



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

Cork County Council

CORK COUNTY
AGE FRIENDLY STRATEGY 2024 – 2028



CORK COUNTY AGE FRIENDLY STRATEGY 2024 - 2028

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Welcome from Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Joe Carroll

As Mayor of the County of Cork, I am proud that Cork is part of this World Health Organisation initiative to create an Age Friendly County.

As this report highlights there have been many beneficial initiatives and developments undertaken across the county, resulting in improved quality of life of our older citizens. I would like to acknowledge the work of Cork County Age Friendly Alliance and Cork County Older People's Council, on their achievements to date and their input into the development and delivery of this ambitious strategy for the period of 2024 to 2028.



County Cork is built on the experience of our older residents. Through community involvement and volunteering, by working and being active members of our business community, the essence of what makes Cork County a good place to live is built on their efforts. The role and experience of older people is fully reflected in the work of the Age Friendly Programme. Given our growing population of older people, this work is more important than ever to ensure that our older people have the necessary supports and services in place. An Age Friendly county is a place where more older persons can stay living in their own homes and communities, lead healthy and active lives, go where they want to and be valued contributors to their communities.

As Mayor, together with the members of Cork County Council, I fully endorse the Age Friendly work programme and look forward to the positive impact this work will make on the quality of life of all of our citizens.

Cllr. Joe Carroll

Mayor of the County of Cork

Foreword from Moira Murrell, Chief Executive of Cork County Council

It is my privilege to present the Cork County Age Friendly Strategy for 2024 – 2028, a comprehensive plan that reflects our deep commitment to enhancing the lives of older people throughout the county. As Chief Executive of Cork County Council, I am proud of the strides we have made in building a more inclusive, supportive environment for all our citizens. This strategy represents the next chapter in our ongoing efforts to make Cork County a place where people of all ages, particularly our older residents, can thrive.



Ireland is experiencing a significant demographic shift, with the number of people ages 65 and over growing at an unprecedented rate. By 2040, it is projected that over 20% of the population will be over 65. Cork County with its vibrant towns, rural communities, and coastline, is no exception to this trend. We recognise the unique opportunities and challenges that come with this demographic change, and this Age Friendly Strategy has been developed to address these realities head-on.

The development of this strategy involved extensive consultation with older people, community groups, service providers, and key stakeholders. Their insights and feedback have been invaluable in shaping a plan grounded in the real experiences and needs of older adults. The strategy focuses on several key areas: housing, transport, health services, social inclusion, and safety. It aims to foster an environment that supports active, healthy aging while addressing barriers that may limit participation in community life.

This is not just a document; it is a roadmap for the future. Cork County Council is committed to implementing this strategy in partnership with Age-Friendly Alliance, state agencies, and local communities. We will work collaboratively to ensure that Cork County continues to be a wonderful place to grow older – where services are accessible, communities are connected, and older people feel valued and empowered.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the development of the strategy, particularly our older residents, whose voices and experience are at the heart of the work. Together we can create a county that is truly age-friendly, ensuring Cork County is a place where people of all ages can enjoy a high quality of life.

Moira Murrell

Chief Executive, Cork County Council

Welcome message from Patricia Liddy, Chair of Cork County Age Friendly Alliance

As Chair of the Cork County Age Friendly Alliance, I welcome the development and recognise the importance of our new Age Friendly Strategy for our County.

Statistics tell us that worldwide the number of older people is increasing, a trend which is set to continue. This demographic shift in Ireland and in Cork County is something to be celebrated and we must plan to ensure that our older people have the necessary supports and services in place to meet their growing needs, to enhance their wellbeing and quality of life as they age in place.



The Cork County Age Friendly Programme has been operational for several years now and continues to grow from strength to strength. Our previous strategy has demonstrated how well we can work together with our partners around the Age-Friendly Alliance table. This was particularly evident during the Covid pandemic, when through the Community Call process, our partners rallied to give unstinting service to the older and more vulnerable people in our communities. Widespread public and stakeholder consultation has informed the priority needs and shaped the actions to be delivered in implementing this strategy. This strategy is the culmination of a detailed consultation process that has brought together our older residents and the key service providers to identify how we can make Cork County an exceptional location to live, work, enjoy life to the full and grow older.

I would like to thank and pay tribute to the members of Cork County Age Friendly Alliance and the Older People's Council. Your active involvement and hard work in delivering our 2024-2028 strategy has created a structured informed plan to meet the needs of our older people in Cork County.

Patricia Liddy

Chairperson of the Cork County Age Friendly Alliance

Welcome message from Chair of the Older People’s Council

As Chairperson of Cork County Older People’s Council, I am delighted to be involved with this new Age Friendly Strategy.

Age friendly programme strategies are informed by the views and needs of the older people. Cork County Older People’s Council look forward to working with the different agencies in supporting the implementation of the new strategy for 2024-2028. Older people are the key to the process-their voice is at the heart of the Age Friendly design in every village, town and city in Cork County. It is great to see the collaborative nature of the commitments put forward by the range of stakeholders involved in the various strategies produced to date. The Cork County Older People’s Council will ensure that older people are valued and appreciated and that they are listened to. If we all play a role in correcting perceptions and enabling greater interactions between generations, we can help to create a more cohesive society for people of all ages.



I would like to thank my fellow members of the Cork County Age Friendly Alliance and the Older Persons Council across the County for their contribution to this strategy and in the preparation of this plan.

Liz Downes

Chair of Cork County Older People’s Council



1.0 Introduction

The Cork Age Friendly County Strategy is a framework plan to help make Cork County a great place in which to live and grow old. The strategy is intended to provide a structure for interagency cooperation which is essential to improve the quality of life for older people in the County, along with the support of older people through the Cork County Older People's Council, statutory, community, voluntary and private sectors.

We are experiencing a continuous major demographic shift in Ireland and in County Cork. People in the county are living longer and this increase in longevity is something to be celebrated. This demographic shift is due to a range of factors including improved diet, better health care, medical and technological advances. It is bringing about a profound change in how we understand ageing and the roles the older person can assume. The ageing population brings great opportunities and also great challenges which require a cross sectoral response if we are to make Cork County an attractive and safe place in which to spend one's later years.

As a result of the city boundary changes in 2018 it was not feasible to draw observations on population changes or trends between the 2016 and 2022 census periods. However, it can be reasonably assumed that the population trends in Cork County are similar to those of the state. The average age of Cork's population in April 2022 was 39.1 years, compared with 37.5 years in April 2016. Nationally, the average age of the population was 38.8 in 2022, up from 37.4 in April 2016. It is anticipated that the percentage of older people relative to the working age population will continue to grow during the lifetime of the plan*. The number of older people over 65 is expected to increase from 45,800 (2016) to 72,822 (2031) and 93,212 (2041).

*Cork County Development Plan 2022, volume 1, section 2.4.2

The Cork Age Friendly County Strategy was prepared by the Cork Age Friendly County Alliance and the Older Person's Council. By actively participating in and coordinating the work on the strategy, older people in County Cork have had a real input into how the County will develop and respond to the opportunities presented and challenges posed by an ageing population. The aim is to ensure that older people in Cork County are enabled to live active and healthy lives by undertaking initiatives over the next five years and beyond that will position Cork County to respond to the challenge of an ageing population.



Focus Group- Castlemartyr

Section 1.0 introduces the rationale for developing an Age Friendly strategy for Cork County. Section 2.0 presents the National Age Friendly Programme, while section 3.0 sets the national policy context. Section 4.0 provides an overview of key demographics. The methodology for the consultation process is presented in section 5. Section 6 is the vision, objectives and values underpinning the strategy. The successes and achievements of the previous strategy are summarised in section 7. The strategic themes and actions are presented in section 8, while section 9 includes the appendices.

The Age Friendly Alliance & The Older Person's Council

In each local authority area, an Age Friendly Alliance has been established, involving senior decision-makers from public, commercial and not-for-profit organisations. Age Friendly Alliances plan and implement strategies and oversee progress in each county. Many thousands of practical steps have been taken at local level under the guidance of these Alliances.

This is a high-level cross-sector group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority (or an independent chair). The member agencies of the local Age Friendly Alliance form a strategic partnership to develop and oversee the realisation of the Age Friendly City or County Strategy. Members include the local authority, the Health Service Executive, the Education and Training Board, An Garda Síochána, Chamber of Commerce, the third level education sector, other relevant stakeholders including the participation of an elected member representing a Strategic Policy Committee.

The Older People's Council:

This is a representative group of older people, established by local authorities as part of the development of the local Age Friendly 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 local Age Friendly Programme. Representatives of Older People's Councils participate, alongside representatives of the relevant member agencies, on the local Age Friendly Alliance.

The key role of Older People's Councils is to:

- o Provide the voice of older people to support the Alliance at strategic level in the delivery of its actions.
- o Co-design solutions in response to barriers and challenges.
- o Surface up national policy issues through the Age Friendly Shared Service.

Older People's Council Guidelines, Age Friendly Ireland

See appendices for list of members.



Focus group, Millstreet

2.0 The National Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme

2.1 World Health Organisation Network Affiliation

The World Health Organisation is the driving force behind the global movement for age friendliness. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines an “age-friendly” community as one in which all stakeholders:

- Recognise diversity among older people.
- Promote the inclusion of older people.
- Value their contribution to community life.
- Respect their decisions.
- Anticipate and respond flexibly to age related needs.

The WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC) was established to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning between cities and communities worldwide. Any city or community that is committed to creating inclusive and accessible urban environments to benefit their ageing populations is welcome to join.

Cities and communities in the Network are of different sizes and are located in different parts of the world. Their efforts to become more age-friendly take place within very diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts. What all members of the Network have in common is the desire and commitment to create physical and social urban environments that promote healthy and active ageing and a good quality of life for their older residents.

Ireland’s Age Friendly Cities and Counties are affiliated to this global movement that is enabling older people to remain active and valued members of their communities on every continent. The results of this worldwide programme include positive ageing, better cities and counties, more relevant and effective local government, service delivery and business opportunities.

The themes established by the WHO were used as the basis for consulting older people and for developing the Age Friendly Strategies and actions nationally. The following are the eight themes developed by the WHO for the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme and are available on www.agefriendlyireland.ie:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Social Participation
5. Respect and Social Inclusion
6. Civic Participation and Employment
7. Communication and Information
8. Community Support and Health Services.

In addition, Cork County Alliance has included the inhabited islands of Cork County as a separate theme for the purposes of this strategy.

2.2 Age Friendly Ireland

Each local Age Friendly Programme operates with the same structure which relies on an active Older People’s Council, an Age Friendly Alliance, an Age Friendly Programme Manager, an Age Friendly Housing Technical Advisor and interdepartmental group within the local authority.

The local Age Friendly Alliance is a high-level cross-sector group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority (or an independent chair). The member agencies of the local Age Friendly Alliance form a strategic partnership to develop and oversee the Age Friendly Strategy. Members include the local authority, the Health Service Executive, the Education and Training Board, An Garda Síochána, the Chamber of Commerce, the third level education sector, other relevant stakeholders including, in some cases, the participation of an elected member representing a Strategic Policy Committee.

The Older People’s Council is a representative group of older people, established by the local authority as part of the local Age Friendly Programme. The Older People’s Council is a two-tier structure with an elected Executive Committee and a wide membership base. Older People’s Councils identify priorities areas of need, raise issues of importance, influence the decision-making process of the local Age Friendly Programme, and also participate 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. Older People’s Council representatives are key collaborators and stakeholders who co-design the actions and objectives of the Age Friendly Strategy.

The National Shared Service.

Age Friendly Ireland is a shared service of local government hosted by Meath County Council. The shared services manages the national Age Friendly Programme, affiliated to the World Health Organization’s Age Friendly Cities and Communities Network. The national programme is operated through a team-based framework of 31 local Age Friendly Programmes hosted in local government.

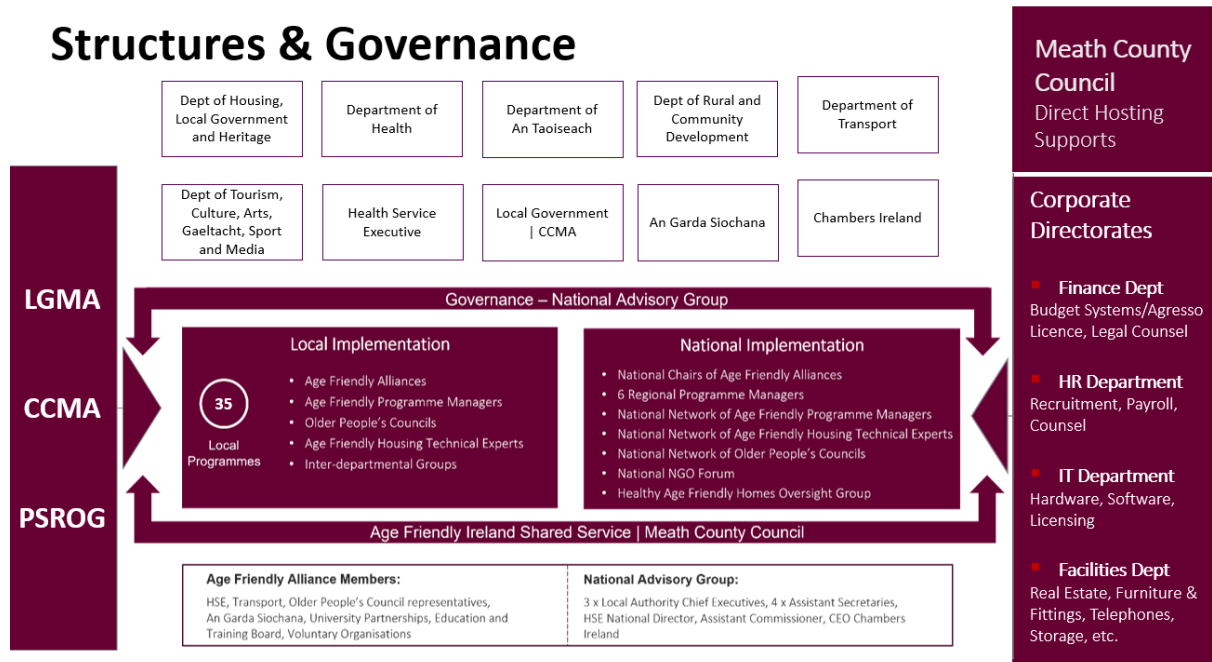
The National Age Friendly Shared Service supports cities, counties, towns, villages, and rural communities across Ireland to prepare for the rapid ageing of our population by paying increased attention to the environmental, economic and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older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

See structure diagram below.

Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service Structure:



3.0 The National Policy Context.

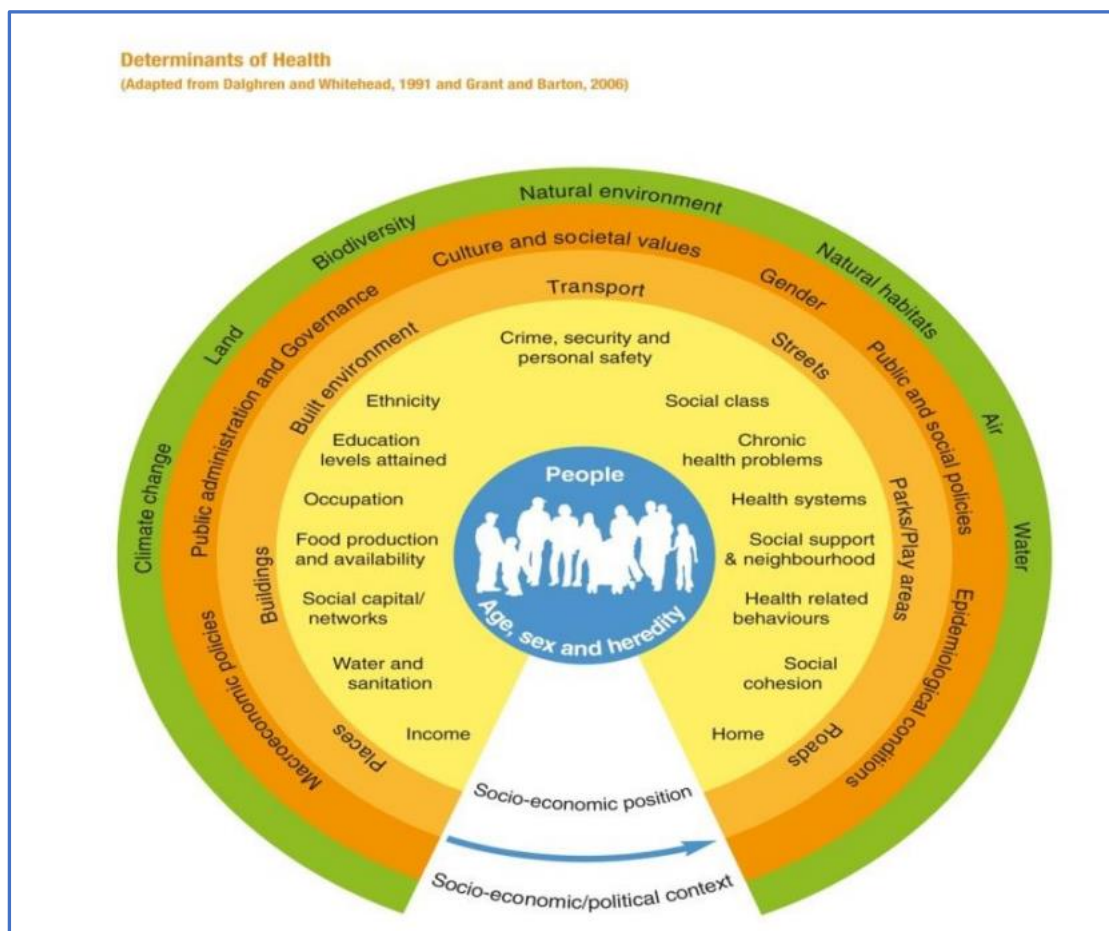
3.1 The National Positive Ageing Strategy.

‘The ageing of our population from this point onwards will represent one of the most significant demographic and social developments that Irish society has encountered. There is no doubt that this will pose challenges but it will also bring great opportunities’

National Positive Ageing Strategy, 2013

The strategy describes population ageing as a success story: people are living longer, healthier and are more active in their later years than before. This demographic transition presents profound economic, social and political challenges. The strategy attempts to counter the negative portrayal and commentary around old age dependency as a strain on public systems and the working age population. The strategy leads a shift towards viewing the later years as a time of new beginnings and new possibilities. Older people are now better educated, enjoy better health than previous generations and present new opportunities for economic, social and cultural development.

It is also now widely recognised that health and wellbeing is a multi-dimensional concept that is determined by a range of interconnected social, economic and environmental factors.



Determinants of Health

The Positive Ageing Strategy is described as the over-arching blueprint for age-related policy and service delivery across Government and society in the years ahead. It provides a framework to enable better engagement to identify and to address issues that require co-operation among, in the first instance, a number of Government Departments. The Community and Voluntary Sector also has a significant role to play, as both a service provider and advocate, in the implementation of the Strategy, given its experience and commitment to working with older people.

Four National Goals have been developed to address key aspects of older people’s lives:

National Goal 1
Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities.
National Goal 2
Support people as they age to maintain, improve or manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
National Goal 3
Enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.
National Goal 4
Support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland.

3.2 The National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040.

‘As more people live longer lives, they will want to stay healthy and independent, and live in their own homes and communities’.

This is a national document that guides the high-level strategic planning and development for Ireland over the next two decades, so that as the population grows, that growth is sustainable in economic, social and environmental terms.

In planning for Age Friendly Communities, the document states that as more people live longer, they will want to stay healthy and independent, live in their own homes and communities and keep to a minimum their use of in-patient and out-patient hospital services. In this regard the government policy is *to support older people to live with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.*

This policy highlights the need for appropriate housing choices based on universal design with appropriate supports for older people so that they can age with confidence and enjoy more active, healthy and connected lives.

3.3 Our Rural Future, Rural Development Policy, Government of Ireland, 2021-2025

Our Rural Future is the Irish Government’s framework for the post-COVID recovery and development of rural Ireland up to 2025. Key aims of the framework reflect many of the issues raised by older people in the consultation process for preparing the Cork County Age Friendly Strategy. Town and Village centre renewal is a core policy and includes for example: encouraging town living, adapting outdoor spaces for socialising and for cultural events and investing in parks and green spaces. This is a priority theme in feedback from older people who wish to comfortably and safely go about their business and socialising, within their local town or village centre. The framework also plans to make greater use of vacant and underused premises for community purposes. The local post office has long been a vital element of providing services availed of by older people, and under the Rural Future framework the government plans to provide additional services through the Post Office Network. During the consultation process rural transport featured strongly and as part of the government’s plan rural transport, including Local Link, will receive significant additional funding to expand and enhance rural transport services. This will include providing accessibility for people with a disability. Other aims within the framework directly relevant to the issues identified by older people in Cork County include Adult Digital Literacy, an Islands Development Policy and a Just Transition to a climate neutral society.

3.4 Better Public Services. A transformation strategy to deliver for the public and build trust.

Prepared by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, Government of Ireland, May 2023. The key objective of this strategy being to support Public Service Bodies and public servants to meet current and future challenges and improve how services are delivered and how functions are carried out.

The strategy is framed around three core themes:	The strategy is focused on six high-level outcomes:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital and Innovation at Scale. 2. Workforce and Organisation of the Future. 3. Evidence-informed policy and services designed for and with our public. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased customer satisfaction. 2. Increased public trust. 3. Greater use of digital to do business with the Public Service. 4. Greater employee engagement. 5. Improved quality of public services. 6. Better Government effectiveness.

The core theme of Digital & Innovation at Scale is the theme most directly related to the Age Friendly Strategy. Delivering a greater level of innovative and effective services on-line is the main priority within the strategy, and as is evident in the consultation with older people, it is a very contested issue. As per the feedback received, some older people have considerable difficulties and even find it impossible to access on-line services. The Better Public Services strategy acknowledges this fact but does not describe how it will accommodate non-digital public services customers, it does however reference the government’s *Digital Inclusion Roadmap*.

3.5 Digital for Good: Ireland’s Digital Inclusion Roadmap, Government of Ireland, July 2023

‘The welfare of the older generation depends on them being able to exercise their citizenship without limitations’

"Please Mind the Grey Digital Divide":

An Analysis of Digital Public Policies in Light of the Welfare State (Sweden and Greece)
Alexopoulou, Sofia, Örebro University, School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences.

The goal of this strategy is to make Ireland one of the most digitally inclusive States in the EU, and that everyone should have the opportunity to use digital services, including digital public services, in a meaningful way. This is to be part of delivering the United Nations principle of “Leave No One Behind”.

It recognises, in an increasingly digital society, that those who are unable to avail of digital opportunities for whatever reason, risk feeling excluded. The strategy is set in the context of the government’s social inclusion policy – to increase social inclusion of those who are most disadvantaged, and digital inclusion is an important element of social inclusion. It recognises that there are groups who remain poorly engaged with digital technologies, in particular, those who are older. It also notes that while Ireland is recognised as having a highly educated workforce there is a significant cohort who *‘lack the reading, writing, numeracy, communication and digital skills required to perform essential daily tasks’*. In this sense, digital literacy is a critical part of general literacy.

The challenge of digital exclusion is also highlighted in the Irish Government’s *Well-Being Framework*, the EU’s 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade, and the OECD’s Declaration on a Trusted, Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Future. Furthermore, The United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development identifies “leave no one behind” as one of its key guiding principles, cutting across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, sustainable development is not achievable if disadvantaged and marginalised sections are excluded and left behind.

The plan aims to achieve digital inclusion in the following ways:

- By mid-2024, to publish a Charter for Digital Inclusion.
- Establish a platform to showcase best practice examples of digital inclusion by businesses and maximise the opportunity for collaboration and partnerships, at national and local levels.
- During 2024, to develop a recognition programme for particular achievements by organisations that adopt the Charter for Digital Inclusion.
- Develop and promote a charter.
- Progress our digital infrastructure.
- Implement our literacy strategies.
- Provide inclusive, accessible and literacy-friendly digital public services.
- Build greater awareness of and trust in digital public services.

3.6 Our Living Islands, Department of Rural and Community Development, June 2023.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that sustainable, vibrant communities can continue to live - and thrive - on the offshore islands for many years to come.

This new policy for the development of Ireland's islands addresses a number of key issues. Islanders have highlighted the priority need for initiatives to support more people and young families to remain or to move to live on the islands, this is being addressed through extra grants to renovate vacant and derelict properties. It also supports remote working. The policy is underpinned by five high-level strategic objectives:

1. Revitalise population levels on the islands
2. Diversify island economies
3. Enhance Health and Wellbeing services
4. Empower Island Communities
5. Build smart sustainable futures

The policy is accompanied by 80 actions for the period 2023 – 2026. As well as providing capital for infrastructure development the actions aim to;

- provide island-specific additional grant support for property refurbishment,
- deliver high-speed broadband to broadband and digital hubs,
- pilot eHealth Pods to improve access to online health appointments, and
- ensure that island communities' voices are heard through the establishment and support of a forum for dialogue.

3.7 Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, September 2021.

The stated objective of this plan is that:

every citizen in the State should have access to good quality homes'

It is estimated that Ireland will need an average of 33,000 new homes to be provided each year from 2021 to 2030. This plan sets out four main objectives;

- supporting home ownership and increasing affordability
- eradicating homelessness, increasing social housing delivery and supporting social inclusion
- increasing new housing supply
- addressing vacancy and efficient use of existing stock

4.0 Demographic Information

4.1 Ageing Population

The number of people aged 65 and over continues to grow, with the county showing a slightly older age profile than the state.

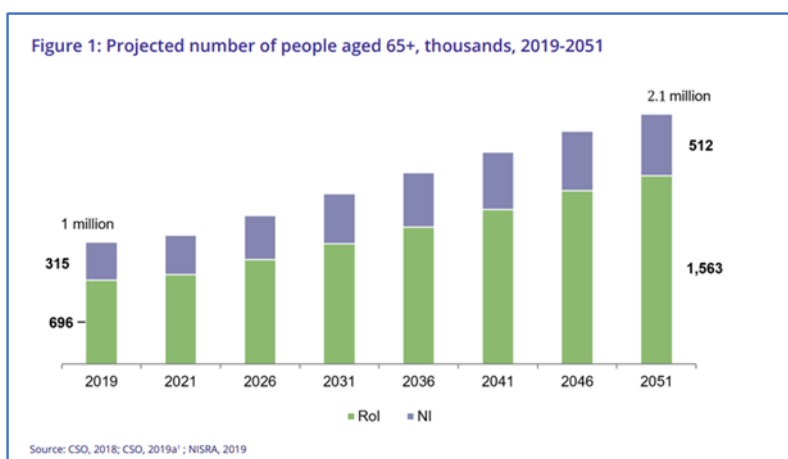
CSO 2022

Average Age

	Cork	State
2016	37.5	37.4
2022	39.1	38.8

Population Growth Projection

Similarly, this graph shows the projected population increase in the over 65s for the whole of Ireland over the coming decades.

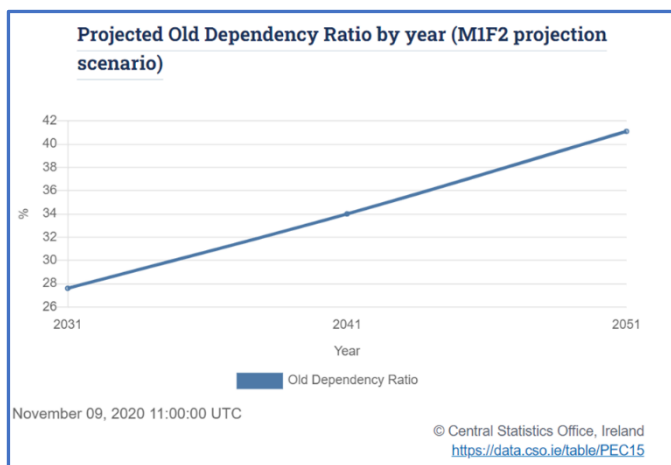


Population Projection Cork It is anticipated that the percentage of older people relative to the working age population will continue to grow during the lifetime of the Plan. The number of older people over 65 is expected to increase from 45,800 (2016) to 72,822 (2031) and 93,212 (2041).

Cork County Development Plan 2022, volume 1, section 2.4.2

4.2 Dependency The dependency ratio is calculated by expressing the population aged 65 years and over as a percentage of the population aged 15 - 64 years. The graph from the 2016 Census shows the projected increase in dependency of the over 65s over the coming decades (nationally).

CSO 2016, Older Person's Information Hub



4.3 Health

In 2022, 85% of people in Cork stated that their health was good or very good compared with 88% in 2016 (slightly higher than the national average). This is a similar trend to the national figures, which also showed a 4% decrease in the good/very good categories, from 87% to 83%. This drop in the self-declared health rating is strongly linked to the COVID 19 pandemic.

People declaring Good or very good health:

	2016	2022
Cork	88%	85%
State	87%	83%

Cork County Development Plan 2022, volume 1, section 2.4.2

4.4 People with a Disability

The percentage of people with a disability in Cork County for 2022 was 21%, very similar to the figure for the state which was 22%.

Persons with a disability	75625
County population	360152

CSO 2022

Health and Disability Key Points

- Relative to Ireland as a whole, Cork County has proportionately fewer persons with a disability and persons whose self-declared health status is either bad or very bad,
- Within the county, the proportion of persons with a disability is highest in areas that have an older age profile, most notably rural areas in the north and west of the county,
- Poor health outcomes are also associated with age, as well as with socio-economic deprivation; and
- Cork County performs well in respect of social determinants of health, but the county has relatively high proportions of persons with sedentary lifestyles, and instances of cancers and cardiovascular diseases are above average.

LECP Socio-Economic Profile, 2022

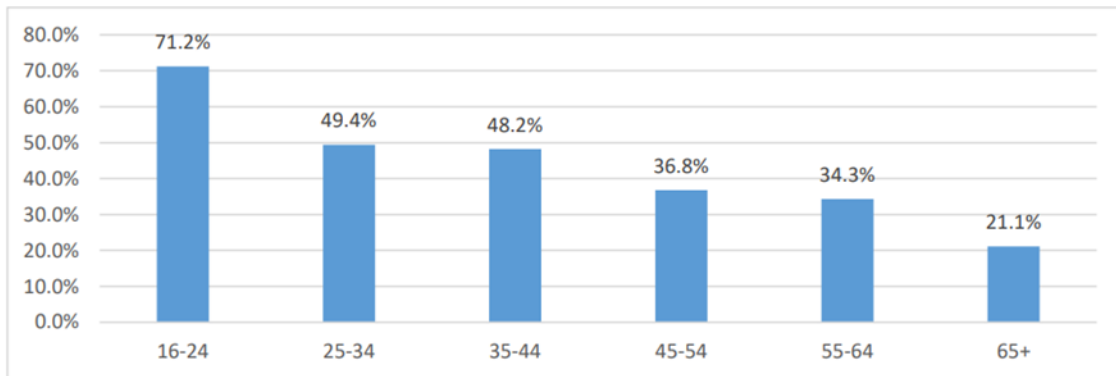
The LECP Socio-Economic Profile reports that just under thirteen percent (12.9%) of Cork County's population has a (self-declared disability) and highlights the direct correlation between ageing and disability. Across Cork County the proportion of persons with a disability are in locations that have older age profiles, in particular the rural communities of North and West Cork.

4.5 Health - Participation in Exercise and Sport

The benefits of continued or even increased physical activity in older adults is well documented and shown to improve physical and mental wellbeing, more social involvement and less illness. Studies in recent decades show that more older adults are participating in exercise and sport, although this was negatively affected by the COVID 19 pandemic.

In Cork, 43.1% of respondents take part in sport and exercise at least once a week. The five most popular sporting activities in Cork are: personal exercise, swimming, running, cycling and soccer. The study also reports that those with a long-term illness/disability are less likely to take part in sport (28.5%).

Figure 3: Participation in sport by age group



Adult Participation in Sport and Physical Activity in Cork (Irish Sports Monitor 2015 and 2017)

4.6 Deprivation Index

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index is a measure of disadvantage and social exclusion. Nationally, it reports a worrying increase of 4.3% in the number of households experiencing deprivation.

***Enforced deprivation** is where a household experiences two or more of the 11 deprivation items ... The percentage of people aged 16 years and older living in households (nationally) experiencing enforced deprivation increased by over four percentage points, from 13.0% in 2021 to 17.3% in 2022.*

Pobal Deprivation Index 2022

In the 2016 Census Cork County had an overall rating of 3.4 on the index, which is defined as slightly above average i.e. not disadvantaged as such. However, this is an average and does not reflect particular areas that experience disadvantage such as some of the rural and coastal areas.

Cork Economic and Community Data Monitor, Cork County Council

County Cork has been scored marginally above average in an analysis of deprivation in Ireland by Pobal, a government-funded organisation. The organisation used figures from the 2022 census to give Cork a score of 2.69 in its newly published Deprivation Indices.

Irish Independent, November 2023

4.7 Housing Need

The Age Dependency Ratio for the county has increased, reflecting the changing demographics both in the county and the country. Age Dependency Ratio (the number of older people (65+) as a percentage of the working age population). As we age, our housing requirements change. For example, we may not need as many rooms, and we may need adaptations to make our homes more age-friendly.

Age Dependency:

2011	16.9%	2022	20.2%
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Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 supports the provision of a housing mix that offers a choice for older people, and it encourages the application of universal design principles into new residential properties. The main aim of the housing strategy is to increase the options available to older people and to facilitate the integration of supports in a more coordinated way.

Cork County Development Plan 2022

4.8 Broadband

Given the growing role of internet in our lives there is a challenge to provide the option of broadband to all citizens, in County Cork almost one in ten homes don't have broadband.

Total homes	127,590	100%
No broadband	12504	9.7%

5. Methodology - How the Age Friendly Strategy was developed in Cork County

County Cork Age Friendly engaged external consultants to undertake the preparation of the strategic plan for the period 2024-2028. A wide range of stakeholders were consulted in the process, some of which was in-person and some on-line. The process took place between May and October 2023.

The main stages of the process involved:

- Coordination and planning with Age Friendly Programme Manager & the Older Person's Council,
- Review of key policy documents,
- Administration of survey,
- Schedule of in-person and on-line interviews,
- Analysis of CSO data,
- Preparation of draft actions for finalisation with stakeholders,
- Preparation of final document.

Stakeholders Consulted:

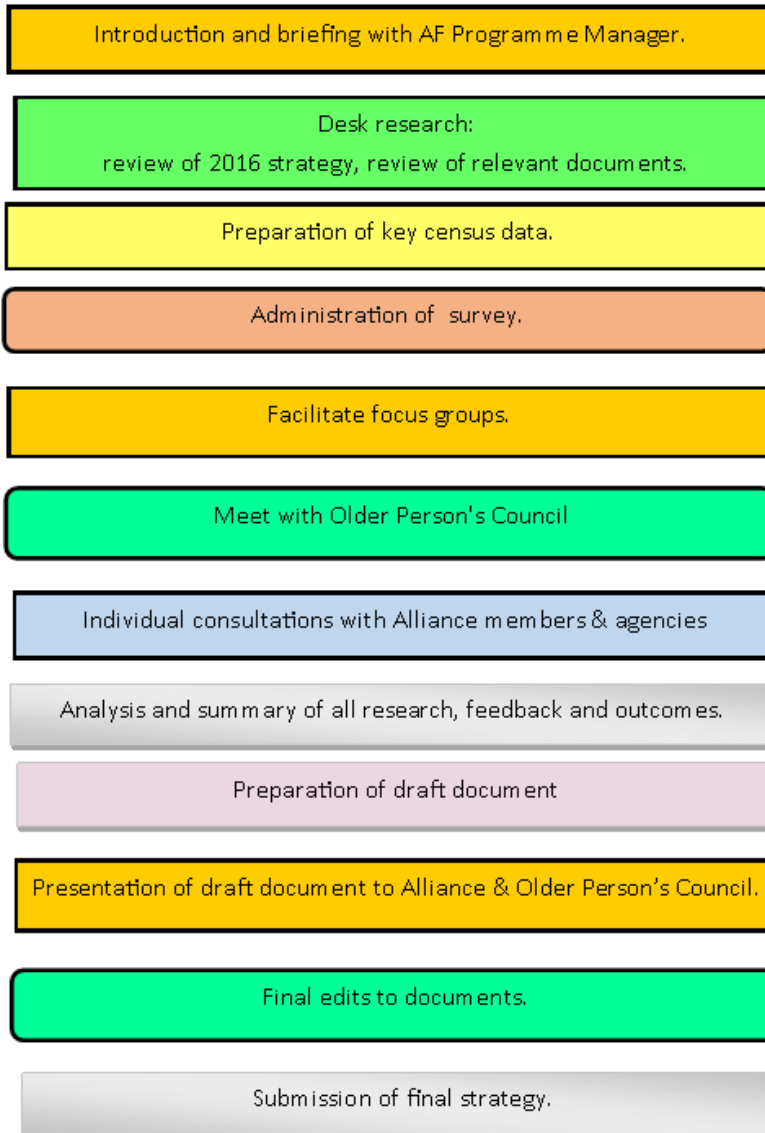
- The Older Person's Council (on-line and in-person meetings and facilitation at AGM).
- Older people: distribution of survey, both on-line and paper versions.
- Age Friendly Alliance: (meetings and presentation of draft actions).
- Cork County Council Interdepartmental Team: consultation meetings (meetings and presentation of draft actions).
- Age Friendly Towns: in-person meetings in Mitchelstown, Millstreet & Bantry.
- Eight Focus Groups: mainly in-person meetings in Mallow, Charleville, Bantry, The Islands, Castlemartyr/ Mitchelstown, Passagewest/ Monkstown & Bandon.
- Relevant agencies and organisations: interviews.



Focus group

Methodology Diagram:

Research, development and production of Cork County Age Friendly Strategy 2023 – 2028



6.0 Vision, Objectives & Values

The Cork Age Friendly County Strategy sets out the vision of Cork as an Age Friendly County, outlining the means by which it can be achieved. The World Health Organisation defines an “age-friendly” community as one in which service providers, public officials, community leaders, faith leaders, business people and citizens recognise the great diversity among older persons, promote their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life, respect their decisions and lifestyle choices, and anticipate and respond flexibly to ageing related needs and preferences.

6.1 Vision

The following is the overarching vision for the Cork Age Friendly County Programme:

***To make Cork County a great place to grow old
in which everyone is valued and respected.***

6.2 Objectives

The Cork Age Friendly County Programme is dedicated to improving the quality of life of older people by implementing the following objectives:

- Involving older people in decision making on issues that affect their lives.
- Providing opportunities and supports which enable older people to live full and active lives.
- Providing a framework to coordinate services to meeting the needs of older people.

6.3 Values

The following are the values that underpin the Cork Age Friendly County Programme:

Person-centred: The strategy aims to include older people in the decision-making process by providing opportunities for them to inform the public processes and services which affect their lives.

Inclusion: It is recognised that older people are not a homogenous group, and that diversity is welcomed and the strategy is committed to advancing equality of participation for older people in the life of the city.

Partnership: The Alliance is committed to working together to deliver coordinated services and supports to meet the needs of older people.

Innovation: The Alliance is committed to using innovative methods and approaches to finding solutions to ensuring that Cork County becomes a great place to grow old.

7.0 Achievements of 2016 – 2021 Strategy

While the previous strategy had many successes and achievements, they were limited by the impact and restrictions associated with the COVID 19 Pandemic, 2020 – 2022. Older people in Ireland were particularly badly affected by the virus and experienced significant isolation and anxiety as a consequence. Older people's groups stopped meeting, activities were cancelled, and many older people themselves remained house bound. Services for older people were considerably disrupted and many meetings shifted to on-line. While the shift to on-line enabled certain meetings and conversations to continue, many older people could not make this transition. Even when the restrictions were finally lifted, some older people were very reluctant to re-engage in social activities.

The implementation of Cork County Age-Friendly Strategy was likewise impacted during the final years of the strategy. The Older Person's Council and Alliance meetings moved to on-line which enabled a level of work to continue. The work of the Age Friendly Towns was also impacted, their activities were limited, and the roll-out of Charleville Age Friendly Town was postponed for two years.

However, it is very important not to lose sight of the successes achieved during the course of the strategy – key successes include:

- Cork County Libraries achieved Age Friendly status, and their work is greatly appreciated by older people.
- Age Friendly parking was installed in a number of towns.
- Age Friendly Towns continued with their plans, although somewhat restricted by the pandemic.
- Cork Cultural Companions was established and well received by older people.
- A number of mobility studies were completed leading to measures to improve local access and mobility.
- Munster Technological University achieved Age Friendly University status.
- County Cork was one of a number of counties to pilot The Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme. The pilot programme has been very successful and led to the national roll-out of the programme.
- Cork County Council established an Age Friendly Interdepartmental Team representing all sections within the council. This team meets quarterly to review progress on internal Age Friendly actions.
- Age Friendly Housing Design Competition. This competition was supported by Cork County Council and the Schools of Architecture in UCC and MTU.
- Cork County Council published a collection of stories about climate change written by older citizens from Cork: Voices of Experience.

8. Cork County Age Friendly Strategy 2024 – 2028

The Cork Age Friendly County Strategy sets out nine strategic goals which will contribute to the achievement of making Cork an age friendly county and are stated below.

	Themes	Strategic Goals
1.	Transportation	To enable older people in County Cork to get from where they are to where they need to go when they want to go there.
2.	Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	Ensure that the location, design and maintenance of buildings and the surrounding environment are age proofed and in line with current best practice.
3.	Communication and Information	Ensure that information relevant to older persons services is easily accessible by everyone
4.	Community Support and Health Services	Ensure that older people have access to adequate health services and information and to age friendly health and recreational facilities needed for healthy and active living.
5.	Civic Participation and Employment	To enable older people to participate fully in lifelong learning opportunities and in the employment market where desired.
6.	Social Participation	To enable older people to participate fully in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the county.
7.	Respect and Social Inclusion	To promote inclusiveness and respect for older people in all aspect of service provision.
8.	Housing	Enable older people to live in their own homes and communities by providing the necessary supports and services as well as suitable housing in the right locations.
9.	The Islands	To enable older people to continue living a good quality of life in island communities.

Strategic Goals and Actions

The strategic goals and corresponding actions all emerged from the consultations with older people with Cork County Alliance members and with other, relevant organisations (see appendix 3). An overview of what older people said together with the goals and actions are set out in the following section. Often during consultations, the same issues re-occurred and while similarities were identified in many areas, differences also emerged across the county. Cork County is a very large and diverse space and while many issues appeared across the county, some areas, in particular remote areas and islands also had issues particular to those areas for geographic reasons and these are also reflected in the following section.

Transportation

Strategic Goal: To enable older people in County Cork to get from where they are to where they need to go when they want to go there.

Transportation - what are older people saying?

Mobility Studies. Age Friendly Towns committees have contributed to transport and mobility improvements in their towns. The starting point for these improvements is undertaking a mobility/walkability audit of the town or village centre, using a standard template and supported by local authority engineers. Older people are fully involved in undertaking the audit and completed the audits provide a plan of actions to make the streets more accessible and safer. These audits and plans rally the community, local businesses and services together to make their streets more age friendly, which improves access and mobility for all sectors of the community.

Local & Wide-Ranging Needs. There were many suggestions received on public transport during the consultation, reflecting the many local needs and issues across the length and breadth of the county. Transport for medical appointments is highlighted as a difficulty for many, particularly those in rural areas. The development of infrastructure is also highlighted – bus stops, bus shelters and real-time bus timetables at bus shelters. Many are unhappy accessing timetable information and bookings on-line and prefer to have an in-person/ phone call option. The responses indicate the need for comprehensive local consultations and local solutions within improved, overall county-wide collaboration between all public providers.

Parking & Footpaths. Older people welcome the age friendly parking that has been provided and would like to see more age friendly parking bays made available. Older people would also like footpaths to be well-maintained, safe to use and kept clear of obstructions, cars parked on footpaths, shop signs etc.

Cycling & Cycle Paths. There were a smaller number of suggestions regarding cycling and cycle paths in the survey responses, reflecting the need and the demand for development of more cycle path options and infrastructure. Without this option, people tend to rely on their cars to move about. Many older people are cyclists and would avail of safe, dedicated cycle lanes if they were made available for health, leisure and appointments etc.

All the info is online, booking tickets and timetables, I would love if there was a phone line where I could prebook train and bus tickets and get timetables, I find the web site difficult.

Community bus is a great asset.

There is an urgent need for public transport to connect the residential areas of the town and its hinterland with the principal shopping area and the new Primary Care Centre.

More public and disabled transport around the town.

Shuttle buses because hills are too steep for older people.

We have no public transport service; I need to drive everywhere.

Theme 1: Transportation - Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
1.1	Cork County Alliance will establish a countywide transport group. This group which will work to develop a clear understanding of public transport needs, overcoming the barriers surrounding transport, and facilitate a high level of collaboration involving private and voluntary providers and representatives from the Older Peoples Council.	Cork County Alliance	Local Link Cork, Bus Eireann, Irish Rail
1.2	Cork County Council, Bus Eireann and Local Link will ensure a coordinated approach in response to issues raised during consultation relating to local bus service provision, infrastructure of bus stops, bus shelters, location, safe access and provision of information.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Bus Eireann Cork Local Link
1.3	Cork County Council will continue to provide further age-friendly parking spaces, as identified locally in towns and villages.	Roads & Transportation Directorate, Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Age-Friendly Towns, Older Persons Council
1.4	Cork County Council will continue the roll-out of cycling pathways and infrastructure.	Roads & Transportation Directorate	Age-Friendly Towns, Older Persons Council
1.5	Cork County Library Service will continue to ensure provision of age friendly parking at its locations where feasible.	Library & Arts Service, Roads & Transportation Directorate Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	
1.6	Bus Eireann Travel Assistance Scheme will assist any customer who would like help in using Cork City Buses and Iarnród Eireann commuter trains.	Bus Eireann	
1.7	Bus Eireann will provide a Customer Host in Cork City to assist passengers where necessary with timetable information, printing of timetables, and advise on location of desired bus bay.	Bus Eireann	
1.8	Under the <i>Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan</i> Bus Eireann plans to improve mobility in rural areas, and it will do this by providing better connections between villages and towns by linking these areas with an enhanced regional network connecting cities and regional centres nationwide.	Bus Eireann	

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

Strategic Goal: to ensure that the location, design and maintenance of buildings and the surrounding environment are age proofed and in line with current best practice.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings - what are older people saying?

Standard Practice. While there have been many improvements in accessing outdoor spaces and buildings, there were considerable requests from older people to ensure provision of the basics. For example, providing ramps and handrails at entrances, properly designed toilets, and that these need to become standard practice. Older people don't want to have to request a special entrance or a disabled toilet.

Walkability/ mobility studies. While the consultation focussed on county-wide issues, people will naturally highlight local needs such as safer crossings, street lighting, traffic calming, improved footpaths etc. One way to address local issues in a coordinated manner is to undertake a mobility/ walkability study. Older people who have experienced the value of undertaking walkability/ mobility studies in their area would recommend the audits as standard practice. As well as benefitting older people, the improvements in local infrastructure benefit all sectors, and the process strengthens local community involvement in the development of their area.

Maintenance. During the consultations older people were keen to include their appreciation for infrastructural developments in their areas such as improved pathways, public spaces and green areas. However, they add the need to ensure maintenance of the facilities as broken pathways, protruding roots etc can present particular obstacles for them.

Providing Comfort. The responses also call for installation of more seating and toilets, both in public areas as well as in shopping centres and other services. These facilities provide comfort for older people as they go about their shopping and appointments etc. Related to this is the suggestion to provide awareness training to local businesses to improve their facilities for older customers.

..it's not easy for people in wheelchairs or with walking aids

Most public buildings are reasonably accessible.

I do not have mobility issues

Cars should not be allowed to park on pavements

More & clearer signage is always welcome

Anti-social behaviour in parks is intimidating.

More pathways made accessible and even, and no big steps

Theme 2: Outdoor Spaces & Buildings - Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
2.1	Cork County Age Friendly Alliance will promote best universal design principles in line with national policy and advocate for it to become regulation practice in building and facilities design, through the range of Age Friendly Ireland Toolkits to the private, public and community sector.	Cork County Age Friendly Alliance	Cork Chamber, Cork PPN
2.2	Cork County Council will continue to ensure provision of age friendly seating areas in new public spaces and actively promote provision of same in new developments, as provided in Part VIII applications for Public Realm Schemes.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	
2.3	Cork Chamber will highlight and promote provision of age friendly infrastructure through the Age Friendly Business programme to its members with a particular focus on the retail sector.	Cork Chamber	Age Friendly Alliance
2.4	Age Friendly Towns Committees as well as other towns and villages, supported by Cork County Council will carry out Age Friendly walkability audits to identify information on where changes can be made to increase a town's accessibility.	Age Friendly Towns committees	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development
2.5	Cork County Council will ensure the Age Friendly voice and concerns are included in Town Regeneration and Town Centre First Initiatives.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Older Person's Council
2.6	Cork County Council Planning & Policy Directorate will review its policy on open spaces in residential developments to ensure greater connectivity between open spaces.	Planning & Policy Directorate	



Focus group

Communications & Information

Strategic Goal: to ensure that information relevant to older persons' services is easily accessible by everyone.

Communications & Information– what are older people saying?

The Shift to On-Line. The lockdown in Ireland brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the move to providing services on-line. In the move to on-line some local offices of state services closed and did not re-open after the pandemic restrictions were lifted, such as Department of Social Protection and Citizen's Information. We have witnessed an ever-growing shift from in-person, face-to-face services to on-line and automatic services. Older people in particular experienced isolation and disruption of social participation during lockdown – the relentless drive to online service provision lessens the older person's human engagement and socialisation. The negative aspects of the impact of this shift on our lives is not being adequately enough.

Digital Divide. Older people reported considerable frustration and annoyance with the move to remote services, provided through screens and automatic voice machines. In general, older people have less confidence and skills in the use of modern technology, but they also value direct dealings with another human not mediated by a piece of software. They highlight the loss of choice in availing of services, and some go as far as expressing feelings of being bullied at choice being removed.

IT Training. It is important to stress that in the consultations, older people weren't against technology, with many calling for more classes to be made available in their locality in the use of mobile phones and use of internet to access information and make bookings etc.

Local Communications. Older people say there is a lack of coordination or central point of information at a local community level, and they are not aware of what is happening in their area. Many people in the consultations would like to have printed communications about local events and services made available, including use of clear typeface and plain English.

Step back from over reliance on digital methods

Less assumptions that everyone is computer literate

More talking less technology

All advice directs you to the computer www.

I am very Internet literate, but I pity older people who are not, as so much nowadays assumes ownership of smart phone & access to internet.

I find it very difficult to get information on what's happening around town.

Theme 3: Communication & Information - Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
3.1	Cork Age Friendly Alliance, in conjunction with the Older Person's Council, will promote age-friendly communications amongst its member agencies.	Cork Age Friendly Alliance	Cork Older Person's Council
3.2	Cork County Council will ensure its services are user-friendly and accessible for older people.	Service Design Unit, CCC	
3.3	Cork Age Friendly Alliance and its members will continue raise awareness of the issues concerning the digital divide and its impacts on older people.	Cork Age Friendly Alliance	
3.4	Cork Chamber will encourage businesses to provide direct phone-in options to customers as well as on-line.	Cork Chamber	Cork Age Friendly Alliance
3.5	Cork Age Friendly Alliance, in conjunction with the Older Person's Council, will pilot the use of IT Hubs for remote meetings with older person's organisations.	Cork Age Friendly Alliance	Older Person's Council
3.6	Cork County Library Service will host a range of talks e.g. Healthy Homes, Gardai, Digital Skills etc.	Library & Arts Service	Relevant agencies
3.7	Cork Age Friendly Alliance will communicate progress on implementation of the strategy to local communities annually.	Cork Age Friendly Alliance	Older Person's Council
3.8	Cork County Age Friendly Towns will set up an Age Friendly Towns website and Facebook page to promote Age Friendly awareness and to provide information on activities and events, both locally and nationally.	Age Friendly Towns	
3.9	An Garda Siochana will use traditional channels of communication to convey information to many older persons (e.g. local and national radio, newspapers, public notices, etc).	An Garda Siochana	Older Person's Council
3.10	An Garda Siochana will host information clinics in communities, specifically aimed at the needs of older persons.	An Garda Siochana	Older Person's Council

Community Support & Health Services

Strategic Goal: to ensure that older people have access to adequate health services and information and to age friendly health and recreational facilities needed for healthy and active living.

Community Support & Health Services – what are older people saying?

Home Support Package. Much dissatisfaction was expressed in relation to the level of HSE Home Support/ Home Care services for older people. During the consultations many felt the service has become very inadequate, with the time allocated to a visit and the type of support provided both restricted. It is felt that this does not meet the needs of many dependent older people and is out of line with the government policy on supporting people to remain in their own home for as long as possible. Carers and community-based support organisations also identified the need for greater coordination and integration of state health services with local community and voluntary services.

COVID 19 Impact. Many stated that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a long-term impact on the well-being of older people, with some not rejoining social organisations, and some groups not resuming when restrictions were lifted. It was also stated that the full impact of the pandemic is not well understood, and that a greater understanding of its impact would be very beneficial to organizations and services in developing their responses.

Meeting Local Needs. A recurring theme throughout the consultations has been the need for services to be provided locally to meet local needs. And, as in other themes in this strategy, older people would like health services to be developed in meaningful consultation. At the time of preparing this strategy there is a crisis in the level of GP services, and this has been felt by older people who need the services the most. Accessing appointments causes anxieties. In as much as possible older people would like health appointments and therapies to be provided in local clinics instead of having to make often circuitous journeys by public transport to the nearest hospital.

Ageing Well. Older people would also like to see more preventative type/ ageing well/ well-being programmes provided in their area, and locally based community services would like to play a role in facilitating this.

...to get a Dr appointment is unreal you would have to wait 2 weeks to meet your GP.

I have to pay for all the health services I access. I would greatly value comprehensive free health care for all over 70 yrs. of age, especially access to testing for early detection of diseases.

Many older or disabled people struggle to keep their houses clean. A subsidised scheme to help us with that would be good.

Is it possible to have some health services like audiology and physio in the Primary Care settings even once a month to avoid the hassle of going up to the city for appointments?

Theme 4: Community Support & Health Services - Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
4.1	Cork County Council Healthy Ireland Programme will support initiatives to improve the physical and mental health of older people, in particular those less active and engaged.	Cork County Council Healthy Ireland Programme	Library & Arts Service, Sports Partnership
4.2	The Cork and Kerry Community Health Organisation (Cork Kerry Community Healthcare) will engage with the Older Peoples Council as key stakeholders in relation to the provision and expansion of health-related services, e.g. day care services, information events, and in regard to rolling out national strategies in the area such as the National Dementia Strategy.	Cork and Kerry Community Health Organisation	The Older Person's Council
4.3	Cork County Council will provide Dementia Friendly Training to staff.	MD Operations & Rural Development	Alzheimer's Society of Ireland
4.4	Cork County Age Friendly Alliance will seek funding to initiate a study into the after-effects of Covid on older people, in particular, the activities and organisations which have not resumed.	Age Friendly Alliance.	Older Person's Council.
4.5	Cork County Age Friendly Towns will implement initiatives to become Dementia-Friendly.	Age Friendly Towns	
4.6	Community Gardaí will actively promote the Senior Alert Scheme and liaise with local organisations that distribute the Personal Pendant Alarms.	An Garda Siochana	Community Alert Groups.



Focus group Passagewest

Civic Participation & Employment

Strategic Goal: To enable older people to participate fully in lifelong learning opportunities and in the employment market where desired.

What are older people saying?

Retirement Age. The main issue of concern under this theme is the retirement age. Many believe that the practice of having to retire at 65 years of age is not justified and should be scrapped in favour of the option of choice to retire, not to retire or to continue on a part-time basis. Some suggest that employers could develop a policy for employing older people.

IT Skills. Older people would like to see new training initiatives, with individual supports included, to help address the digital divide. It was also suggested that, in general, there is a need for strategies to support on-going education and training for older people to support their continued employment as well as on-going personal development. Feedback also calls for further representation of the voice of older people in decision-making bodies.

Since I retired it has not been possible to take up employment other than voluntary.

More information mornings in-person as opposed to social media.

Fine if one has own transport.

Older people should be given an opportunity to remain in the workforce for as long as they were able.

Not easy to find work if you are over 60.

Not interested in this topic as I am retired.

Theme 5: Civic Participation & Employment – Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
5.1	Cork County Alliance will engage with Cork Education & Training Board regarding provision of further training initiatives with individual supports to address the digital divide.	Cork Education & Training Board	Library & Arts Service
5.2	Cork Chamber, in conjunction with Cork Age Friendly Alliance, will promote the employment of people beyond the traditional retirement age of 65.	Cork Chamber	Age Friendly Alliance
5.3	Cork Age Friendly Alliance will strive to ensure greater representation of older voices, in all its diversity, on public bodies as the older population continues to grow.	Age Friendly Alliance	Older Person's Council
5.4	Education providers to cater for the diverse learning and development needs of older people and supporting their participation in education.	Cork Education & Training Board	Cork Age Friendly Alliance
5.5	Munster Technological University will undertake mobility studies on its campuses.	Munster Technological University	
5.6	Cork County Council will invite submissions from a further four towns to become Age Friendly Towns.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Older Person's Council

Social Participation

Strategic Goal: to enable older people to participate fully in the social, cultural, economic and political life of the county.

Cultural Companions. A new positive development supporting social participation is the Cultural Companions project supported by Muintir na Tire, HSE and Cork County Council. This project creates local networks of like-minded people interested in arts and culture who can accompany each other to cultural events. It brings together like-minded people that meet up regularly to go out either with another other person or as part of a small group. Its aim is to provide increased opportunities for older people to engage with Ireland's vibrant cultural and arts scene. Older people who took part in its activities are very pleased with it and would like to see it strengthened and expanded.

Suitable Meeting Spaces. One of the difficulties reported in the consultations by some older people's organisations is trying to find suitable meeting rooms for their activities. A corner in a bar or a hotel is not the most appropriate venue for the groups, and some communities just don't have suitable or comfortable meeting rooms. There is a clear case for local community halls to ensure that at least one room in the building to be suitably furnished for greater ease of access and comfort. There was a further suggestion that the traditional Day-Care centre could be adapted for use as a social hub for older people in general as well as for older people with greater support needs for times it is not in use.

Covid 19 Pandemic. As previously mentioned, the Covid 19 Pandemic seriously disrupted social networks, and as a result extra efforts are still required to facilitate the participation of some older people who are reluctant to re-engage. Older people's groups and support organisations believe there is a need for consistent outreach as well as appropriate communications to ensure as much inclusion as possible. There is a clear preference for traditional, printed communications of services and activities within the local community.

Regular Updates. Over the course of the consultations, the facilitator's received feedback expressing wariness and even scepticism regarding consultation processes. Some people expressed concern that consultation could be tokenistic and that they would not be aware of developments in implementing plans. This emphasises the importance of providing on-going updates to older people's groups and local communities as the plan is implemented over the coming years. People need to know that their feedback has been taken seriously and included in actions in the plan.

Social spaces to meet in safety for a chat, for information and advice, and with adequate parking.

I can't use the internet, I read the paper and local newsletter.

The future goal should be that each town should provide suitable premises or area for formal and informal activities which local citizens of that area can engage in.

Theme 6: Social Participation – Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
6.1	Cork Age Friendly Alliance will address the difficulties older persons and groups encounter in accessing suitable venues. An accessibility audit of cultural facilities will be undertaken to ensure barrier-free access for older adults. This can involve promoting the 'Seomra' concept in community hall and other community services. [seomra is the Irish word for a room e.g. sitting room]	Age Friendly Alliance	Muintir na Tire, Local development companies
6.2	Muintir na Tire, in conjunction with Cork County Council Heritage Department and the Healthy Ireland Programme, will promote and expand the Cultural Companions programme.	Muintir na Tire	Heritage Dept Library & Arts Service, Healthy Ireland Programme
6.3	Muintir na Tire will continue to establish and support the development of further local networks/hubs of Cultural Companions across Cork County to facilitate social connections and cultural engagement for older adults within their local communities.	Muintir na Tire	Heritage Dept, Library & Arts Service, Healthy Ireland
6.4	Cork County Council Heritage Department will review access to heritage sites for older people.	Heritage Department	The Office of Public Works, Private land-owners
6.5	Library & Arts Service will design intergenerational opportunities for creative expression that harnesses the wisdom and experience of older people and the energy of young people.	Library & Arts Service	

Respect and Social Inclusion

Strategic Goal: to promote inclusiveness and respect for older people in all aspect of service provision.

Age Friendly Towns. In towns that have an Age Friendly Committee and plan, the community and business sectors have collaborated in an effort to ensure greater mobility, enhanced infrastructure and age friendly awareness within retail and other services. However, in some towns that haven't begun the age friendly journey older people report a lack of awareness of the older customer. Feedback calls for continued provision for example of seating within supermarkets and shopping centres, more public toilets and awareness training for staff. There is also a desire for retailers to consult more with their older customers, and this extends in public service agencies also.

Ageist Attitudes. Ageism is still common and is experienced in attitudes, in structures and in employment opportunities. Older people feel they are particularly discriminated when it comes to employment opportunities and that their experience is not sufficiently valued. The depiction of older people in the media can still re-enforce negative stereotypes; more visibility in the media would be a step to counteract this.

Intergenerational Initiatives. The Age Friendly Housing Design Competition is a new initiative supported by Cork County Council, UCC and MTU. This event provides a platform for second-year architecture students to showcase their ingenuity in designing age-friendly housing solutions. Cork County Age Friendly has also supported the Intergenerational Quiz, the aim being to connect together younger and older generations. Each team comprises two Transition Year students and two older people from the community.

Since Mitchelstown became an AF town it's a great place to grow old in.

When you get to a certain age people think you are incapable of being responsible...



Older Person's Council AGM 2023, consultation workshop.

Theme 7: Respect and Social Inclusion - Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
7.1	The member organisations and agencies of the Age Friendly Alliance will work to embed the principles of the vision, objectives and values of the Cork Age Friendly County Strategy into their own strategies, plans and service provision.	Age Friendly Alliance	
7.2	Cork County Alliance will establish and promote an Age Friendly Business Programme for the county to ensure a greater focus on the older customer.	Age Friendly Alliance	Cork Chamber
7.3	Cork County Alliance will encourage its members to provide training for public agency staff and local authority staff in age-friendly principles and customer service.	Age Friendly Alliance	
7.4	Cork County Council Departments will promote the use of existing services and facilities like libraries, community centres, day centres etc to run intergenerational events.	Age Friendly Alliance	Library & Arts Service, Heritage Dept, & Climate Office
7.5	Cork County Alliance will promote opportunities for dialogue and interaction between the generations facilitating greater mutual understanding.	Cork County Alliance	
7.6	Cork Chamber will encourage its members to provide age friendly seating in supermarkets and shopping centres.	Cork Chamber	Cork County Alliance
7.7	Cork Chamber will highlight the benefits of consultation with older customers to its members.	Cork Chamber	Cork County Alliance
7.8	Cork County Alliance will engage with An Post to ensure its customers do not need to queue outside of local Post Office buildings, and to ensure seating is provided.	Cork County Alliance	An Post
7.9	Cork County Alliance will promote the correct terminology to be used when referring to older people and to discourage use of the term 'the elderly'.	Cork County Alliance	
7.10	Cork County Alliance will ensure that older adults from diverse backgrounds are represented and actively involved in decision-making processes related to the age-friendly strategy.	Cork County Alliance	All alliance members.

Housing.

Strategic Goal: to enable older people to live in their own homes and communities by providing the necessary supports and services as well as suitable housing in the right locations.

Home Care Package. Older people highlight a number of housing needs from down-sizing/ right-sizing to home maintenance to futureproofing, and to address this challenge, a greater level of collaboration between state and voluntary service providers. Across the consultations the under-resourcing of the HSE Home Care supports was consistently criticised as being limited and inadequate. Cost-savings cutbacks have reduced the amount of time a Home Care Worker can give to an individual and the nature of what they are permitted to do is also restricted, i.e. personal care and nothing else. Respondents in the consultations state that this is inconsistent with the State policy of supporting people to stay in their homes as long as possible.

Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme. County Cork was one of the pilot counties for the Healthy Age Friendly Homes program which began in 2021. Upon review the program has been deemed to be successful, and in 2023 it was rolled out nationally with each county covered. Phase 1 is to support people to live in their own home with dignity and independence, for as long as possible, thus avoiding the premature transition into long-term residential care. To date, very few of the older people consulted in preparing the Cork County Age Friendly Strategy 2024 – 2028 were aware of the program due to its newness. Over the course of the strategy, it will be necessary to collaborate with older people's organisations and support organisations to bring about greater awareness and understanding of the program.

Until recently I could do a lot myself, but there are some things I can no longer do.

The healthy age friendly homes programme ...is very welcome.

Would like to downsize. But no houses on the market to buy.

...more home help hours for those able and willing to remain at home.

Renting as an elderly person is very stressful.

...grants are very complicated to access,

The greatest nightmare is trying to find reliable tradesmen to do house maintenance.

Theme 8: Housing – Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
8.1	Cork County Council Climate Action Office will provide older people with user-friendly information on home heating options and energy saving.	Climate Action Office	Age Friendly Healthy Homes
8.2	Cork County Age Friendly Alliance will advocate to increase the level of home care services to support the Government’s living at home policy.	Age Friendly Alliance	
8.3	Cork County Age Friendly Healthy Homes Programme will be rolled out in the county with the aim of providing one-to-one supports enabling older people to remain in their homes.	Age Friendly Healthy Homes	
8.4	Cork County Age Friendly Healthy Homes will support those who wish to move to smaller accommodation.	Age Friendly Healthy Homes	Housing Dept



‘Voting’ on draft actions at Older Person’s Council AGM 2023.

The Islands

Strategic Goal: to enable older people to continue living a good quality of life in island communities.

Recurring Issues. While undertaking the consultations with the islands communities it was apparent that the issues raised by islanders in 2023 were very similar to those identified in the previous Age Friendly Strategy in 2016. The main actions identified in the previous plan were:

- Improved infrastructure: safe access at harbours, roads maintenance and recreational infrastructure,
- Health services,
- Increased private and public housing to sustain the population.

Additional Issues. The consultation responses in 2023 identify the same issues with the addition of:

- Health services to meet the needs of older people,
- Provision of community centres with adequate IT connectivity,
- Greater collaboration between the Islands Interagency Group and Cork County Council.

Broad Islands Development Plan. As can be seen most of the issues identified are not specific to older people, they apply equally to all residents on the islands. While this Age Friendly Strategy is not a development plan for the islands, it would appear that there is a need for agreement and implementation of a broad development plan for the islands in order to address the needs of older people.

Long term sustainable planning needed.

Better and safer ways of getting to and from the islands.

There should be a community centre to allow all residents to come together. For the elderly population this would make a big difference to life in the winter. It could be used for films, bingo, courses etc. It could also be used as a one-stop-shop for health services, visiting GP etc.

Ease of getting on and off the ferry need attention. A pontoon would circumvent steps and make travel much easier.

I see no future for me here as an older person, no resources, no supports, no activities.

Theme 9: The Islands - Actions

Action No.	Action	Lead Agency	Partner Agencies
9.1	Cork County Council in collaboration with the Islands Interagency Group will implement measures to ensure safe access to the slipways, pontoons and ferries in line with best AF design and practice.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Islands Interagency Group
9.2	Cork Age Friendly will participate in an initiative 'Age Friendly Days for Older People' on the three biggest islands in County Cork, this is part of a wider Age Friendly Ireland initiative.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	
9.3	Cork County Council will commit to putting in place proper infrastructure such as roads and recreational areas.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Islands Interagency Group
9.4	Cork County Council and local service providers, through the West Cork Healthy Islands Forum, will coordinate and ensure that regular health clinic services are in place to meet the needs of older people and their carers on the islands.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	West Cork Islands Health Forum
9.5	Cork County Council will agree, set targets and review policy in line with Our Living Islands policy for enabling increased provision of private and public housing accommodation for permanent year-round occupation on the islands in conjunction with the island communities.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Islands Interagency Group
9.6	Cork County Council will prioritise community centre provision on the islands (as meeting spaces, health clinics, IT hubs etc) with supports for remote working facilities and the development of an integrated local plan for the islands.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development	Islands Interagency Group
9.7	Cork County Council with the Islands Interagency group will advocate for a holistic, place-based approach which encourages and supports older people to develop their own plans to meet their long-term needs and to help them realise their vision for their own particular area.	Municipal District Operations & Rural Development, and Library & Arts	Islands Interagency Group

Cross-Cutting Themes

It can be seen that numerous needs and challenges arise across the nine Age Friendly Themes in the strategy. This emphasises the importance of a rounded approach to the strategy that ensures the engagement and involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, both statutory and community. Cross-cutting issues include, for example;

- mobility within towns and villages,
- education,
- transport,
- access to health services,
- the impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic,
- the limitations of the Home Care Package,
- the Digital Divide.

The consultation responses show that no single theme can be addressed on its own as all the themes are highly interconnected. It requires stronger and sustained collaboration and communications involving all stakeholders in the strategy.

The project consultants facilitated a joint meeting of the Older Person's Council and the Age Friendly Alliance in November 2023 to finalise the actions. During this workshop those present were invited to identify principles for good collaboration to implement the strategy, these included:

- Having the right person for the right position.
- More and better collaboration between the generations.
- Clarity regarding who is representing on issues.
- You are never too old to start learning - there are great role models.
- Energy and commitment are required to build good alliances.
- Diversity is needed and all views are important.

Implementing & Monitoring the Strategy

The key purpose of an Age Friendly strategy is to facilitate collaboration between the various agencies, organisations and older person's representatives. The members of the Cork County Age Friendly Alliance, together with the Older Peoples Council are committed to implementing this strategy over a 5-year period to 2028.

During focus group consultations there were requests for good communications to keep stakeholders informed of progress on implementation of the strategy, this is reflected in Action 3.7. This will be led by Cork Age Friendly Alliance who will undertake periodic reviews of the strategy.

Becoming age-friendly within an organisation requires a greater level of awareness and a shift in attitudes towards ageing, both individually and organisationally. A task going forward is for State, NGOs and the Business sectors to embed Age Friendly principles into their own strategic plans.

Monitoring the Cork Age Friendly County Strategy

The process of monitoring this strategy will comprise of:

- monthly meetings of the Older Person's Council,
- quarterly meetings of the Age Friendly Alliance,
- bi-monthly meetings of Cork County Council Age Friendly Interdepartmental Team,
- An annual review of the achievements to date and commitments for priority actions to be submitted to the Alliance and Older Peoples Council,
- A comprehensive final review of the strategy in the final year of the strategy to inform the next phase of the Cork Age Friendly County Programme.
- Other agencies and organisations involved in providing services for older people, not members of the Alliance, will also be invited to make presentations to the Alliance from time to time.



Cork County Council Library Service delivering boxes of books to older people during the pandemic 2020.

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1. Members of Cork County Older Person's Council

Name	Representing
Liz Downes (chairperson)	Mitchelstown
Eleanor Coughlan (vice-chair)	Clonakilty
Christy Roche (PRO)	Fermoy
Máire Corr	Passagewest
Billy Flynn	Lower Aghada
James Murphy	Passage West
Mary B. O'Shea	Mallow
Emily Murphy	Cobh
Charlie Mc Allister	Midleton
Jim Harrison	Killeagh
Catherine Dineen	Coachford
John Fitzgerald	Clonakilty
Martin Forrest	Midleton
Gavin Falk	Innishannon



Joint meeting of the Older Person's Council & the Age Friendly Alliance to review the draft actions, County Buildings, November 2023

Appendix 2.

Members of Cork County Age Friendly Alliance

Name	Organisation
Patricia Liddy	Chair of Age Friendly Alliance Cork County Council
Aisling O’Sullivan	Cork County Age Friendly
Catherine Keating	Bus Eireann
Emer O’Brien	Cork County Libraries
Rory Bunce	Cork County Libraries
Cllr. Kay Dawson	Mitchelstown Age Friendly Town Committee
Cllr Ian Doyle	Charleville Age Friendly Town Committee
Cllr Marcia Dalton	Carrigaline Municipal District
Winnie O’Sullivan	Bantry Age Friendly Town Committee
Ger Reaney	Bantry Age Friendly Town Committee
David O’Brien	Local Link Rural Transport
Tara O’Donoghue	Cork Cultural Companions
Marie O’Sullivan	Millstreet Age Friendly Town Committee
Jane O’ Flynn	Munster Technological University
Inspector Triona O’Mahony (West)	Inspector for Superintendent Bantry District
Mary O’Brien	Bandon Age Friendly Town Committee
Nora Hickey	Kinsale Age Friendly Town Committee
Eleanor Moore	HSE
Patricia O’Brien	ALONE
Tim Burke	Sports Partnership
Sinead Maloney	Cork Education & Training Board
Fiona O’Donovan	Cork Chamber
Vacant	UCC

Appendix 3. Agencies Interviewed in the Consultation Process

Cork County Heritage Office
Muintir na Tire, Cultural Companions
Cork County Healthy Ireland
Avondhu Blackwater Partnership Ltd
Cork County Age Friendly Alliance Chairperson
Ballyhoura Development Ltd
Local Link Cork
UCC (School of Nursing & Midwifery & Centre for Gerontology and Rehabilitation)
An Gardai Siochana
Cork County Library & Arts Service
Cork County Age Friendly Office
Cork County Council Housing & Planning
Cork County Healthy Age Friendly Homes
Bus Eireann
Cork County Council Planning Department
Munster Technological University
ALONE
Cork Sports Partnership
Cork Education & Training Board
HSE
Southeast Cork Area Development
West Cork Development Partnership
Cork Chamber

Appendix 4. References & Resources

This is a selection of reference material and resources relevant to Age Friendly, some of which was referenced in the preparation of this strategy, some may be of interest for further reading.

Global Context

- ✚ Global Strategy & Action Plan on Ageing & Health, World Health Organisation, January 2017.
- ✚ Guidelines & Themes for creating Age Friendly Communities, World Health Organisation, <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-cities-framework/>
- ✚ Global Strategy & Action Plan on Ageing & Health (10-page summary), World Health Organization, 2017

Irish Context

- ✚ National Planning Framework/ Project Ireland 2040, Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, September 2017.
- ✚ Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025, Department of Rural and Community Development, March 2021.
- ✚ National Volunteering Strategy (2021 - 2025), Department of Rural and Community Development, December 2020.
- ✚ Better Public Services - Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, May 2023.
- ✚ Census 2022, Central Statistics Office.

Age Friendly Ireland

- ✚ See Age Friendly Ireland for a wide range of helpful resources.

Cork Context

- ✚ Cork County Development Plan main policy document.
- ✚ Library Service, Age Friendly Library Report, June 2023.
- ✚ Library Service Development Plan [2020 – 2025](#).
- ✚ Cork County Age Friendly Interdepartmental Team, Guidance | Terms of Reference.
- ✚ Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029.

Thematic Resources:

Transportation

- ✚ The National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP), April 2022,
- ✚ Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility plan 2022 - 2025
- ✚ Bus Eireann submission to Cork AF Strategy 2023-2028.

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

- ✚ Urban Design Manual; A best practice guide. Dept Environment, Heritage & Local Govt 2009.
- ✚ Universal Design Walkability Audit Report, Kilrush, County Clare, 2020.
- ✚ Universal Design, Walkability Audit Tool for Roads and Streets, National Transport Authority.

Communication & Information

- ✚ Digital Inclusion in Ireland: Connectivity, Devices & Skills, NESC, June 2021
- ✚ Digital for Good: Ireland's Digital Inclusion Roadmap, Irish Govt, July 2023.
- ✚ Digital Exclusion and E-government in Ireland. Citizen's Information Board, 2021.
- ✚ Bridging the gap – Ireland's digital divide. Accenture. July 2020.
- ✚ Digital Inclusion in Ireland, Social Justice Ireland, 2021.
- ✚ National Broadband Strategy, Government of Ireland, June 2020.
- ✚ Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy for Ireland. www.solas.ie
- ✚ Adult Literacy for Life: <https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/>

Community Support & Health Services

- ✚ Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025, Government of Ireland, May 2021
- ✚ Health Services Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan 2023-2027.
- ✚ The National Positive Ageing Strategy, April 2013
- ✚ National Climate Action Plan, Government of Ireland, December 2022

Civic Participation & Employment

- ✚ Report of the Commission on Pensions, October 2021.
- ✚ Healthy & Positive Ageing Initiative, Department of Health, 2015
- ✚ The Over 50s in a Changing Ireland, Atlantic Philanthropies, 2014
- ✚ Social Engagement of Older People. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing, Trinity College, 2011

The Islands

- ✚ Our Living Islands, Department of Rural and Community Development, June 2023

Housing

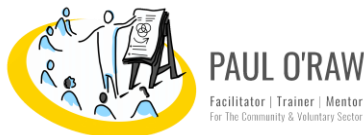
- ✚ Housing for All - a New Housing Plan for Ireland, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, September 2021
- ✚ Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland, National Disability Authority, & The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design & National Disability Authority, 2020.
- ✚ Healthy Age Friendly Homes, Interim Report, Sláintecare / Department of Health and Local Government, June 2022.
- ✚ Housing Options for Our Ageing Population: Policy Statement, Department of Health, March 2020.
- ✚ Agency and Ageing in Place in Rural Ireland, UCC, 2021.

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- The members of the Older Person’s Council
- The older person’s organisations and services
- The members of Cork County Age Friendly Alliance
- The Age Friendly Towns Committees
- All the statutory, NGOs, voluntary and community organisations
- The staff of Cork County Council Age Friendly Interdepartmental Team

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