leading health organisation. Its policies and programmes have a far-reaching impact on the status of international public health.

Age Friendly Ireland

Established in January 2014 as an intermediary organisation, it coordinates the national Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme. Age Friendly Ireland brings together supports and provides technical guidance to the 31 local authority led multi agency Age Friendly City and County Programmes

The Healthy Offaly Plan

This plan has been prepared as a living document which is flexible enough to respond to the key challenges which lie ahead. A number of key themes, such as Physical Activity, Mental Health, Alcohol /Tobacco /Substance Misuse will be developed each year and annexed to the plan in the form of annual actions to be achieved.

Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) aims to develop, co-ordinate and implement local and community development programmes such as the Healthy Offaly Plan. Working with a range of organisations (i.e. Offaly Local Development Company, HSE, Offaly County Council etc.) and groups, the LCDC is well equipped and positioned to support Healthy Offaly in responding to local people's needs.

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Health Ageing Initiative (HaPAI)

The Department of Health is leading a joint national programme with the HSE and the Atlantic Philanthropies aimed at measuring progress towards the objective of making Ireland a great place in which to grow old. This project, the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI) operates on a national and local level (2014 – 2019)

National Indicators; The first national report containing indicators of positive ageing was published in November 2016. The report will be published on a biennial basis after the term of this Initiative

Research and Data mining; The Initiative has established a research fund to commission targeted additional once-off research to fill identified gaps in existing data required to cover all indicators, or configuration of future services and supports for older people; relevant to the design

Development of indicators at local authority level, using data collected on a county by county basis

Acknowledgements

Ms Anna Marie Delaney Chief Executive of Offaly County Council and Chairperson of the Alliance together with the Alliance members, wish to acknowledge the collaboration and interagency working which took place in the preparation of this strategy.

We would especially like to thank all older people in Offaly who responded to the consultation process and hope that this strategy reflects their opinions.

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