Older People's Council's Guide

Age Friendly Ireland

Age Friendly
IRELAND

Foreword

Conn Murray
Chief Executive, Limerick
City & County Council

Empowering the citizen to participate in the development of their community, both rural and urban, is central to the new model of local governance and service delivery. It is important that no section of the community is left behind in the future delivery of our services.

The signing of the Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Cities & Communities by all 31 local authorities represents a significant and unique national commitment to creating an inclusive, equitable society for citizens of all ages. The Declaration provides a most important underpinning role for the Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme.

The Age Friendly Programme is proving to be a very effective model for bringing diverse organisations, groups, services and businesses together to streamline their work, with the interests and needs of older people at their core. When policies, programmes and actions are

re-framed in this way, the whole community benefits. This is because what is essential for older people tends to be of benefit to everyone.

Very often simple things will improve everyone's quality of life. For example, liaison between transport providers and health and social services mean that people can attend health appointments with minimal difficulty, while liaison between local authorities and health and social services can reduce the amount of time that people have to spend in hospital.

The Programme for Government commits to the establishment of Older People Councils by local authorities. As part of the Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme, such Councils help in supporting the voice of the local older person to be heard and for that voice to influence and inform.

This 'Older People's Council's Guide' provides, through case studies and an outline of established and tried and tested principles, a valuable sense for the rationale for these groups along with an overview of some of the many relevant practices that have emerged through the Age Friendly Cities & Counties programme to date.

Continuing to share practices will contribute much to our common goal of building a more age friendly Ireland. I would like to wish all of the programme partners continued success in the future.

Conn Murray
Chief Executive, Limerick City & County Council
Director, Age Friendly Ireland

General Introduction

The Irish Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme is Ireland's adaptation of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Cities and Communities model. It is coordinated by Age Friendly Ireland which provides infrastructure, advice and technical support to local authorities, rolling out the programme.

The programme itself involves the development of a multi-agency approach to age-related planning and service provision at city and county level. Through consistent application of this methodology throughout Ireland, the Age Friendly programme supports cities and counties to become more inclusive of older people. Two key pieces of 'infrastructure' are developed in the process of adopting and supporting an Age Friendly City or County programme. These are the Age Friendly Alliance and the Older People's Council.

Age Friendly City/County Alliance: This is a high level cross-sector group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority. The member agencies of the Age Friendly City/County Alliance form a strategic partnership to develop and oversee the realisation of the Age Friendly City or County Strategy.

Age Friendly City or County Strategy: This is a strategy prepared by the Age Friendly City or County Alliance to address the issues identified by older people in the local area. It is typically a three to five year cycle. Through the Age Friendly Strategy and accompanying action plans, participating service providers and businesses become accountable to each other and to older people for the age friendly actions they agree to take on.

Older People's Council: This is a representative group of older people, established by local authorities as part of the development of the Age Friendly City/County programme. The group of older people identify priority areas of need, raise issues of importance and inform and influence the decision making process of the City or County Age Friendly initiative. Representatives of Older People's Councils participate, alongside representatives of the relevant member agencies, on the Age Friendly City/County Alliance.

In addition to taking on specific commitments related to the implementation of the Age Friendly City/County Strategies, the Older People's Council also provides a citizen or service user perspective in monitoring the implementation of those strategies. The Older People's Councils are, over time, intended to be representative of the diversity of the older population in the city or county, linked to local older people's groups and supportive of the participation of the most marginalised.

Introduction

Older People's Councils are representative groups of older people who work together and with key state and voluntary agencies to make Ireland a better place in which to grow old. The Programme for Government has committed to the establishment of Older People's Councils by Local Authorities so that older people can raise concerns or issues of importance at a local level. This short guide will explain how Older People's Councils have been set up in Ireland and offer guidelines to local authorities who are about to set one up.

There are two key initiatives that have led to the development of Older People's Councils in Ireland. The first is the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme, now in place in all counties and cities in Ireland (2015). This initiative has been set up around the world, following the Age Friendly Cities guidelines developed by the World Health Organisation.

The principle aim of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme is to give older people a strong voice in decision-making on housing, health, spatial planning and all aspects of everyday living so that policies will be inclusive of the needs and choices of older people in urban and rural areas. The approach also gives older people a joint platform as senior managers of voluntary and state agencies in the development, implementation and monitoring of Age Friendly strategies in each local authority.

Ireland's National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013) is the second key initiative which promotes the development of Older People's Councils in cities and counties across Ireland. The vision statement of the National Positive Ageing Strategy says that Ireland will be a society for all ages that celebrates and prepares properly for individual and population ageing. It goes on to say that Ireland will *'enable and support all ages and older people to enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential'*. It aims to promote and respect older people's engagement in economic, social, cultural, community and family life whilst fostering better solidarity between generations.

To be successful, the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy must be the responsibility of all sectors of society; government, health service providers, local authorities, businesses, voluntary groups and families.

Many of the factors that contribute to a good quality of life for older people are influenced at a local level. The creation of communities in which ageing can be a positive experience is also something that happens at a local level.

The establishment of Older People's Councils in Ireland addresses the core vision of the National Positive Ageing Strategy which states that this is a society *'in which equality, independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people are pursued at all times.'* It's worth noting that the core aim of Older People's Councils is precisely this, to ensure that Irish society is an age-friendly one in the years ahead.

The National Positive Ageing Strategy specifically highlights the local authority led, multi-agency Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme as an excellent example of cooperation for positive ageing by bringing together all the key players in local service provision to improve the lives of older people. The establishment of Older People's Councils in each participating local authority area also gives older people a strong voice to influence local development. The National Positive Ageing Strategy includes in its statement that in establishing Older People's Council, local authorities should ensure that their composition is representative of the diversity of the older population at a local level; that the councils are linked with local groups of older people and

that the participation of the most vulnerable is supported.

The National Dementia Strategy is another initiative which sees Older People's Councils as a significant voice for older people. In its key principles, it cites the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme as an approach which enables people with dementia to live well as valued citizens. Having representatives for people with dementia on Older People's Councils is a key principle of the strategy.

The ambition of every Older People's Council in Ireland is to work creatively with the Age Friendly programme and the Age Friendly Alliance in each city/county to improve the delivery of services and supports for us all as we age. The collaborative model at the heart of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme is the blueprint for this work. This guide will explain how local authorities set up and maintain an Older People's Council, drawing examples from counties which have successfully done so already.

Chapter One
Setting up an Older People's Council

In this section, we will explain how to set up an Older People's Council. There are several key steps to go through so as to reach a diverse group of older people in the city or county. Getting older people involved in the process as early as possible is a key as is spreading the world about the establishment of an Older People's Council in the area.

In this chapter, we will draw on the experience of County Louth, the first county in Ireland to set up an Older People's Council. It should be noted that some counties chose to use the term Older People's Forum rather than Older People's Council which is the collective term used in the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

Ask yourself the question: What sort of place would I like to grow old in?

A place . . .
- Where I can engage and participate fully in everything that is going on in the community
- Where I can easily get to where I want to go, when I want to go
- Where I can access great quality healthcare and other services without difficulty
- Where I can have a say in what happens in my county or city if I wish to
- Where I feel safe and secure
- Where I can live a healthy and active life
- Where young and old interact and get along

*Taken from Age Friendly Cities and Counties Handbook

Step by Step Guidelines to setting up an **Older People's Council**

▶ **STEP ONE**
Setting up a database of older people in your county

The first task is to set up a database of older people in your county and voluntary and state agencies that provide services to older people. The Age Friendly City/County Coordinators or an assigned member of staff in the local authority will often have access to a database of organisations in which older people are involved. This database can be built upon to ensure that it includes an up-to-date list of older people's groups and voluntary and state agencies that provide services to older people. This is the first essential step to recruiting as wide and diverse a group of older people onto the Older People's Council as possible.

▶ **STEP TWO**
Hold an open meeting to set up the **Older People's Council**

The Age Friendly City/County Coordinator will help organise the first Older People's Council meeting. Sometimes, the local authority will provide the venue and refreshments which helps defray initial costs. Local libraries are often excellent free venues that are available for such meetings. A wide range of older people should be invited to this first open meeting. The Age Friendly City/County Co-ordinator will also give administrative support for this meeting by sending out invitations to people, devising an agenda and collate the expressions of interest from those keen to join an Older People's Council.

NOTE

Some counties choose to invite all older people to the launch of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme and ask them to sign expressions of interest for the Older People's Council at this event. Other counties, Louth for example, held a separate process to create the Older People's Council, inviting a wide range of older people and their representatives to introductory meetings and forming an Older People's Council after these events. Yet, other counties draw on existing networks of older people, County Cavan for example, and ask these older people or their representatives to join the Older People's Council. The important point is that the Older People's Council is formed before the Age Friendly Strategy is finalised so that this group of people can have input into the various actions in the strategy.

To have a wide and diverse group of people on the Older People's Council, it's important to recruit members from four key groups.

- Members of community and voluntary groups
- Individual older people from aged 50 onwards,
- Representatives of older people living in residential care homes
- Representatives of more vulnerable older people who can be advocated for by formal/informal carers and/or public health nurses.

It's also important to invite new groups as they form, for example a group representing people with dementia living in the community.

Catherine McGuigan
Age Friendly Ireland
Regional Development Consultant

STEP THREE
The first Annual General Meeting of The Older People's Council

The first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Older People's Council will have many of the same elements of the open meeting as it will give people an opportunity to consolidate their understanding of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme. It will also give people a chance to meet each other again as future influencers of policy and practice in service provision in their county. The Age Friendly City/County Co-ordinator will devise the agenda for the meeting (see sample agenda below). It's important to include time for a presentation on the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme to set the context. It's also recommended to include time for a member from an established Older People's Council in a neighbouring County to speak about their experiences including how their council developed.

Following these two presentations, the members of the newly formed Older People's Council can elect members to the Executive Committee. Some of these individuals will then go forward as representatives of the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Alliance. It will be their responsibility to report back to the wider Older People's Council on progress in the Age Friendly Strategy.

Sample Agenda for the Inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Older People's Council

▶ Introduction by an older person from the county or the Age Friendly Co-ordinator

▶ Presentation of the draft Age Friendly Strategy (see Note below)

▶ Presentation by the chairperson of an established Older People's Council

▶ Elect an Executive Committee of the Older People's Council

▶ Local entertainment and refreshments

▶ Expressions of appreciation for those who attended and organised the meeting

TIP

Some local authorities feel it is important to make the AGM and other Older People's Council events as enjoyable for all as possible. This can be done by including time for people to network, providing refreshments and sometimes light entertainment at the end of the event. Some older people may need transport to and from events. It's important to choose a venue that is the most accessible for people in the area, possibly one that there is public transport links to. It's also useful to suggest that people can share lifts or organise themselves to get to the venue together. Use the event as an opportunity to spread the message of the Age Friendly programme in your city or county. Invite members of the press and local photographers to attend. Write an advance press release on the event and follow up with local media outlets on their interest in covering the event.

Age Friendly County
LOGO HERE

Date here

VOICE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN COUNTY XXX HEARD LOUD AND CLEAR

Today saw the inaugural meeting of the XXX County Older Persons Council.

The group has been established under the auspices of the XXX Age Friendly Programme to put the voice of older people central to decision-making process about matters that affect everyday living in the county. The people who gathered here today will contribute to an Age Friendly Strategy for the county.

The Chair of the XXX Age Friendly Alliance, Chief Executive XXX said: "Today we in County XXX are embarking on a journey to make xxx an Age Friendly county/city. We have spent the past number of months listening to older people across the county. We now know what matters to the older members of our communities on issues such as public transport, access to quality healthcare, opportunities to socialise and stay connected, and public spaces where they can walk and talk and feel safe. The launch of this strategy is an important milestone as it sets out a blueprint for how we will plan and develop our county in the coming years to ensure that it is a truly great place in which to grow old."

Chair of the Older People's Council for the Age Friendly Counties Programme in XXX The Age Friendly County Programme is working to make Ireland one of the best places in the world in which to grow old. The Programme aims to see all older people living in Ireland enjoying a good quality of life and to participate fully in their communities.

TIP

Some local authorities have used organisations such as Age & Opportunity to provide training for older people to encourage them to become more active members of Older People's Councils.

"Giving older people a chance to find their voice and influence change through personal development training is very beneficial. It's worth seeing what kind of training is available in your county or city."

Sarah Wetherald, Age Friendly Ireland Regional Development Consultant

NOTE

The draft Age Friendly Strategy is sometimes presented at the first AGM of the Older People's Council.   This happens usually when the Age Friendly Alliance has been formed in advance or the Older People's Council. The Age Friendly Coordinator or the Chairperson of the Age Friendly Alliance can explain the concept and contents of the draft strategy to this group of older people. While the AGM is important as an event for the members of the Older People's Council themselves, it is also an opportunity for the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme to ensure that the older person's voice is at the heart of the Age Friendly Strategy. For this reason, it's crucial that a clear presentation on the draft strategy is given. It also gives older people a chance to give their initial feedback on the recommendations and priorities set out in the draft strategy. Full details of how this form of consultation is carried out with older people are provided in the Age Friendly Cities and Counties handbook.

Case Study For Setting Up **An Older People's Council**

As the first county in Ireland to embrace the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme, Louth was also the first county in Ireland to set up an Older People's Council. Mary Deery, the administrative officer in Louth County Council co-ordinating the Age Friendly programme organized a consultation process to establish the Older People's Forum in County Louth.

As a first step in the process to reach out to older people, Mary Deery established a database of older peoples groups and voluntary groups which provided services to older people.   When, she had compiled this valuable information, she invited all those on her database to consultations to discuss the formation of an Older People's Forum in the county. These consultations were held in four different geographical areas so that people could attend the event in their local area.

"The groups we met were older people's groups (active retirement, etc) advocacy groups (Meals on Wheels, Community Alert, Citizens and Family Resource Centres, the ICA and the GAA), nursing homes managers or relatives' forums and individuals themselves," explains Mary Deery.

"We were trying to get as inclusive a voice as possible and capture the diversity of that voice. We also wanted to reach the really vulnerable older people," adds Rodd Bond.

At each workshop, people registered their interest in becoming members of the Older People's Forum. Mary Deery then contacted everyone to invite them to the first meeting of the Older People's Forum. She also sent out a sample constitution of the Older People's Forum [since devised as the Terms of Reference for an Older People's Council and provided in the appendix of this guide] in advance of the meeting which the older people subsequently agreed on. At the first official meeting of the Older People's Forum, an executive committee was elected and formed.

Over its lifespan so far, the executive committee of the Louth Older People's Forum has been actively involved in the Age Friendly Alliance, influencing, informing and monitoring the Age Friendly Strategy in County Louth.

The Older People's Forum has also been involved in making submissions and promoting a number of initiatives in the county. These include the Louth Age Friendly Baseline Survey and Retail Strategy, the Ardee Area Development Plan, the Ardee Pay Parking Review, the Clogherhead Transport Survey. They have also promoted two trade fairs in the county.

There are a number of projects that members of the Louth Older People's Forum are also involved with. These include Failte Isteach, the Third Age Foundation's programme teaching new migrants conversation English, Positive Ageing Week in Dundalk and Drogheda, the Senior Helpline call centres in Dundalk and Drogheda, activities during Age & Opportunity's Bealtaine festival, the GAA Social initiatve in Cooley, Kickhams & Knockbridge, Good Morning Louth, the Men's Sheds, the Care & Repair network, Meals on Wheels, Cultaca, Nursing Home Care and St Vincent de Paul.

Members of the Louth Older People's Forum and the groups they represent

James Fitzgerald	St Vincent de Paul	Ann Marron	Nestling Project
Mary Dunne	Ardee Active Retirement	Ann Murphy	Good Morning Louth
Marie Hayes	Citizens Information	Ann Ward	Various Groups
Thomas Matthews	Dunleer Active Retirement	Brendan Crawley	Faughart Social Group
Pearse O'Hanrahan	St Gerard's Day Centre	Michael McCoy	Moorehall Lodge, Ardee
Charlie McCarron	Garda Active Retired Association	Shane Kelly	Sunhill Nursing Home
Luke Martin	Dundalk Social Services	Kevin Doyle	Redeemer Family Resource Centre
Ann Egan	Age Action	Maeve Montgomery	Alzheimer Day Care
Michael Kelly	Kilkerley Young at Heart	Olive Joyce	The Birches, Dundalk Alzheimer Day Care
Paddy McMahon	GAA		
Harry McCarthy	Cooley Active Retirement	Michael Rice	St Vincent de Paul
John Matthews	St Oliver Plunkett Support Group	Andrea Connolly	Cuidigh Linn
Valeen McMullen	Irish Wheelchair Association	Pauline Connor / William Woods	Drogheda Senior Citizens
Joan McEvoy / Michael Clarke	Drogheda & District Support 4 Older People	Eva Beirne	Mens Sheds
Pat Kerins	Nestling Project	Kath Briggs	Drogheda Senior Citizens

The recent AGM of the Louth People's Forum heard about the vital role the forum has played in making Louth the premier age friendly county in Ireland.

Dundalk Democrat, May 18, 2014

From restructuring the county's bus service to combating loneliness and improving age friendly business services, the Forum have established the needs of the county's older people and delivered real and lasting change. Following the initial chairmanship of the late Jim Cousins, RIP, Ann Ward has been elected chair of the Forum for the second time, after receiving glowing praise at their recent AGM for the stellar progress made over the past two years.

"Louth has led the way in Ireland because it puts the older person at the centre of decision-making and service delivery – and the Louth Older People's Forum has been one of the main driving forces behind that," said Mary Deery, Louth Age Friendly County Co-Ordinator. The Forum consists of older people's groups, advocacy groups, nursing homes, day care centres, community stakeholders and individuals and meets on a monthly basis.

Vice Chairperson Kath Briggs and Secretary Michael McCoy will join Ann on the new committee, which will serve a two-year term. On a local level, one of the great triumphs of the Forum over the past two years has been the dawning of a new era for bus commuters looking to use Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital.

The Forum recently also carried out a comprehensive Age Friendly survey of the needs of older people in County Louth. "The survey was the first of its kind, and we are looking forward to publishing results which will show a full picture of the views and needs of older people in the area," said Ann.

The Forum also made a submission to Louth County Council planning office on the development of the Louth Retail Strategy. The county has also hosted two annual Age Friendly Business and Consumer Fairs at Darver Castle in October – each attracting crowds of over 3,000. Ardee was also recently awarded the status of Ireland's first Age Friendly Town and is now being used as an exemplar for 16 other towns in the country.

"The Louth Older People's Forum has earned respect and trust because its constitution and services were designed by the members," said Ann. "The Forum has led to person-centred services such as the Cultacha older people's advocacy service, the Nestling Project, the Parlour, Men's Sheds in Dundalk, Drogheda and Cooley and Good Morning Call Services in Dundalk and Drogheda.

"We have also established a GAA social initiative, a volunteer day centre, care and repair programmes, befriending services and much more. But Louth's impact is not just on a local stage – it is also a full member of the WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities Network.

The Local Authority won the prestigious Taoiseach's Public Service Excellence Award in 2012 for the "Sharing the Journey" Age Friendly County project. "We were recently awarded the top status as a reference site for the ground-breaking European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing," said Ann. "Because of this, Forum members are now playing their part in a regional alliance, older people's forum and transport group and the county is in line for vital funding under the Horizon 2020 initiative."

The Role of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council

The Executive Committee of the Older People's Council is a representative group elected by the members of the broader Older People's Council. The size of the Executive Committee will be determined by the population and geographical spread of the County or City. It should include people from as wide a geographical area as possible so that issues of importance to older people in rural and urban areas are covered. A smaller group from the Executive Committee then represents the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Alliance. Their job is to monitor the progress of the Age Friendly Strategy and to report back to the Older People's Council.

The Executive Committee of the Older People's Council meets every six to eight weeks. Two or three members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council will join the Age Friendly Alliance. They contribute to the agenda of each meeting and report back to the full Executive Committee after each meeting. They also report back to the entire Older People's Council at the council's annual general meeting.

The Age Friendly Co-ordinator in each local authority will keep in close contact with the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council. The co-ordinator will send members advance notice of the Age Friendly Alliance meetings and any information required before each meeting. The Age Friendly Co-ordinator will also ensure that members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council have opportunities to participate as equals at the Age Friendly Alliance meetings. Their role is key as their views are a tangible contribution on how policy can be best developed to suit older people.

Members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council also join other decision-making groups within their counties or cities. For example, in Kilkenny, members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Forum were actively involved in decision-making groups on housing and access to services. Nora Webster, the former chair of the Older People's Forum in Kilkenny saw this as an important and crucial role for older people in the county.

"The city has changed – particularly the public areas and access to information. I really feel older people have become a real part of the decision and planning process whether it's a County Development Plan or a site for a new seat," says Nora Webster. However, she admits that it takes time to get things done. "It took a lot of time for officials within the local authorities to take the Older People's Forum seriously and to take our issues on board. We had to follow up a lot. We also needed to understand how things worked in terms of timeframes and plans. Our main issues are transport, public toilets and bus

shelters with seating. We have achieved a lot but transport is still proving to be a difficult issues. We need more buses from the outskirts of Kilkenny into the city." Nora Webster says that she would advice older people to get involved. "You can be part of the process of making change for the better in your city or county. You get a great satisfaction out of that. You don't realise until you are involved that you have such an amount to give."

In County Clare, members of the Older People's Council were invited to senior Gardai team meetings. John Kerins, the Garda Chief Superintendant in County Clare says that this has been a very positive development for all involved.

"It allows older people to have access to a wide range of Gardai across the county so that they can raise local issues with them. It's a great way for the Older People's Council to influence how the Gardai develop their policies."

Chapter Two
Running an Older People's Council

In this section, we will look at ways to run an Older People's Council. In the process, we will draw on the experience of County Cavan, which has a dynamic Older People's Council, run with support from the community and enterprise department in Cavan County Council.

Guidelines to Running an Older People's Council

Once the Older People's Council has had its first meeting, it is essential that it plans for the year ahead. Each geographical area will have its own set of priorities and it is important that people feel empowered to pursue the issues that they feel need to be addressed. However, it's also important to realise that the role of the Older People's Council is one of implementing change through collaborative leadership.

The Older People's Council is not a campaigning or lobby group. Instead, it is an active and equal partner in raising issues of importance to older people that can go on to inform and influence the work of state and voluntary agencies. The issues that older people have raised in consultations for Age Friendly Strategies in local authorities range from a lack of supported accommodation to poor local infrastructure to poor transport links and concerns about personal security.

The Age Friendly Strategy developed by the Age Friendly Alliance as part of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme is the mechanism through which concerns and issues can be raised and solutions found. It's a rolling process of development, implementation and review. As explained in the previous chapter, the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council have an active role on the Age Friendly Alliance. These members act as a conduit of information and influence, bringing the concerns of the Older People's Council to the Alliance and returning to the Older People's Council with updates on progress made at the Age Friendly Alliance.

This monitoring role of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council is crucial to the working of the Age Friendly Alliance and the ongoing development and review of the Age Friendly Strategy. The Older People's Council also has a strong role in co-designing of solutions and providing leadership in advancing certain **action points** within the Age Friendly Strategy.

1 **Establishing administrative support for the Older People's Council.**
As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Older People's Council will need administrative support to organise meetings, plan events and keep older people informed about developments in the Age Friendly programme. It works very well when this administration support comes from the local authority. The chairperson of the Age Friendly Alliance and/or the chief executive in the local authority will decide how best to give this administrative support. In some counties, the Age Friendly Co-ordinator will provide this support or assign an administrative officer within the local authority to do so. In other counties, a part-time administrator in a local development company has provided this support. As the members of the Older People's Council are volunteers, it is essential that the key administration is provided to the Older People's Council. This also means that the Older People's Council can draw on the local authority resources such as venues (local libraries are often used for information meetings), email and posting facilities (an administrator will send out invites to members and take notes at meetings, on request). The Executive Committee of the Older People's Council will meet every six to eight weeks while the Older People's Council itself will often only host one large get together. The event doubles as a social occasion (an annual tea dance, for example) and the Annual General Meeting of the Older People's Council. The Age Friendly Co-ordinator of the local authority may offer assistance with the organisation of this annual event.

2 **Create an annual plan of activity.**
The Older People's Council must decide how often they wish to hold meetings and what they wish to achieve in a year. In some counties, such as Cavan, the Older People's Council hold monthly meetings in the public library. They invite members of the Gardai, the Health Service Executive and voluntary groups providing services for older people to give presentations to members. In other counties, the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council continue the work of the Older People's Council throughout the year and report back to the Older People's Council at the Annual General Meeting.

3 Working with the Age Friendly Alliance

The members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council sit on the Age Friendly Alliance. As explained in the previous chapter, the Age Friendly Co-ordinator links with members on meetings and agendas for the Age Friendly Alliance. The members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council have a key role in monitoring progress on the Age Friendly Strategy. The members of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council bring a citizen-cum-service user voice to the Age Friendly Alliance. By sitting as equals to senior managers responsible for health, transport, housing and personal security issues within the city or county, this voice is crucial to raising issues and finding appropriate solutions for our ageing population.

4 Taking part in Age Friendly initiatives in your city/county.

Members of the Older People's Council are perfectly placed to get involved in the Age Friendly initiatives held as part of the Age Friendly consultations and Age Friendly Strategy in your county or city. These initiatives range from Age Friendly surveys of the infrastructure and businesses in the Age Friendly towns in your county to assessing the age friendliness of hospitals, airports and universities. Partaking in these projects will give members of the Older People's Council a keen sense of how to instigate and implement change as part of a partnership process.

Connecting with other local government initiatives is also valuable. For example, members of the Older People's Council can attend briefing meetings, presentations and submissions on housing, roads and other civic initiatives.

Members of the Older People's Councils also get involved in other aspects of civic and community life. These include joining Joint Policing Committees, Local Community Development Committees, Local Economic and Community Planning processes, the Public Participation Network and other bodies. It has been suggested that age friendly principles need to be incorporated into all aspects of our society and having members of the Older People's Council on these committees is significant towards this goal.

In Donegal, the Older Peoples Council is becoming one of **7 linkage groups** for the Public Participation Network (PPN). There are **430 members** of the PPN of which 45 are older persons groups. The groups included members of Active Retirement, Day Care, good morning call service, 50+ groups, Arthritis Ireland, Community Development and Care of the Aged. They also actively seek to include key representatives of those in residential care and individuals. This is an fantastic example of how the Older Peoples Council can be deeply embedded in Local Government structures Other counties such as Westmeath and Louth are already replicating this process.

5 Hosting Annual General Meetings

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Older People's Council is the key event of the year. It's important that this event welcomes new and existing members.

The AGM is the key opportunity for the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council to update members on the progress of the Age Friendly Strategy in their city or county. It gives the wider group of older people a chance to comment on the progress of the Age Friendly Strategy in their area. It also gives the members of the Older People's Council to raise issues that they feel the strategy needs to address or discuss lack of progress on certain areas so that the Executive Committee can bring this important feedback to the Age Friendly Alliance.

The AGM is also an opportunity to refresh in people's minds the purpose of the Age Friendly initiative across the country with an address by a member of the Age Friendly Alliance. The AGM can be used as an opportunity to learn about the work of another Older People's Council with a presentation from the chairperson of an Older People's Council in another county. Speakers at the AGM can include the chairperson of the Older People's Council, a member of the Executive Committee of Older People's Council and/or a member of the Age Friendly Alliance.

As mentioned in Chapter One, administrative support from the local authority is crucial to plan, organise and host the AGM of the Older People's Council. The Age Friendly Co-ordinator in the local authority is well placed to decide where best to draw this support from. The local authority can help choose an appropriate venue and issue invitations to a wide group of older people throughout the city or county.

Sample Agenda for an Annual General Meeting of the **Older People's Council**

▶ Introduction by the chair of the Older People's Council

▶ Update on the Age Friendly Strategy by the member of the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Alliance with time for discussion.

▶ Presentation from another Older People's Council

▶ Voting of new members onto the executive committee if necessary

▶ Refreshments and local entertainment

TIP
Some counties find it useful to host an annual joint meeting between the Age Friendly Alliance and the Older People's Council. It's crucial that the full membership of both groups attend this meeting to get value from the engagement. The AGM is an opportunity for older people to get a full review of the progress of the Age Friendly Strategy and give suggestions and feedback on areas of progress and lack of progress.

6

Ensuring Inclusivity

One of the key aims of Older People's Council's is to represent the diversity of older people in the city or county. To do this, the Older People's Council must draw on the database of organisations run by and for older people in their city or county. This database of older people's groups in the county will have been drawn up by the local authority either during the Age Friendly process or at another time.

The Older People's Council must actively seek out older people or their representatives who are not part of the initial core group. It's particularly important to build awareness of the Age Friendly programme in established older people's groups and invite them to join the Older People's Council. A key message to get across to these already established groups is the influential role of the Older People's Council in making their city or county an age friendly one.

The aim of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme is to ensure that the voice of all older people – those living in urban and rural areas, those living independently or in supported accommodation and those with or without disability - is included. Therefore, Older People's Councils are actively encouraged to keep this in mind.   If the older people themselves aren't able to partake (for example, people in the advanced stages of dementia or those living in residential settings), it's important to have their voice represented by a carer, home help or public health nurse. Keeping the original database of older people and agencies providing services to older people as up to date as possible and inviting all these people to your annual general meeting is one good way to work towards maintaining diversity in the Older People's Council.

Intensive support is critical while the Older People's Councils are being formed. However, once the group begins to find its place in the Age Friendly programme, it can grow in confidence and understand the importance of its voice. Older People's Councils need to work as equal partners within the Age Friendly Alliance with administrative support from the local authority.

In those counties with a strong structure and a great relationship between Older Peoples Councils and service providers, project and programme implementation can be far more effective in improving quality of life.

Sarah Wetherald
Age Friendly Ireland
Regional Development Consultant

Setting up the Older People's Council in Fingal has been a huge learning curve. The older people themselves received training to organise Annual General Meetings, do their own presentations, write newsletters and make contributions to the Age Friendly strategy. We have a community development officer in Fingal who has facilitated meetings and other events for the Older People's Council. The feedback from members has been great. In my view, the key is to be flexible and make room for new things. There will always be issues that arise through the Older People's Council that weren't in the original Age Friendly strategy.

Eithne Mallin
Age Friendly Coordinator
in Fingal County Council

TIP

It's important for each Older People's Council to be properly resourced. Administrative support is usually provided by the local authority. At a meeting of Older People's Councils in Clare in 2015, this point was stressed by various Older People's Council members. An under resourced Older People's Council will find it difficult to successfully engage with the Age Friendly programme and in particular to support and monitor the work of the Age Friendly Strategy. Therefore, each Older People's Council should be clear from the outset where its administrative support is coming from.

Case Study of Running An **Older People's Council**

The experience of setting up an Older People's Forum in County Cavan was different to that in County Louth, the county we explored in the previous chapter.

The key difference emerged from the fact that there was already a network of older people's groups in existence in County Cavan. This 050 Network includes about 45 different groups of older people in the county and was set up with assistance from a local development company.

Many of the members of the 050 network decided to join the Older People's Forum and elected an executive committee from its membership. The O50 network continues to exist but the members who joined the Older People's Forum drew up new terms of reference in line with the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme.

The Older People's Forum has administrative support from the Community and Enterprise Department of Cavan County Council. This local administrator organises monthly meetings in Cavan library, takes minutes at these meetings and supports any projects the Older People's Councils are involved with. The administrator also reports back to the Older People's Forum about matters arising in the Age Friendly Alliance.

Members of the Older People's Forum in Cavan have been active in various Age Friendly projects, particularly those part of the Age Friendly town initiative in Cavan.

Members of the Older People's Forum also volunteered to partake in a walkability audit of Cavan town and a mystery shopper project to review the age-friendliness of the businesses in the town. The Older People's Forum also runs a weekly drop-in centre held in Cavan library, holding information sessions with the Gardai, the Health Service Executive and other organisations working with older people. The Older People's Forum currently has plans to put together a Trusted Trades people brochure for the county.

The Older People's Forum in Cavan doesn't have an independent budget but administrative expenses – postage, reports, etc – are funded by the local authority. The local authority also provides the venue for the meetings of the Older People's Forum.

Bob Gilbert, Chairperson of Cavan Older Persons Forum gave the following speech at the signing ceremony of the Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Cities & Counties Thursday, 27th November 2014 (abridged version of speech)

By participating as a volunteer, older people can enhance social support networks, increase social status and reinforce not only their own knowledge and skills but those of others.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme affords older people a unique opportunity for participation – participation at local community level, municipality, county, regional and national level. It affords us an opportunity to have our voices heard in places where they have never been heard before. It affords us the opportunity to participate in the decision making process within our local authority areas.

Our voices are now being heard loudly and clearly throughout the land via our Older Persons Fora or Councils, which are being set up in all local authority areas. They are being heard through our participation on bodies such as Public Participation Networks. Older Peoples involvement in Local Community Development Committees gives us a voice in the creation of Local Community and Economics Plans for our areas. Other opportunities for participation exist on Local Authority Strategic Policy Committees. Most important of all, our voices are heard on the Local Authority's Age Friendly Alliance, where we sit not as protagonists, not as lobbyists, but as equal partners with CEO's and decision makers of statutory agencies such as the Local Authority, Health Service Executive (HES), Education and Training Board (ETB), An Garda Siochana and other bodies.

Developing a county age friendly strategy is perhaps the foremost vehicle for older people's participation. We take part in a consultation process that involves conducting age friendly audits of local communities, focused workshops that concentrate on issues confronting older people and their suggested solutions, and the compiling and analysis of questionnaires on these issues. These consultations are for the most part peer driven and conducted.

We have heard many times politicians and others bewail the dwindling resources within our country. Yet there is one resource in our nation that is not only not dwindling but is actually increasing. I refer of course to our increasing older population who are indeed a valuable asset and not a liability as some would try to make us believe. Here is a part of the populace who has survived two or more recessions- some of whom may not have had great formal education, but who have been through the 'university of life'. We are people who have built up a wealth of knowledge and experience while attending that university of life. That knowledge and experience is not being utilised to its fullest and our country is the poorer for that. Of course there is now a new cohort of older person emerging who are better educated, more widely travelled and with greater exposure to the technological advances that our world has experienced. These assets should not be left untapped by our communities, our NGO's or our Government, but opportunities should be afforded them to continue contributing and utilising their skills for the benefit and enhancement of all our people.

Harnessing the skills, knowledge and experience gained by older people throughout their lives will bring benefits to the individual, to the community and the whole nation. I challenge the government to properly resource the creation of age friendly environments – to resource the creation of safe and sustainable communities and to resource our Older Person's Councils. I also urge the government to fully implement without any further delay the National Positive Ageing Strategy. I finally challenge it to engage with and work with us so that we can together participate in building a nation where every citizen, irrespective of age, colour, class and creed, level of ability or orientation can live in safety, in harmony and with dignity.

Chapter Three
Looking Ahead
The Way Forward for Older People's Councils

There are five key areas that Older People's Councils need to keep in mind when planning for the future.

Recommendations

Recommendation

1

Ensure that members understand the challenges and ambitions of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme, Ireland's adaptation of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Cities and Communities model. The entire programme is a process-driven initiative which encourages both bottom-up and top-down leadership to make Ireland a better place to grow old in. It's very important that the members of the Older People's Council are briefed fully on this programme. The Age Friendly Ireland regional consultant is well placed to explain the aims and process of the Age Friendly programme at each AGM so people can refresh their memories of the approach. It's also very important that members of the Older People's Council have adequate time for questions and answers at each AGM. This is crucial to keep the voice of the older person central to the Age Friendly process. It also gives the members of the Older People's Councils a good basis to spread the message about how to make Ireland a better place to grow old in.

Recommendation

2

Ensure that members understand the role of the Older People's Council in collaborative leadership. The central role of Older People's Councils is to collaborate with voluntary and state agencies to embed age-friendly thinking into policy making and decision making at a local level. Older People's Councils are not lobby or campaigning groups. Members are instead encouraged to bring issues to senior managers through the Age Friendly Alliance. The role of the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council is to ensure all policies and decisions at a local level have an age friendly dimension. Keeping the full membership up to date with progress and indeed, lack of progress on actions in the Age Friendly Strategy is key to this process.

3

Ensure that members understand the importance of maintaining an Older People's Council representative of the diversity of older people in the county or city. The central aim of Older People's Councils is to represent the diversity of older people in their membership. The reason for this is to make sure all issues relating to older people's needs are brought to the decision-makers on policy and planning into the future.

As mentioned earlier, keeping the database of older people and representatives from agencies working for older people up to date and inviting all these individuals to the annual general meetings of the Older People's Council is a key to maintain inclusivity and diversity going forward. This form on ongoing recruitment of new people is crucial. It allows a sharing of the workload and planning for new members to succeed those on the Executive Committee when individuals feel they can't continue with the voluntary commitments required. Keeping a space free on the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council for new members of as yet unidentified groups of older people is another way of promoting inclusivity.

4

Ensure that members understand that the Older People's Council is a partner with state and voluntary agencies on the Age Friendly Alliance. Solution Focused Co-Decision Making is the approach to embedding age friendly thinking into our counties and cities. Having members of the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Alliance is the key way to ensure that older people are co-decision makers in what is decided for older people in to the future. The Age Friendly Strategy becomes the key document through which change is implemented. Involving the Older People's Council in the monitoring and subsequent review of this strategy is a key aspect of the process.

The central aim of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme is to embed age-friendly thinking into the state and voluntary agencies that make decisions on all our futures. While some agencies will have their own Age Friendly strategies, the key to the Age Friendly Alliance is to pool resources so that shared decisions can prevent repetition and reduce costs for each agency. This facilitation of common agendas also means that goals are more likely to be achieved within reasonable time frames.

Recommendation

5 **Ensure that the Older People's Council is supported by the Local Authority.** The Age Friendly City or County Coordinator will be a key person in the establishment and continuation of the Older People's Council. This individual and his/her team will be available to provide funding for specific initiatives, administrative support and benefits in kind such as free venues, refreshments at events and publicity and promotional materials.

Appendices

Older People's Council
Expression of Interest Form

I _____ would like to express my interest in finding out more about the development of the Older People's Council in Sligo

I _____ would like to be part of the information network for the county and receive information on relevant programmes and projects under the Age Friendly initiative

Name   _____

Email   _____

Phone   _____

Townland   _____

Creating an Older People's Council
Terms of Reference

Aim

The Older Peoples Council is, in many ways, the key group of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme. It brings the concerns and experiences of older people to the Age Friendly Alliance and the voice of older people to the decision making process of the Age Friendly Initiative throughout the City/County.

Purpose of the group

▶ To ensure that older people in _____ participate in the decisions which affect their lives.

▶ To provide an active channel of communication between the Older Peoples Council and the Age Friendly Initiative.

▶ To provide the opportunity to comment on and influence Age Friendly City/County strategies, plans and projects.

▶ To work cooperatively and represent the views of older people at local, regional and national level

▶ To identify and inform key actions for implementation with the Age Friendly City/County Alliance and strive to achieve a number of the objectives in the Age Friendly City/County Strategy.

▶ To monitor the arrangements across the county in relation to implementation of the Age Friendly City or County Strategy.

▶ To represent the views of older people, and keep older people up to date on key Age Friendly County initiatives and structures.

Membership of the Older People's Council

Membership will be made up of individuals and group representatives who submit a membership form and will be representative of the city or county as a whole; both rural and urban and strive to achieve a gender balance across the county.

Executive Membership

The Chair

The Chair of the Group should be:
- ▶ Independent of the agencies involved with the Age Friendly Alliance.
- ▶ Elected by members of the committee and re-appointed bi-annually
- ▶ Supported by a formally elected vice chair (who must likewise be independent of the agencies involved with the Age Friendly Programme)

The Chair is responsible for:
- ▶ Chairing both the Older People's Council and the Executive Committee of the Older People's Council
- ▶ Ensuring the needs of all ages are addressed through the agenda and conduct of the meeting
- ▶ Facilitating consensus decision making amongst members as best as possible.
- ▶ Representing the collective views of the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly City/County Initiative Alliance.

Secretariat:

The Secretariat will be provided by the Age Friendly City/County Alliance – the purpose of the Secretariat is to:
- ▶ Build, maintain and support the Older Peoples Council.
- ▶ Take responsibility for general administration for meetings, booking venues, preparation of minutes, agenda etc to the Chair for approval.

Executive Committee of the Older Peoples Council

Purpose of the Executive

- To actively organise meetings and ensure widespread participation of older people within Older People's Council.
- To attend the Age Friendly Alliance meetings and report back to the Older People's Council on the Age Friendly Strategy.
- To organise annual general meeting(s) and ensure all members receive updates and information in relation to the Age Friendly City/County Initiative.

Membership of Executive Committee

- The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson will be key members of the Executive Committee.
- The Chairperson will convene meetings with the support from the secretariat.
- The appropriate number of Executive members ranges from 12 to 20 members, depending the population of the county and other relevant considerations.

Meetings

- Meetings of the full Older People's Council will take place at least once a year.
- Meeting agendas to be sent out prior to the meeting for comment by members.
- The Chairperson can convene a meeting outside of these annual meetings if deemed necessary.
- The Executive Committee will meet at least four times per year.

Terms of office

- Members of the Executive will serve a term of 2 years to ensure that there is consistency in work undertaken for a period of time.
- Members can serve two terms consecutively if re-elected.
- At the end of this term, all of the Executive Committee members will step down and the Older People's Council will nominate new Members.
- If a Member fails to attend two meetings of the Executive Committee without giving notice he/she will face automatic removal from the Executive Committee.

Quorum

Half the membership plus one.

Age Friendly Ireland,
3 Palace Street, Dublin 2.
t *01* 222 6266
e info@agefriendlyireland.ie
w www.agefriendlyireland.ie

European
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