

Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2025 - 2028







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WELCOME MESSAGE FROM WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

Embracing Age-Friendly Living: Introducing the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2025-2028

As the Cathaoirleach of Westmeath County Council Cllr Aoife Davitt, and the Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council Mr Barry Kehoe, we are delighted to unveil the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2025-2028. This visionary document embodies our commitment to creating a county where individuals of all ages are cherished, included, and empowered to thrive.

A County steeped in community and heritage, nestled amidst vibrant towns and picturesque landscapes, Westmeath is renowned for its strong sense of community and cultural heritage. As our population ages in alignment with global trends, we view this demographic shift as an opportunity to uphold Westmeath's legacy as a place where older adults can lead active, independent lives while remaining deeply connected to their communities. A collective responsibility towards Age Friendly initiatives, the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy underscores our shared obligation to anticipate and address the evolving needs of our aging population. By fostering inclusive, accessible environments that support older adults, we not only enhance their quality of life but also fortify the social and economic fabric of our county for the benefit of all residents.

The voices of older adults with lived experiences and insights has guided us in shaping this strategy, ensuring that their perspectives and expertise are at the forefront identifying, prioritising and shaping actions. I would like to sincerely thank all those who engaged with us through consultations and workshops, particularly the members of the Westmeath Older People's Council, for their invaluable contribution.

Paving the way towards Age Friendly communities, this comprehensive strategy outlines actionable steps in key areas such as transportation, housing, public spaces, social engagement, healthcare services, and civic involvement. It builds upon existing initiatives while aligning with both the national Age Friendly Ireland Programme and our broader community development objectives.

We eagerly anticipate collaborating with our partners, community organisations, service providers, and older residents to implement this strategy in the years ahead. Together, we will uphold Westmeath's reputation as a vibrant and inclusive environment where individuals can live, work, and age gracefully.



Cllr Aoife Davitt
Cathaoirleach
Westmeath County Council



Barry Kehoe
Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council
Chairperson of the Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE WESTMEATH OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

As Chairperson of Westmeath Older People's Council, I am very pleased to welcome this new Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2025-2028. This is an important document for older people in our county, as it clearly shows that their voices are being heard and valued.

As we navigate the changing demographics of our beloved Westmeath, it is crucial to ensure that all individuals, regardless of age, feel valued and supported within our communities. The unveiling of the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2025-2028 marks a significant milestone in our commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for residents of all ages. A vision for inclusivity and connection, the strategy reflects our shared vision for a county where every individual is embraced for their unique contributions. By actively involving older members of our community in the planning process, we have crafted a strategy that resonates with their needs and aspirations.

This strategy is about more than just words on a page — it is about working together to create positive change. Older people from across Westmeath have contributed to this strategy, sharing their views, concerns, and ideas about how to make our communities more inclusive, accessible, and supportive for people as they age. It is heartening to see these contributions reflected in the actions set out in this plan ensuring that older people can remain active, independent, and connected within their own communities.

The Older People's Council will continue to play an active role in this work, representing the views of older citizens and working through partnerships with community groups, service providers, and local stakeholders, we aim to implement practical solutions that benefit all residents. From transportation improvements to enhanced social participation opportunities, the strategy outlines actionable steps to address the evolving needs of our aging population.

Join us on this transformative journey as we work together to ensure that Westmeath remains a vibrant and welcoming place for individuals to live, work, and thrive at every stage of life. Let's embrace the spirit of inclusivity and collaboration as we embark on this exciting endeavor towards a more Age Friendly future.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this strategy, including the Older People's Council members, Age Friendly Alliance members, the Older People's Forum, Age Friendly Service Providers Forum members and staff of Westmeath County Council Age Friendly Programme and I look forward to working together in the future and seeing the positive impact of the Age Friendly Strategy in the years ahead.



Anne Drury
Chairperson
Westmeath Older People's Council

INTRODUCTION

Westmeath Age Friendly Programme established in 2011 operates within the National Age Friendly programme framework. This Age Friendly Strategy for County Westmeath 2025-2028 has been developed to align with a broad range of national, regional, and international policies, strategies, and frameworks that support positive and healthy ageing. These documents provide important direction and context for how communities, service providers, and local authorities can work together to create more inclusive, accessible, and supportive environments for older people.

The Strategy reflects key policy priorities in areas such as health and wellbeing, housing, transport, community development, accessibility, and social inclusion. It builds upon commitments set out in national initiatives like Healthy Ireland, Housing for All, and Sláintecare, as well as international frameworks such as the World Health Organisation's Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide and the Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Cities and Communities.

At a local level, the Strategy is informed by existing plans and policies that shape the social, economic, and physical development of Westmeath, including the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021–2027 and the Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2023–2028.

The successful implementation of the programme relies on an active Older People's Council, an Age Friendly Alliance, an Age Friendly Programme Manager, an Age Friendly Homes Co-ordinator, an Age Friendly Housing Technical Advisor and an interdepartmental group within the local authority.

The local Age Friendly Alliance is a high level cross-sector group, chaired by the Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council. The member agencies of Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance form a strategic partnership to develop and oversee the Age Friendly Strategy. Members include the local authority, Elected Members, the Health Service Executive, Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board, An Garda Síochána, the Chamber of Commerce, the Technological University of the Shannon, Citizens Information Centre, TFI Local Link, Westmeath Community Development (LDC), the Department of Social Protection and representatives from the Older People's Council (OPC).

Westmeath Older People's Council is a representative group of older people, established by the Westmeath County Council as part of the local Age Friendly Programme. The Older People's Council is a two tier structure with an elected Committee and a wider forum membership base. Westmeath Older People's Council identifies priority areas of need, raises issues of importance, influences the decision making process of the local Age Friendly Programme and also participates in national level structures. The key purpose of the Older People's Council is to provide the authentic voice of older people representing the diversity that exists among our ageing population. Westmeath Older People's Council representatives are key collaborators and stakeholders who co-design the actions and objectives of the Age Friendly Strategy.

*(A full list of relevant national and international policy documents and frameworks that have informed this Strategy is provided in **Appendix 1**)*

THE AGE FRIENDLY MOVEMENT – GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

World Health Organisation Age Friendly Cities and Communities

The Global Age Friendly concept emerged in the early 2000s via the World Health Organisation. The World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme was launched in 2006 and the Westmeath Age Friendly Programme is the localised county initiative. The World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Cities & Communities Guides provides a framework which helps communities to become more supportive of older people by addressing their needs across eight themes:



The WHO defines an “Age Friendly” community as “one in which service providers, public officials, community leaders, faith leaders, business people and citizens recognize the great diversity among older people, promotes their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life, respects their decisions and lifestyle choices and anticipates and responds flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences”.

According to the World Health Organisation and the United Nations, population ageing is both one of humanity's greatest triumphs and one of its greatest challenges. Notwithstanding further increases in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy in the coming decades, it has been proposed that the expected increase in the sheer numbers of people over the age of 65 years will lead to increased demands on our health and welfare services in particular.

In an Age Friendly community, policies, programmes, services and infrastructure related to the physical and social environment are designed to enable older people to live in security, enjoy good health and continue to participate in society in a meaningful way. It takes into account the biological, psychological, behavioural, economic, social and environmental factors that operate over the course of a person's life to determine health and well-being in later years. Making Westmeath Age Friendly is one of the most effective policy approaches for responding to demographic ageing.

NATIONAL AGE FRIENDLY IRELAND SHARED SERVICE

Age Friendly Ireland is a shared service of local government hosted by Meath County Council. The shared service manages the national Age Friendly Programme, affiliated to the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities and Communities Network. The national programme is operated through a team-based framework of 35 local Age Friendly Programmes hosted in each local authority with an appointed Age Friendly Programme Manager. In addition, there are 6 regions overseen by Regional Age Friendly Programme Managers.

The National Age Friendly Shared Service supports cities, counties, towns, villages, and rural communities across Ireland to prepare for the rapid ageing of our population by paying increased attention to the environmental, economic and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.

Age Friendly Programmes work to provide walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to key services and opportunities for older people to participate in community activities. By doing so, these communities are better equipped to become great places, and even lifelong homes, for people of all ages.

Local Age Friendly Programmes are informed by a positive ageing perspective and seek to enhance and improve the lives of older people across the country by giving them a voice in the decision-making processes that affect their ability to live full and active lives. Initiatives focus on areas such as housing, transport, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combating isolation among older citizens.

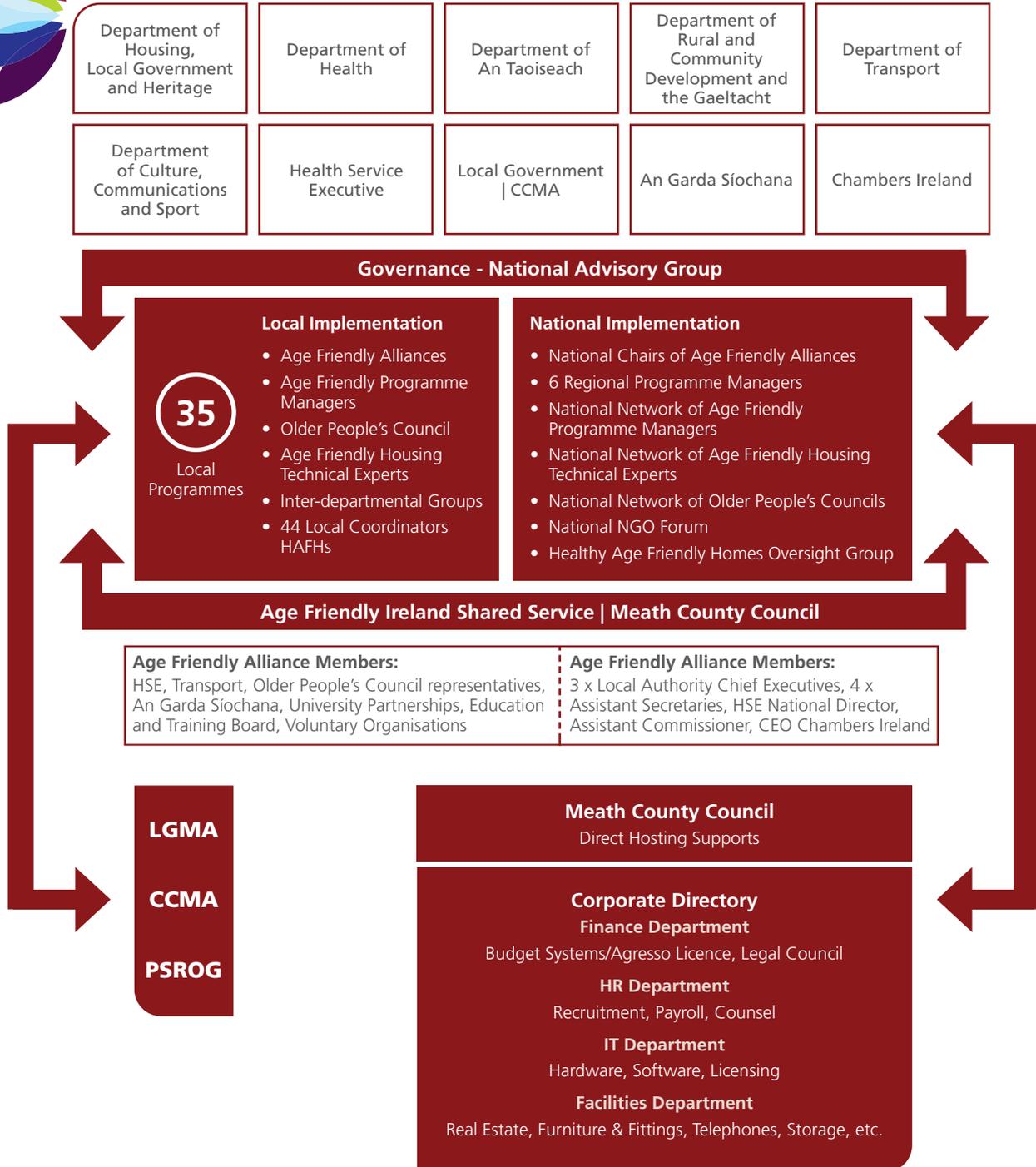


NATIONAL AGE FRIENDLY IRELAND SHARED SERVICE

Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service Structure



Structures & Governance



NATIONAL AGE FRIENDLY IRELAND SHARED SERVICE

Since the establishment of the Age Friendly programme, best practice models have been developed nationally for:

- Age Friendly Towns
- Age Friendly Housing
- Age Friendly Libraries
- Age Friendly Hospitals and Primary Care Centres
- Age Friendly Business Recognition Scheme
- Age Friendly Parking
- Age Friendly Public Realm
- Age Friendly Train Stations
- And Others

For further details on Age Friendly programmes please visit www.agefriendlyireland.ie

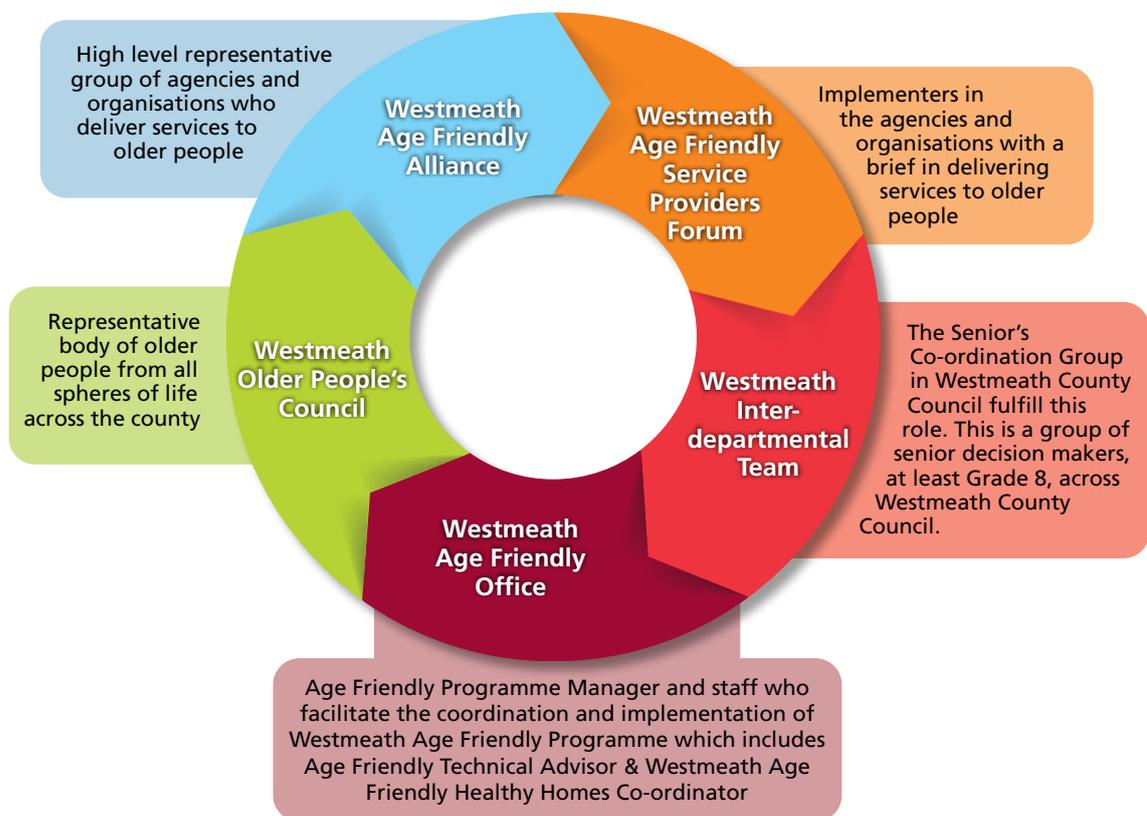


WESTMEATH AGE FRIENDLY STRUCTURE

Westmeath County Council has long recognised that older people are a valuable resource to the county and have much expertise, experience and resources to assist the county's growth. We also recognise the changing demographics across the country and in Westmeath. Since 2011 the Westmeath Age Friendly programme has developed significantly and has incorporated Age Friendly actions into mainstream programmes including Town & Village, CIÁR, Outdoor Recreational & Infrastructure (ORIS), Sports Partnership, Healthy Ireland, Sláintecare Healthy Communities, SICAP and other mainstream programmes. Among our aims is to ensure that Age Friendly and older people are considered and their needs are addressed under as many programmes across the county as possible.

Our progress to date:

- **2011** - Westmeath County Council first engaged in the All Ireland Age Friendly Programme whereupon they appointed a Westmeath Age Friendly Programme Manager and developed the Age Friendly Structures in the county.
- **2013 - 2016** - Developed and implemented first Westmeath Age Friendly County Strategy.
- **2018** - Westmeath County Council became an affiliate member to the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Programme.
- **2017 - 2023** - Annual work plans developed and implemented which increased the expertise of the Age Friendly structures, much learning has been attained to inform Westmeath's second Age Friendly Strategy 2025 – 2028.



WESTMEATH AGE FRIENDLY ALLIANCE

The Age Friendly Alliance is a high level cross-sectoral group that forms a strategic partnership to develop and oversee the implementation of the Westmeath Age Friendly Programme and the Age Friendly Strategy. The Age Friendly Alliance works within existing community structures, networks and service providers to make Westmeath a great place in which to grow old.

The Age Friendly Alliance is chaired by the Chief Executive of Westmeath County Council and is made up of decision makers from key organisations as well as representatives from the Older People's Council. The Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance meets regularly throughout the year.

Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance Membership:

- Chief Executive, Westmeath County Council
- An Garda Síochána
- Department of Social Protection
- Elected Representative
- Health Service Executive (HSE)
- Longford Westmeath Education Training Board (LWETB)
- Representatives from Westmeath Older People's Council
- Technological University of the Shannon (TUS)
- TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon
- Westmeath Citizen's Information
- Westmeath Community Development (WCD)
- Westmeath Age Friendly Programme Manager



WESTMEATH OLDER PEOPLE'S COUNCIL

The Westmeath Older People's Council provides a means by which older adults can have their voices heard and take a more active role in decision making in their communities. As part of the Older People's Council people can raise issues of importance, inform the decision making process and help to shape the Westmeath Age Friendly Programme. The Older People's Council is a vital link between local, regional and national networks. The voice of the older person sits as an equal partner on the Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance. Older People's Councils play an extremely important role in policy development, strategy implementation and monitoring across the entire local government sector. The Older People's Council also provides a vital platform to share information about services, activities and programmes to the wider older person's forum throughout the county.

The Older People's Council is a two tiered structure that represents a wide membership base representing all older people in the community. It has an elected Older People's Committee and a large forum membership consisting of all Age Friendly groups in the County. The Older People's Committee membership is made up of elected individual older people and Age Friendly groups. The Committee is elected by the full membership every two years.

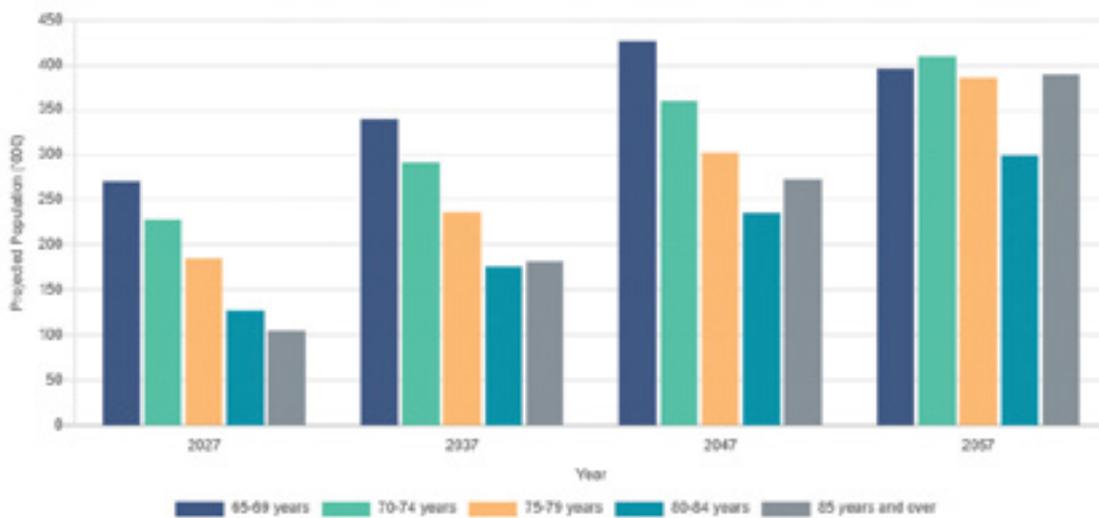
The Westmeath Older People's Council meets regularly throughout the year and host an annual AGM event.



AN AGEING POPULATION

People in Ireland are living longer, healthier, and more active lives, and this is something to be celebrated. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) projects that the number of people aged 65 and over will almost double, increasing from 15% of the population in 2023 to between 28% and 32% by 2057, depending on migration patterns. The number of people aged 80 and over is also expected to grow significantly, potentially doubling or even tripling by 2041-2051.

Projected population aged 65 years and over by age group and year (M2 projection scenario)



Source: CSO 2022

An ageing population brings with it important challenges, particularly in how we plan and deliver public services, health and social care, housing, and infrastructure. However, it also presents meaningful opportunities for communities to become more inclusive, supportive and Age Friendly. Providing places where people of all ages can live well, stay connected and actively participate in their community.

As people grow older, their needs and priorities may change - but their value as active citizens, neighbours, volunteers, carers, and contributors to community life remains constant. Ensuring that communities are welcoming, accessible, and supportive for older people is at the heart of this strategy.

Population Ageing in Ireland

5,100,200 total population
768,900 people aged 65 and over in 2022

The population aged 65 and over has increased by 35% since 2013, (considerably higher than the EU average increase of 17.3%)

1.3 million projected population of 65+ by 2042
Ireland has highest life expectancy at birth of EU-27

Life expectancy is continuing to increase, currently standing at 84 years for women and 81 years for men

Health in Ireland Key Trends 2022

Prepared by the
Department of Health,
gov.ie/health

Census 2022 Preliminary Results

Ireland has the highest self-perceived health status in the EU, with 82.1% of people rating their health as good or very good

Source: Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service Office

Addressing the needs of an ageing population requires joined-up, community-focused solutions. It involves fostering strong social networks, promoting participation, ensuring suitable housing options, providing accessible transport, and creating environments that enable people to remain active, independent, and connected within their communities for as long as possible.



PROFILE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN WESTMEATH

As part of the development of the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy, consideration has been given to the latest available Census data for County Westmeath, 2022. This analysis provides an essential evidence base for understanding the demographic profile of older people in the county and informing the priorities of the Strategy.

Specifically, the Strategy examines:

- **The density and distribution of older people (aged 65 years and over)** across urban and rural areas of Westmeath, identifying areas with higher concentrations of older residents.
- **The number of older people living with a disability**, recognising that this group may have additional support, accessibility, and service needs.
- **The prevalence of older people living alone**, acknowledging the increased risk of social isolation and vulnerability within this cohort.

This data has been mapped and cross-referenced with consultation feedback to ensure that the Strategy's actions are targeted, equitable, and responsive to the real needs of Westmeath's older population.

Westmeath 65+ CSO Statistics 2022



Total Population of Westmeath **96,221**

Population of Westmeath 65+ **14,369 (15%)**

↑ An increase from **11,370** in 2016

National % increase in 65+ since 2016



Westmeath % increase in 65+ since 2016



3.9% higher than the national average

Population by Town (+65)



Town	Population (+65)
Athlone	3,026
Mullingar	2,926
Moate	452
Castlepollard	231
Kinnegad	219
Kilbeggan	181



Disability of 65+

Disability to:

Any Extent	Great Extent	Some Extent
6,305	2,649	3,656

Over 65 Living Alone



Total	Male	Female
3,446	1,405	2,041

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT AND CONSULTATION

The Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2025 - 2028 is informed by the ever increasing demographics of older people in the county. Westmeath County Council and Westmeath Older People's Council undertook a consultation process from April 2024 to May 2025.

Phase 1 incorporated three consultation sessions with older people - 72 community & voluntary groups, the majority of which were older people's groups, agency support groups to older people also participated. An online survey was circulated through Westmeath PPN. In addition, an in-person survey was carried out at the Well Westmeath 2025 event and at the Westmeath Community Development's Disability & Age Friendly Information Day 2025.

Phase 2 of the process included consulting with the Age Friendly service provider's forum - this process targeted a multitude of agencies and stakeholders representing statutory agencies, local development agencies, voluntary organisations and community organisations who have a role in delivering older people's services.

Phase 3 Consultation with the Senior Co-ordination Group of Westmeath County Council who fulfil the role of the Interdepartmental Team.

Phase 4 Seek final recommendation from Older People's Council June 2025

Phase 5 Presentation to SPC for Housing, Community, Recreation and Culture July 2025

Phase 6 Consultation and approval from Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance July 2025

Phase 7 Presentation and adoption of the Age Friendly Strategy by Westmeath Full County Council July 2025

Phase 8 Launch of adopted Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2025 - 2028 October 2025

MAIN FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH OLDER PEOPLE

Consultation with older people in Westmeath has identified a number of consistent needs and priorities across all eight WHO Age Friendly themes. The following main observations emerged:



Outdoor Spaces and Building - Accessibility and Inclusive Design

Older people highlighted the need for improvements in the physical environment of towns, villages, and public amenities to make them more Age Friendly. This includes better footpath surfaces, accessible canal walks, more public toilets, and comfortable, accessible community meeting spaces. Age Friendly seating and communal gardens with outdoor exercise equipment were also suggested as important amenities to support active and connected communities.



Transportation - Accessible, Coordinated and Responsive Transport

Transport remains a major issue for older people, particularly in rural areas. Challenges include poor communication on transport options and timetables, lack of evening services, insufficient local transport for medical appointments and errands and poor interconnectivity between services (e.g. bus and train schedules). Expanding Local Link services, improving Age Friendly parking, and providing seating and shelters at bus stops were also highlighted as essential.



Housing - Suitable Housing and Independent Living Supports

Older people expressed a need for more suitable housing options to support safe and dignified ageing in place. There is a call for greater support around downsizing, home adaptations, small repair services, personal alarms, and increased Garda visibility to promote a sense of security in their homes.



Respect & Social Inclusion - Tackling Isolation and Supporting Social Inclusion

A clear message emerged around the need to address loneliness and social isolation, particularly among those living alone. Older people called for expanded befriending services, intergenerational projects, local outreach initiatives, and awareness campaigns to positively challenge stereotypes and raise the visibility and value of older people in the community.



Social Participation - Affordable, Accessible Social Participation Opportunities

Older people in Westmeath are keen to stay active and engaged but need more affordable and accessible activities, trips, and group workshops. The provision of local, inclusive and affordable leisure and cultural opportunities, including Age Friendly outdoor amenities and sporting & cultural facilities are seen as vital in promoting social participation and wellbeing.

MAIN FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATIONS WITH OLDER PEOPLE



Communication & Information - Better Communication and Accessible Information

There is a strong demand for a more inclusive approach to communication and consultation. Many older people feel excluded by an over reliance on digital only communication. Calls were made for clear, accessible signage, print materials, and a centralised source of local activity and event information. Computer skills training tailored for older people was also highlighted as a priority for those wishing to engage digitally.



Civic Participation and Employment - Meaningful Civic Participation and Age Friendly Business Culture

Older people want to be actively involved in decision making processes that affect their lives. There is a desire for greater inclusion in local civic initiatives, the adoption of Age Friendly principles by businesses, and increased awareness around issues such as climate action. A diverse and supported Age Friendly structure in the county was viewed as a key enabler of this participation.



Community Supports and Health Services - Accessible, Affordable Health and Community Supports

Older people identified ongoing challenges in accessing affordable healthcare and community supports. Key issues include high medication costs, long waiting times for hospital services, limited home help hours, and gaps in mental health and dementia supports. The need for more affordable chiropody services, nutritional advice, overnight care options, and proactive, preventative work by Public Health Nurses was also emphasised.

Implementating the Strategy

Responsibility for implementing this strategy lies with the Age Friendly Programme Manager, Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance and Older People's Council.

Westmeath Age Friendly Alliance will oversee implementation through its regular meetings. Lead Agencies will provide progress reports for Alliance meetings.

An Annual Report will be produced outlining progress for each year of the strategy.

A Midterm Review of the strategy will take place mid 2027.

Westmeath Age Friendly Programme Manager will attend National and Regional Age Friendly Ireland meetings and work directly with the national office on specific initiatives where required.



THEME 1 OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS



MAKE WAY DAY ANNUAL PARTICIPATION & WALKABILITY AUDITS

Issue: Older people have difficulty navigating streets due to accessibility issues.

Action: Westmeath County Council hosts an annual Make Way Day, this is a day of action to highlight the difficulties and dangers that wheelie bins, vehicles and other obstacles placed on footpaths create for people with reduced mobility. A number of walkability audits have also taken place in the county as part of the Town Centre First regeneration programme.

THEME 1 - OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

Goal

Older people will be enabled by the built and social environment through the creation of accessible, pleasant, safe and walkable communities and Age Friendly spaces.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
1.1	Walkability study to be carried out in three towns/ villages in the county in line with Town Centre First Plans. Age Friendly Guidelines, CEUD Guidelines & NTA toolkit "Universal Design – Walkability Audit tool for Roads & Streets"	3 walkability study reports completed by 2025	WCC TCF & Community OPC Disability WG	2025
1.2	Increase public toilets and seating on Greenways & Blueways & public areas	Identify suitable locations Number of additional seating & toilets installed	WCC MD Offices Community Section	2025 - 2028
1.3	Ensure that the County Development Plan (CDP), Housing Action Plan, Local Area Plans, and other key Local Authority plans together with planning guidelines incorporate relevant universal design and Age Friendly concepts and principles.	Universal Design Training & Awareness, Alignment of objectives and references in CDP to current national policy and guideline for UD AF homes	WCC Planning	2027 - 2028
1.4	Pedestrian Crossings - audit of pedestrian crossings in 2 towns/ villages per Municipal District per annum. Retrofit as necessary to take account of disability and inclusion	Completed audit reports and number of retrofitted crossings as NTA toolkit "Universal Design – Walkability Audit tool for Roads & Streets"	WCC MD Offices Disability WG	2025 - 2028
1.5	All Rural Support Schemes have regard to the needs of older people.	Number of schemes incorporating Age Friendly principles.	WCC Community	2025 - 2028
1.6	Making community spaces more accessible and comfortable for older people by making them more energy efficient and improving accessibility	Energy grant information sessions for community groups. Number of WCC community facilities upgraded	WCC Climate Action Co-ordinator WCC Property Management Community Section	2025 - 2028
1.7	Increase number of Changing Places facilities across the county	3 new facilities installed	WCC Community	2025 - 2026
1.8	Support the use of outdoor amenities by older people by ensuring that council owned facilities are Age Friendly	Pursue Age Friendly status for Belvedere House & Gardens and Dun ns Sí	WCC Community	2026 -2027
1.9	Affordable access for older people to Belvedere House & Gardens, Athlone Castle, Mullingar & Athlone swimming pools	Reduced fees	WCC MD Offices	2025
1.10	Pursue Age Friendly status for a flagship sporting facility/ venue in Westmeath	Age Friendly status achieved	WCC Community and partner location	2026 -2027



THEME 2 TRANSPORTATION



THE SLÁINTECARE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES RAPID ATHLONE GARDA COMMUNITY MINIBUS

Issue: There was a need identified by older people's groups for additional transport supports.

Action: The Rapid Athlone Garda Community Minibus Project was fully funded by the Sláintecare Healthy Communities programme in 2023. This RAPID Athlone community transport initiative provides a 16-seat disability accessible minibus, which is operated by the Athlone Community Gardaí and accessed by older people's groups in Athlone and surrounding areas.

THEME 2 - TRANSPORTATION

Goal

Older people will be able to go where they want, when they want with safe, accessible, reliable and comfortable transport services and infrastructure.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
2.1	Signs for trains and buses similar to those on Luas "Please give up your seat for older person or less able" Consideration given to other signage to avoid clutter Promotion of TFI Local Link LWR's "Please Offer Me a Seat" badge	Signage installed	NTA Bus Éireann Irish Rail TFI Local Link LWR Private Transport Operators	2026
2.2	Maximise NTA funding to WCC to improve bus stop infrastructure in Westmeath. Consideration should be given to design of footpath to improve accessibility for bus passengers.	Additional bus stops and shelters Improved egress from footpath to bus	WCC Transport NTA	2025 - 2028
2.3	Route planners will maximise connections to ensure service alignment to the greatest extent possible	Maximise use of routes	WCC Transport NTA	2025 - 2028
2.4	Promote the National Transport Authority's Journey Planner to assist people with timetable interconnectivity.	Communication campaign	TFI Local Link LWR NTA	2025 - 2026
2.5	Consult with Irish Rail regarding the potential to undertake an Age Friendly audit of Mullingar and Athlone Train Stations to determine actions required to achieve Age Friendly status by building on existing improvements	Age Friendly status achieved	Irish Rail WCC Community TFI Local Link LWR AFISSO	2026 - 2027
2.6	Request access within Athone Bus Station for TFI Local Link buses to provide for safer access for older customers	Access granted	TFI Local Link LWR Bus Éireann	2025 - 2026
2.7	Age Friendly Parking - request Age Friendly Parking spaces in main towns, near strategic areas e.g. Post office, credit union, doctors surgery.	(a) Develop a policy for Age Friendly Parking in Westmeath. (b) Make provision in Westmeath CDP for Age Friendly parking	WCC Community Section Planning Dept	2025 - 2026 2027 - 2028
2.8	Roll out Back in 5 Mins Campaign, crack down on those who park in disability spaces/footpaths or at bus stops	Communication campaign	WCC MD Offices AGS	2025 - 2026
2.9	Extend Just A Minute (JAM) training for transport personnel on Demand Responsive Transport routes.	Training completed and awareness campaign	TFI Local Link LWR	2025 - 2026
2.10	Feasibility study/research into local model for community car. Investigate national and international best practice models.	Feasibility study for community car model completed.	TFI Local Link LWR WCD HSE WCC TCF	2025 - 2026



THEME 3 HOUSING



AGE FRIENDLY HOUSING – ESKER PARK, ATHLONE

Issue: Older people identified the need for Age Friendly housing.

Action: The development of 23 housing units was allocated to social housing need, in particular five units were identified as suitable for older people. The suitability of these units for older people was identified at design stage.

The allocation of the five units, commensurate with their suitability for older people, was based on Westmeath County Council's allocations policy and prioritisation strategy.

Esker Park achieved a BER rating of A2 and complies with TGD Part L requirements.

THEME 3 - HOUSING

Goal

Older people can stay living independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and to provide appropriate continuum of housing choices and options.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
3.1	Maximise Local Authority Housing Adaptation budgets to support older people to live independently in their homes.	Number of adaptations completed	WCC Housing DHLGH	2025 - 2028
3.2	Publication: Ten Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home: Promote this important document to housing developers.	Awareness campaign	WCC Community Section WCC Housing WCC Planning AHBs	2025 - 2026
3.3	Age Friendly Ireland together with Technical Advisors are seeking an increase in Universal Design Dwellings in all new housing schemes to be written into development plans. CEUD publication Universal Design for Homes in Ireland, 2015 and Universal Design Homes Checklist to be utilised by all Design Teams to inform and apply UD principles for all new homes	Target included in Westmeath County Development Plan 2028-2034	WCC Housing & Planning AF Technical Advisor Housing Capital Staff AHBs Private Developers	2027 - 2028
3.4	Age Friendly Technical Advisor to assess Age Friendly suitability in acquisition of new housing sites	Number of suitable sites acquired	WCC Housing	2025 - 2028
3.5	Delivery of Westmeath Age Friendly Housing in accordance with Westmeath Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026	18 Age Friendly Homes in 2025 and 22 in 2026	WCC Housing WCC Planning Dept	2025 - 2026
3.6	Develop a new Rightsizing Policy in line with Age Friendly Ireland's Rightsizing Guide	Policy developed & implemented	WCC Housing Age Friendly Healthy Homes Co-ordinator	2025 - 2028
3.7	Feasibility study for Age Friendly housing in rural towns & villages with high density of older people	Study completed	AF Technical Advisor WCC Housing & Planning Dept	2025 - 2027
3.8	Work with the National Shared Service Office to make business case for additional Healthy Age Friendly Homes Co-Ordinator based on success to date and considerable positive impact on older people in Westmeath	Additional staff member appointed. Increased number of engagements	AFISSO WCC OPC	2025
3.9	Support, promote and extend the Care & Repair scheme	Increased engagement	WCD	2025 - 2028
3.10	Facilitate the delivery of "Home Safety talks"	Number of talks presented	Westmeath Libraries	2025-2028

THEME 3 - HOUSING

Goal

Older people can stay living independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and to provide appropriate continuum of housing choices and options.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
3.11	Organise Energy Seminar to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and assistance on grants available to older people • SEAI Grants • Switching providers 	Annual information event	Climate Action Co-ordinator	2025 - 2028
3.12	Deliver crime prevention information to older people	Number of presentations given	An Garda Síochána	2026 - 2028
3.13	Garda "Call back" to victims of abuse/ crime to provide advice and support	Recorded on Pulse	An Garda Síochána	2025 - 2028



THEME 4 RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION



**LIVE LONGER & PROSPER PROGRAMME –
IMPLEMENTED BY WESTMEATH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT &
SUPPORTED BY HEALTHY IRELAND, WESTMEATH.**

Issue: Older people identified social isolation as a major issue.

Action: The Live Longer & Prosper programme is implemented on an annual basis to target older adults living in Westmeath, including those who participate in older people's groups, as well as isolated people engaging with Westmeath Community Development's Befriending and Care & Repair service.

The programme is delivered in 5 locations across the county for 5 weeks. Each session comprises an activity, education/information session and social engagement such as arts & crafts, IT, music, healthy eating. Information is also provided on supports available, such as Alzheimer's disease, personal alarms and MABS.

THEME 4 - RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Goal

Older people will be truly valued, integrated and respected in their communities via social inclusion supports.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
4.1	Support Westmeath Older People's Council and ensure it is representative of the diversity of older people. Promote membership to older people from all economic and cultural backgrounds	Meetings every 6-8 weeks.	OPC WCC Community	2025 - 2028
4.2	Implement Age Friendly projects Did I Ever Tell You? and Playful Pathways to Senior Vitality	Projects completed	Westmeath Library & Arts Team	2025 - 2026
4.3	To maintain Age Friendly Libraries status	Age Friendly status maintained for all Westmeath Libraries	Westmeath Libraries	2025 - 2028
4.4	To extend the My Open Library service to increase accessibility for all	MOL service available in new Kinnegad Library	Westmeath Libraries	2026
4.5	Implement pilot Grandparent and Toddler Group in Libraries	2-3 groups established	Westmeath Libraries	2025 - 2026
4.6	Ensure older people are retained as a target group in the SICAP programme and LCDC	Included in SICAP plan	LCDC WCD	2025 - 2028
4.7	Extend Befriending Programme to those most isolated in communities	Increase to 120 people getting 160 calls per week, or an additional 1000 calls per year.	WCD	2025 - 2028
4.8	Support and promote oral history projects that capture and share the life experiences of older people, as a means of enhancing intergenerational understanding and strengthening community identity.	Projects to be completed: Argentine Emigration From Mayo to Westmeath: Voices of Resettlement Columb Barracks And Me Athlone Community Service Council Memory Project.	WCC Heritage Officer	2025 - 2028
4.9	Host an annual Intergenerational Day: event and workshops with Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg	Annual event	Comhairle na nÓg YWIM	2026 - 2028
4.10	Marketing campaign highlighting positive ageing and highlights from Age Friendly Programme	Radio and newspaper features	WCC Community Section OPC	2025 - 2028

THEME 4 - RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Goal

Older people will be truly valued, integrated and respected in their communities via social inclusion supports.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
4.11	Support local community organisations to provide, and access, inclusive community education opportunities by facilitating partnerships with adult education providers and ensuring accessibility for older adults in all learning environments.	Participation numbers by age category recorded via Management Information Systems. Educational funding opportunities provided where available to community organisations e.g. Reach Funding, Adult Literacy for Life Collaboration and Innovation Funding	LWETB	2025 - 2028
4.12	Collaborate with local education providers to offer lifelong learning Age Friendly programmes tailored to interests and needs, including health, digital literacy, creative arts, and personal development.	Programmes and participation numbers by age category recorded via the LWETB Management Information Systems	LWETB	2025 - 2028
4.13	Promote Age Friendly learning environments by working with education and community providers to make physical spaces, teaching materials and communication styles inclusive and accessible (e.g. large print, plain English, one to one support)	Learner Support Service available in LWETB. Plain English training provided by the Regional Literacy Coordinator to organisations	LWETB	2025 - 2028



THEME 5 SOCIAL PARTICIPATION



BIODIVERSITY & CLIMATE ACTION WORKSHOPS

Issue: Older people reported a need for increased awareness around issues such as climate action.

Action: Westmeath County Council has provided training opportunities in the area of climate action to older people's groups in 2023 and 2024, with more planned in 2026.

THEME 5 - SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Goal

Support older people's participation in social life and provide opportunities for older people to stay socially connected to help prevent social isolation.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
5.1	Mullingar Swimming Pool - measures to improve Age Friendly access to enter swimming pool.	Improved physical access: all staff trained to use hoist. Designated Age Friendly hours	WCC MD Office	2026 - 2027
5.2	Capacity Building - deliver training and capacity building to members of Older People's Council and Age Friendly Service Providers Forum	Training delivered twice a year	WCC Community OPC	2025 - 2028
5.3	Local Recognition - include Age Friendly as a category in WCC's Community Awards Scheme	Categories included	WCC Community	2025 - 2028
5.4	National Recognition - participate in the National Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement Awards	Nominate local projects	OPC WCC Community	2025 - 2028
5.5	Increase levels of participation by older people in sporting activities throughout the county	Increased participation	Westmeath Sports Partnership Healthy Ireland	2025 - 2028
5.6	Encourage use of outdoor Age Friendly exercise equipment in the county. Provide instruction on how to safely use the machines	Awareness campaign	Westmeath Sports Partnership Healthy Ireland	2025 - 2028
5.7	Provision of community & communal spaces within new housing developments to encourage social participation among residents, in particular Older People	No of facilities provided	WCC Housing DHLGH AHBs	2025 - 2028
5.8	Host National Age Friendly Convention	Event hosted	WCC Community Section AFISSO OPC	2026
5.9	Encourage LWETB schools in Westmeath to engage older people in their communities in intergenerational activities with students	Intergenerational projects and events completed	LWETB	2025 - 2028



THEME 6 COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION



WELL WESTMEATH HEALTH LITERACY PROGRAMME FUNDED BY SLÁINTECARE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME (SHC)

Issue: Older people cited difficulty in communicating with health professionals regarding their health and wellbeing.

Action: Development of the Health Literacy training programme, which addresses and provides vital skills to the participants to gain the knowledge, motivation and competencies to access, understand, appraise and apply health information to make judgements and decisions in their everyday life.

SHC organized and delivered two Train the Trainer (QQI Level 6) courses for 12 people interested in helping to deliver health literacy in their own communities in Westmeath.

THEME 6 - COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Goal

Older people can access timely, practical, reliable and understandable information about what is happening in their communities. Older people continue to learn, develop and work.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
6.1	Computer Training - develop and support dedicated 1 to 1 Computer Training for older people, in people's own homes if possible or an accessible location	Training delivered	WCD SWEETS LWETB Volunteer Centre Libraries	2025 - 2028
6.2	Digital innovation training – AI, cyber security	Training delivered twice a year	Just Transition STEM	2025 - 2026
6.3	Promote HSE Directory of Services for older people in Westmeath	Awareness campaign	OPC PPN	2025 - 2028
6.4	Include Age Friendly Programme and activities in PPN Newsletter	Newsletter updated	WCC PPN	2025 - 2028
6.5	Encourage use of Plain English - provide training and guidelines for producing accessible content to service providers	Awareness campaign	WCC Community WCD Disability Working Group OPC	2025 - 2026
6.6	Promote Just A Minute (JAM) training to service providers and businesses in Westmeath	Training delivered	LEO Business Community Chamber of Commerce	2025 - 2028
6.7	Achieve Age Friendly status for Citizen's Information centres in Athlone and Mullingar	Age Friendly status attained	Westmeath Citizen's Information	2026
6.8	Citizen's Information will deliver Age Friendly clinics in each of their service locations in line with Citizen's Information Board Strategic Plan 2023-2026	Number of clinics held	Westmeath Citizen's Information	2025 - 2028



THEME 7 CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT



AGE FRIENDLY AGM

Issue: Older people want to be actively involved in decision making processes that affect their lives.

Action: A diverse and supported Age Friendly structure in the county is viewed as a key enabler of this participation. Westmeath County Council hosts the Age Friendly Programme in the county, providing support to the local Older People's Council, including an annual AGM event.

THEME 7 - CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT

Goal

Older people will participate in social, economic and public life.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
7.1	Age Friendly structure fully implemented and calendar of meetings held	Structure implemented	WCC Community	2025 - 2028
7.2	Age Friendly AGM and activities	Annual Event	WCC Community	2025 - 2028
7.3	Support members of Older People's Council to sit on SPCs, PPN Secretariat, Slaintecare HC LIT and LCDC	Increased representation	WCC Community PPN OPC	2025 - 2028
7.4	Deliver climate action training to older people in Westmeath	Training delivered	WCC Climate Action Co-ordinator Westmeath Libraries	2026
7.5	Promotion of volunteering opportunities to older people.	Increased number of older volunteers across Westmeath.	WCD Volunteer Centre	2025 - 2028
7.6	Promote the Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme to Westmeath business sector	Increase in number of Westmeath Businesses awarded Age Friendly Charter	LEO Chamber of Commerce Age Friendly Ireland	2025 - 2028
7.7	Maximise Shop Front Enhancement Programme to assist businesses to make their entrances Age Friendly	Number of businesses improving entrance accessibility under the Programme	LEO Local Businesses	2025 - 2028
7.8	Work with community organisations and education providers to ensure access to lifelong learning opportunities and tailored learning supports that enhance skills, confidence, and employability - whether for paid work, volunteering, or community involvement. This includes promoting flexible, Age Friendly training options and pathways into meaningful roles	Supporting data recorded via the LWETB Management Information Systems LWETB Adult Education Career Guidance Service available to all	LWETB	2025 - 2028
7.9	Support partnerships between community organisations and education providers to ensure older people have a voice in shaping educational programme offerings through participation on relevant forums/groups	Membership of relevant educational forums e.g. Regional Literacy Coalition	LWETB	2025 - 2028



THEME 8 COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES



EXWELL MEDICAL PROGRAMME

Issue: Older people identified a lack of physical exercise programmes with clinical oversight.

Action: The piloting of two “ExWell Medical” programmes. The aim of these programmes is to increase physical activity participation and physical and functional capacity of adults living with chronic illnesses. One programme is based in Athlone Regional Sports Centre and the second in the Downs GAA Club. Programmes have been extended to other rural areas and the first pilot is now being mainstreamed through the Department of Health funding.

THEME 8 - COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

Goal

Older people will lead healthier and active lives for longer. They will have easily accessible health and community services and help with access to everyday activities, high quality home care and residential facilities.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
8.1	Raise awareness of Integrated Care Programme for Older People (ICPOP) and Uisneach centre through the Living Well at Home Group. Evaluation of My Health Matters Folder	Awareness campaign across Westmeath Age Friendly Network	HSE OPC HAFH Programme	2025 - 2028
8.2	Support older people to work together to represent all older people in the community and work with local representatives on healthcare issues and agendas	Submission made to Department of Health	WCC Community Dept of Health OPC	2026 - 2027
8.3	Liaise with Mullingar Regional Hospital to determine if feasible for them to undergo the Age Friendly Hospital recognition process.	Feasibility of case study examined	HSE WCC Community	2026 - 2027
8.4	Host an annual Age Friendly & Disability Expo	Annual event	WCD	2025 - 2028
8.5	Enhance the health of older people by promoting healthy ageing focusing on the 5 Ms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minding my Memory • Minding my Mobility • Minding my Meals • Minding my Meds • What Matters to Me 	Number of programmes delivered	HSE Slaintecare Healthy Communities Healthy Ireland WCD	2025 - 2028
8.6	Host Midlands Sports Taster event	Event Implemented	WCC Community Westmeath Sports Partnership AFISSO	2025
8.7	To promote positive mental health programme through Mental Health Ireland	Awareness campaign	Healthy Ireland Mental Health Ireland	2026
8.8	Promotion of services in the county to those affected by Alzheimers	Awareness campaign	HSE Alzheimers Ireland OPC	2025 - 2028
8.9	Consult with HSE Primary Health Care Centres in Westmeath regarding the potential to undertake an Age Friendly audit to determine actions required to achieve Age Friendly status	Number of Primary Health Care Centre achieving Age Friendly Status	HSE Integrated Healthcare Area Manager WCC Community Section OPC AFISSO	2025 - 2028

THEME 8 - COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

Goal

Older people will lead healthier and active lives for longer. They will have easily accessible health and community services and help with access to everyday activities, high quality home care and residential facilities.

Action No:	Actions	Measure	Lead Agency & Supporting Partners	Timeframe
8.10	Participate in consultation on services and products relating to older people	Number of consultation	OPC AFISSO WCC HSE	2025 - 2028
8.11	Implementation of the Well Westmeath Health Literacy Programme	Number of programmes implemented	OPC WCC Community	2025 - 2028



ACTIVATOR POLES AT WESTMEATH LIBRARIES

Issue: Older people identified a lack of recreational activities in their communities.

Action: Westmeath Libraries, with the support of Healthy Ireland funding, implemented the activator poles programme in all 5 Westmeath libraries. The programme also includes training and provision of the activator poles in each location and is available to all.

Appendix 1

The Westmeath Age Friendly strategy builds on existing international and national strategies and frameworks, such as:

Age Friendly Parking Guidelines <https://agefriendlyireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AFI-Parking-Space-Guide.pdf>

Age Friendly Seating Guidelines <https://agefriendlyhomes.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AFI-Seating-Guide.pdf>

Being Age Friendly in the Public Realm <https://agefriendlyireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Public-Realm-Guidelines.pdf>

Buildings for Everyone, CEUD - Building for Everyone - Centre for Excellence in Universal Design

Citizen's Information Board Strategy 2023 - 2026 https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/cib/strategic_plan_2023.pdf

Dublin Declaration, 2011 https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Dublin_Declaration-2011.pdf

Healthy Ireland Strategic Action plan, 2021 - 2025 <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/healthy-ireland-strategic-action-plan-2021-2025.pdf>

National Positive Ageing Strategy, 2013 updated 2020 <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-positive-ageing-strategy-252ec34c-5471-4cff-9f8c-8f266721b4dc.pdf>

National Sports Policy, 2018 - 2027 <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-sports-policy-2018-2027-0815113f-8d44-4756-8d19-5ac2c4501e35.pdf>

Programme for Government 2025: Securing Ireland's Future <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/programme-for-government-securing-irelands-future.pdf>

Ten Universal Design Features to include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home - AFI-10-Universal-Design-Features.pdf.pdf

Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns, 2022 <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/town-centre-first.pdf>

Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland, 2015 <https://universaldesign.ie/built-environment/housing>

Universal Design Homes Checklist - Internal Layout Checklist for Universal Design Homes

Westmeath County Development Plan, 2021-2027 <https://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/ourservices/planning/developmentplans/countydevelopmentplan2021-2027/>

Westmeath Local Economic Community Plan, 2023-2028 <https://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/LECP%202023%20%202028%20FINAL.pdf>

World Health Organisation's Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide, 2007 https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/43755/9789241547307_eng.pdf?sequence=1

Appendix 2

List of Partner Organisations

Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service Office
Alzheimers Ireland
An Garda Síochána
Bus Éireann
Chamber of Commerce
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Department of Social Protection
Health Service Executive
Irish Rail
Local Community Development Committee
Longford Westmeath Education & Training Board
National Transport Authority
Public Participation Network
South Westmeath Employment Education and Training Services
Technological University of the Shannon
TFI Local Link LWR Transport for Ireland (Longford, Westmeath, Roscommon)
Westmeath Citizens Information
Westmeath Comhairle na nÓg
Westmeath Community Development
Westmeath County Council
Westmeath Older People's Council
Youth Work Ireland, Midlands

Appendix 3

List of Acronyms

AGS	An Garda Síochána
AHB	Approved Housing Body
AFISSO	Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service
CDP	County Development Plan
CEUD	Centre for Excellence in Universal Design
DHLGH	Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage
DSP	Department of Social Protection
HAFH	Healthy Age Friendly Homes
HSE	Health Service Executive
LCDC	Local Community Development Committee
LECP	Local Economic Community Plan
LEO	Local Enterprise Office
LWETB	Longford Westmeath Education & Training Board
NDA	National Disability Authority
MD	Municipal District Office (Westmeath County Council)
NTA	National Transport Authority
OPC	Older People's Council
PPN	Public Participation Network
SHC	Slaintecare Healthy Communities
SPC	Strategic Policy Committee
SWEETS	South Westmeath Employment, Education and Training Services
TFI LWR	Transport for Ireland (Longford, Westmeath, Roscommon)
TUS	Technological University of the Shannon
UD	Universal Design
WCC	Westmeath County Council
WCD	Westmeath Community Development
WHO	World Health Organisation
YWIM	Youth Work Ireland, Midland

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