



# Age Friendly Public Services Recognition Programme

Step-By-Step Guide





## Table of Contents

### What is involved?

<b>Stage 1:</b> Staff Champion	4
<b>Stage 2:</b> Age Friendly Community facility Workshop	4
<b>Stage 3:</b> Customer Consultation	5
<b>Stage 4:</b> Develop Actions	7

<b>Resource Guide</b>	<b>8</b>
Customer Service and Respect	9
Sound Advice	10
Print and Web	11
Good Lighting is Inviting	13
Physical Environment	14
Communications	16
Age Friendly Charter	17
What's Next?	18

Contact Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme at;

**business@agefriendlyireland.ie**, or find your local co-ordinator on our website

**www.agefriendlyireland.ie**

# Enhance your Public Services for older people in your county.



**46% of  
55-69 use the  
internet almost  
every day**

There are more than 1 million older (60+) people living in Ireland. Are you doing everything you can to enable this cohort to fully access all your public services?

It is relatively easy to make your public services facility age friendly. Most age friendly practices are low or zero cost and can mean a big difference to older customers. Changes such as making it easier for older people to find out about available services and how they can access these services are good for your all your customers. By letting your customers know you are aiming to be age friendly, you are letting older people know that you value their custom and you are committed to serving them.

#### **Here are examples of what some Public Services in Ireland are doing to become more age friendly**

- Providing customer seating with arms
- Having clearer signage
- Providing a magnifying glass
- Providing contact names and numbers on forms

# What is Involved?

In four simple stages, you can get recognised for providing age friendly public services

The Age Friendly Public Services Recognition Programme is part of the wider Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme.

This recognition allows customers to identify you as an Age Friendly Public Services provider and helps promote your public services to older customers.

#### You can be identified by;

- Age Friendly window sticker
- Been listed as an Age Friendly provider on our national website; [www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie)
- Age Friendly Charter displayed in your building/community facility/ reception area
- Age Friendly logo where ever you choose to display or use it – online or on your materials



**64%** of the 70+ age

group identified the internet as

**'not been applicable'** to them

# Stage 3

## Consult with your older customers ask what they like, what could be improved?



### Consulting with your Customers

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

### Method

It is good to review existing data. Do you know for example the average number of queries and the age group they originate from. Are the queries – phone, in person or online? Use this and any other relevant internal data to decide what sections you want to explore further. It may make more sense to consult with older customers for each different section.

Some typical low cost methods are:

- customer feedback forms
- informal conversations
- checklists

### What you can do?

#### 1 Collect customer feedback

*Use existing data as outlined above*

- Ask questions to inform you about your older customer's opinions?
- Adapt what exists if necessary, and get colleagues to also ask your older customers
- Ask additional questions, and use trigger questions to get more ideas.

*Use checksheet overleaf*

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

#### 2 Review data

*Identify changes from the customer suggestions*

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

**One in four**  
*Irish adults has a difficulty  
with everyday reading*



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

- 1 Is this a good place to visit and get information?
- 2 Why is it a good place to visit and get information?
- 3 What could we do to make it easier to visit here and get information?

# Checklist for Consultation

*Older Consumers  
will **double** in the next  
**30 years** and those  
over **80** will quadruple*

- 1** Is this a good place to visit? Yes  No
- 2** Why is it a good place to visit?

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- 3** What could we do to make it easier to visit here?

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

- 1** Are staff here helpful? Yes  No
- 2** Can you understand the information given to you? Yes  No
- 3** Do you find it noisy here? Yes  No
- 4** Can you read the signs and understand the information (forms)? Yes  No
- 5** Will you come back? Yes  No

Thank You!

# Stage 4

## Develop Actions and get recognised as an Age Friendly Public Services Provider



### 1 Workshop

During the workshop you will be invited to see if you are already doing an action that is age friendly. This will give an idea of where you might focus your efforts to maximize the impact of actions on your services.

### 2 Ask Your Customers

Review the information you got from asking your customers about your services. This may help you understand a little better the difficulties some people have when trying to access your services. Decide what changes you can make to improve the experience for your customers.

### 3 Share with Colleagues

You have been nominated as the champion for older customers and age friendliness. However this is not a journey you should take on your own. Talk to your peers and management. Together gather and analysis data from your older customers.



### 4 Actions

Reviewing your customer data, may help you understand a little better the difficulties some people have when trying to access public services. Decide the three maximum impact actions you and your colleagues can implement.

### 5 Result

Your Age Friendly Charter will be awarded after this stage at a launch event. Put the sticker on your window and use the logo on your website and materials.

You are now aiming to be age friendly and have joined an age friendly community that provides appropriate products and services for the older consumer.

You will also get listed on our Age Friendly directory at the national website, [www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie)

# Resource Guide

## Resource Guide and Age Friendly Practices Welcoming your customers:

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

While they are a varied group, many share certain changes as part of the natural ageing process. These can include vision and hearing which can affect their capacity to absorb information.

Changes in cognitive functions such as memory and reasoning can impact how a person receives and understands information.

Physical changes including a decline in hand-eye co-ordination can translate into difficulty using touch screens and perhaps holding a pen. Knowing this, and making small changes in the areas of sound, vision and mobility, can help your services become even more age friendly.

Using plain language, good design and materials that are easy to use and understand are valued by all customers.

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



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



# Customer Service and Respect

Research shows that providing individual customer care is the most effective way of managing relationships with the older customer.

The social interaction involved in seeking public services is very important. It is important that the person feels they are genuinely welcomed and valued as a customer.

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

## Zero Cost Improvements

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

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

## Accessing Information on Services

Delivery options are highly desirable to older adults who are homebound or find it difficult to get around.

However, people value the social aspect of shopping, so a designated person to assist a customer in the store is a good option too.

If you do not offer delivery services, consider doing so for older customers or work with a courier service. Accept orders by phone, in person, and online when possible.

Offer information in person, over the phone and online where possible.

Research has shown that leaflet drops directly in to people’s homes is particularly affective in disseminating information.

Other methods could include; local media (press and radio, newsletters to highlight the availability, location etc, of services. Using professionals that may engage with beneficiaries eg. GPs. Involve local representative organization – older people, carers, and home help.

Include images of older people in materials and on your website.

If it’s easier to access your public services, people will come more often. The goal is to be a welcoming and pleasant place to come back to.

# Sound Advice

## Speaking Clearly - Changes in hearing can affect capacity to receive information

### Zero Cost Improvements

Do you:

- Facial Expressions: Make eye-contact during conversations and ensure your facial expression is one that shows you are listening and willing to help.
- Repeat yourself when necessary. Customers with hearing loss may want you to repeat a question, but may be too shy to ask.

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

## Music

### Zero Cost Improvements

- Do you have background music and is it loud or are the acoustics harsh, this can quickly turn older customers off.
- Background music is often just "background noise". Consider having certain music free hours or spaces in your building that are quieter.



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

## Sound Reduction & Absorption

### Zero Cost Improvements

Can you:

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

Have quiet areas - such as specific areas in your buildings - that can be used for customers

### Low Cost Improvements:

Can you:

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

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

# Print & Web

## Make Information Easy to See

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

### Zero Cost Improvements

#### Spacing

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

#### Font

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

#### Size

The body copy of this document is set at 10 point.

This is an example of 12 point size

This is an example of 16 point size

This is an example of 18 point size

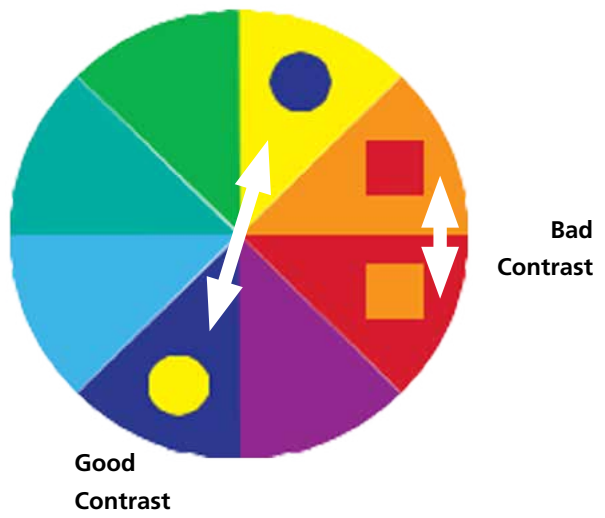
Use a large font size, which is more readable for everyone. Never use a font size smaller than 12 point.

### Colour

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



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





## Web Site Design: Easy to See, Understand and Use

### Zero Cost Improvements

Do you

- Use shorter video segments and other media so they will load more quickly on older computers.
- Include easy-to-find instructions for web users who are less technologically savvy.

Include an easy text resize option on web sites: A A A

## Ensure Information is Available in Different Formats

### Low Cost Improvements

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

## Multimedia

### Zero Cost Improvements

Do you:

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

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

# Good Lighting is Inviting

## Keep your Local Services Building Well Lit

### Zero Cost Improvements

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

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

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

## Avoid Glare

### Fact:

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

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

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



# Physical Environment

## Universal Design

### Zero Cost Improvements

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

#### Fact:

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

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

### Low Cost Improvements

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

### Some Cost Improvements

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

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

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

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

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

Provide seating in all waiting areas.



## Prevent Falls

### Fact:

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

### Zero Cost Improvements

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

### Low Cost Improvements

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

## Toilets

### Low Cost Improvements

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

### Some Cost Improvements

Do you

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

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

Older people are **loyal customers**



# Age Friendly CHARTER

## Our Public Service is aiming to be Age Friendly

Our champion for age-friendliness and older customers is:

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

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

Talk to our champion or email [business@agefriendlyireland.ie](mailto:business@agefriendlyireland.ie) if you have any suggestions or comments.

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*Older Persons Champion*

*Age Friendly Programme Manager*



# What's next?

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

## 1. Send your three actions

to your nominated colleague

## 2. Start implementing the actions

and make the changes you have committed to.

## 3. Launch Event & Charter

A launch event is organised and held locally. This is a key opportunity to publicise that your services are Age Friendly is when you receive the framed Charter which lists the three actions your service is committing to.

Previous launches have included the local Mayor, older customers and other officials in attendance. Local press/radio are invited to attend also.

## 4. Mystery Public Services Users

So who better to give us feedback on the participating public services facilities than the older customer? Locally we work with the Older People's Council to organise the mystery public service users. We look for older volunteers to assess the actions and if they are been implemented locally.

## 5. Awards

The annual Age Friendly Achievement and Recognition Awards recognise the great innovative and creative work been completed nation-wide in making Ireland a great place in which to grow old. This work is having a real sustainable impact on the lives of older people.

We welcome applications from public services that have participated in this programme.

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

[www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie) for up to date information.

## Keep in touch with us

Once you have started, we'd love to hear how you are doing. Please go onto our website

[www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie) and leave a comment/suggestion or email [business@agefriendlyireland.ie](mailto:business@agefriendlyireland.ie)

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

A list of Age Friendly Services in your area will be featured on our website, along with hints, tips, and any events that are happening in your area.

[www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie)









**Contact**

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or contact your local co-ordinator on our website  
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