

Louth: Ireland's First Age Friendly County Strategy



An Action Plan

March 2009

An Invitation to All Older People in Louth

This document outlines a new and ambitious strategy to improve the lives of all older people in Louth. You are invited to take part by making your own contribution to the plans that are being developed.

They aim to make Louth an 'Age Friendly County', with all agencies working together to promote and maintain the best possible health and well-being of older people, and to make the County itself a great place to grow old in.

Louth will be the first age-friendly county in Ireland, and will lead the way for others to follow. It is an exciting time to be involved in this flagship project.

A NEW ALLIANCE and A NEW STRATEGY FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The draft Strategy, and the very specific plans it contains, are being developed by Louth's **Age Friendly County Alliance**, a newly-established partnership of

Louth County Development Board within the Louth County Council
The Health Services Executive
The Gardai
Louth County Enterprise Board
Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)
Sustainable Energy Ireland
The Ageing Well Network
Older People's Forum for County Louth

A PLAN DEVELOPED WITH OLDER PEOPLE, NOT FOR THEM

Older people are at the heart of the Strategy, and your responses and contributions will be vital to developing the plan further, and to setting the priorities for action by the partners.

This draft *Strategy and Action Plan* has grown out of earlier consultations with older people and organisations working with them. It presents the vision of the new partnership, and is intended as a clear statement of aims and approaches, and an outline of practical and cost-effective ways to achieve them.

It will now be used as the basis for fresh consultations with older people across the county, at a series of meetings starting in March this year.

WHY A NEW FOCUS ON OLDER PEOPLE?

The world's older population is increasing, with people living longer and healthier lives, and experiencing older age very differently from their grandparents' generation. In Ireland, though the change is happening later than other European countries, the number of people over 65 (for decades around 11% of the population) is rising and may stand at around 20% of the population by 2036, and will include many more people aged over 80.

However, this does not have to represent an increased 'burden' on society, because older people can and do contribute through paid employment, unpaid volunteer work and caring.

Policies and practices everywhere have been slow to reflect these new realities, but the Irish government has already committed itself to devising a national strategy for older people during 2009.

The new action-focused strategy and plans in Louth can show the rest of the country what is possible, bringing about change not through greatly increased expenditure, but through imaginative use of existing resources, including the resources of older people themselves.

HOW DID THE LOUTH INITIATIVE BEGIN?

It was launched in Dundalk in November 2008, by Dermot Ahern, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Before this, Dundalk and its Institute of Technology had led the way as the Irish participants in an international project on *Age Friendly Cities* sponsored by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 2007.

The thinking behind this new strategy for the county has been strongly influenced by the WHO *Guidelines for an Age Friendly City* (which can be applied to communities of all sizes) and the plans developed for Louth are based on the 8-point framework in that document.

WHAT IS THE THINKING BEHIND THE STRATEGY?

The Louth County strategy is grounded in sound international research and knowledge, and based on a number of important principles agreed by the partners in the Alliance, including:

- A recognition that older people are critical contributors to our society and a resource, not a burden, to society;
- Communities that find imaginative ways of capitalising on the diverse assets of older adults can find ways of addressing many of their complex challenges and providing much needed services;
- A commitment to the direct involvement of older people in deciding priorities, shaping actions and bringing about change;
- An emphasis on improving the physical environment, and the understanding that *where* we live greatly affects *how* we live;
- An awareness that age-friendly principles and practice create environments and communities that benefit all age groups, not just older people;
- A linked awareness that everyone has an interest in these developments, because we all hope to be 'older' in time, and hope to live in a community and a society that respects, includes and cares for us;
- A determination that Louth will set standards and lead the way for other counties.

WHAT'S IN THE DRAFT PLAN?

The draft plan covers eight specific areas for action to benefit older people, followed by a section on creating the right framework for getting the work done. The eight areas are:

Outdoor spaces and public buildings	Social participation	Transportation
Communication and information	Respect and Social Inclusion	Housing
Civic participation and employment	Community support and health services	

Please read this document carefully, and have your say!

An Age Friendly County: Vision, Aims, Outcomes

THE VISION

In an Ireland that will be one of the greatest countries to grow old in:

- Louth itself, its rural and urban environments, will be a great place to grow old in, enjoyed and appreciated by everyone for its quality of life.

Louth will lead the rest of Ireland, showing how:

- People of all ages benefit when communities are designed to be age-friendly, and when older people live healthy, active and fulfilled lives;
- Older people's talents, life experience and wisdom are valued and tapped into.

OUR AIMS

- To increase the participation of older people in the social, economic and cultural life of the community, for everyone's benefit;
- To improve the health and well-being of older people in the county;
- To show how services and supports for older people can be made more responsive, caring, professional and accessible, through imaginative and cost-effective partnerships;
- To lead the way in demonstrating the processes that are required, the benefits to be gained and the lessons to be learned from such an integrated initiative.

OUTCOMES

The ambition of this Strategy is that Louth will be a county in which older people will:

- Be leaders in revitalising and strengthening the well-being of their communities;
- Feel and *be* involved and influential, and be valued for their life experience, talents and contributions;
- Be healthier, mentally and physically;
- Feel safe and secure in their homes and everywhere they are 'out and about';
- Have the necessary information and transport to access the supports and services they need.

Checking progress: *the partners in the Alliance will carefully monitor and measure progress towards achieving these ambitious aims and objectives.*

At the start, the Nestling Project at Dundalk Institute of Technology will carry out a comprehensive study of older people in the county, and produce a profile of current levels of health and well-being. The study will be updated at regular intervals, so that changes and improvements can be clearly seen. The DKIT research project will also explore the views of older people on their current needs and contributions, and especially on their priorities for action.

An Age Friendly County: the Alliance's Approach

The Alliance will achieve these aims and bring about these outcomes by working:

AT COUNTY LEVEL

- **Building on achievements** to date of initiatives such as the DKIT Nestling Project, and on the plans and ambitions of organisations already working to improve the quality of life of older people in the county;
- **Ensuring the voices of older people are heard**, to inform the priorities of this Plan, through the Louth Older People's Forum and the evidence from research;
- **Forging strong and effective partnerships** between statutory agencies, older people's organisations and other bodies working at local level, to develop and implement a 'joined-up' Plan for older people. Cooperation between agencies will be maximised in order to provide high quality services;
- **Redesigning and improving current approaches**, and finding imaginative new ways to provide better services and supports for older people;
- **Using the expertise and resources of older people** and their organisations to bring about much of the change that is needed;
- **Setting ambitious but realistic targets** and measuring progress towards them;
- **Creating a number of 'supporting forums'** – an Older People's Forum, a business forum, and a forum for service providers and those intending to develop new services;
- **Changing mind-sets about ageing and older people** – moving beyond a view of older people as frail and dependent and a burden on society, to one in which older people play a critical role in providing services, creating new opportunities for economic growth and ensuring a better quality of life for people of all ages;
- **Building local recognition and support**, encouraging all the citizens of Louth to take their own initiatives to make Louth a great place to grow old in.
- **Learning continuously** through the outcomes of evaluations, the findings of the Drogheda Rapid project, the DKIT updated surveys, and feedback from the new Louth Older People's Forum.

AT NATIONAL LEVEL

- **Creating a leadership group** of senior national policy makers, to support the integrated partnership approach, and secure national recognition of the initiative;
- **Using the expertise and influence of national organisations** for older people and members of the Ageing Well Network to support and develop the project;
- **Sharing the experience and knowledge** from the Louth initiative with other Irish counties which decide to develop their own age friendly programmes;

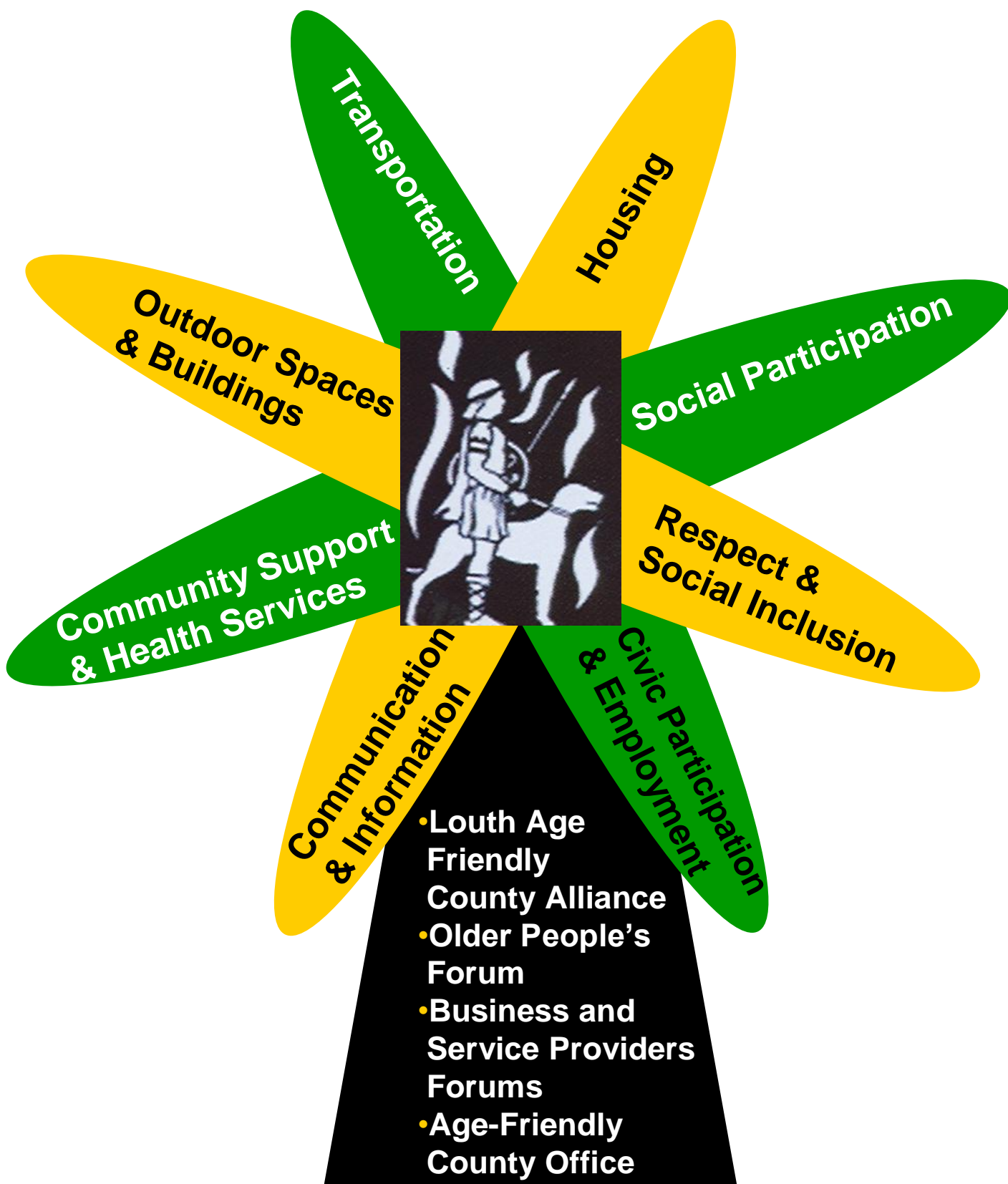
- **Demonstrating the benefits and challenges** of working through the County Development Board and existing local partnerships to develop more effective, professional and citizen-centred services.

AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- **Leading the way** in developing methods of accreditation for ‘age-friendly community’ status, and drawing up an *Age Friendly Charter*;
- **Strengthening the County Louth initiative** by linking with and learning from similar initiatives in other countries.

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OUR PLAN



1. OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

What you have told us are the challenges

- Public spaces often don't have resting places or access to toilets
 - For older pedestrians there are problems with traffic lights when there's not enough time to cross
 - Footpaths often have obstructions
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, the Alliance undertakes to:

Develop age-friendly planning guidelines

- The County Council will develop its own *Principles for Age-friendly Planning* based on the World Health Organisation's *Age Friendly Cities* guidelines;
- These principles will be incorporated into the County Development Plan;
- The Council will begin reviewing all planning applications to check their adherence to these principles;
- At a later stage, the Council will work with the Department of the Environment to develop technical guidelines which will be communicated to planners, architects and developers.

Establish a new parks programme

The County Council and the Older People's Forum will develop one new Parks Programme, in partnership with an older people's organisation. The programme will be extended in the medium and longer term to include parks in all County Louth's towns and villages. All these projects will involve older people, and will include:

- redesigning a designated area within the park to be 'age-friendly';
- improving the landscaping, providing space for public activities and for exercise programmes such as chess and Tai Chi;
- introducing 'Tone Zones' for older people in these designated areas.

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Walkability programmes

The Older People's Forum will initially conduct 'walkability audits' of our towns and villages and propose a prioritised plan for the improvements needed to make both urban and rural areas easier to walk about in.

Various initiatives in the programme will seek to make it easier, safer and more pleasant for older people to walk from their homes to the services and facilities they use.

New walking trails will be created in urban and rural areas, and organisations and older people from the Louth Older People's Forum will take the lead in monitoring the quality of these trails.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance will put in place:

Public buildings programme

The County Council and Gardai will work in partnership with the Chambers of Commerce, Shopping Centre Managers, banks, post offices and individual operators of large public buildings to carry out an 'age-friendly buildings' campaign, improving:

- public seating in public areas, making it easier for older people to sit down, rest, and 'watch the world go by';
- access to toilets, making older people feel more 'secure' about leaving home;
- queues, reducing the amount of time older people have to wait for services, and where possible providing seating for those queuing.

Public pavements campaign

The Local Authority, together with the Chamber of Commerce and others, will review our pavement standards across the county to ensure they adhere to the principles laid down in the *Barcelona Declaration* (adopted in 1995 as a set of standards for local authorities across Europe) which means they must be the appropriate width, be able to accommodate wheelchairs, and be free from blockages which put people at risk of falls and injury.

2. TRANSPORTATION

What you have told us are the challenges

- Public buses don't always go where we want them to or can be difficult to access
 - There are many under-used public transport vehicles
 - Transport service providers don't always understand the needs of older people
 - Many older private car drivers have difficulties finding suitable parking and/ or getting in and out of cars
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, partners in the Alliance will:

Conduct a transport audit

This study will measure utilisation of all public passenger vehicles, including the 'down-time' of publicly funded vehicles such as school buses. It will explore how the transport needs of older people could be better met through 'smarter' use of existing resources, as well as by providing more personalised transport services.

Improve bus shelters

The County Council, together with transport service providers, will begin a four-year programme of upgrading all the bus shelters in the county, providing adequate cover and seating, good lighting and other age-friendly design features – as long as the changes do not adversely affect people with visual impairments.

Change traffic light timings

Longer count-downs at selected traffic lights in the three main towns will be introduced on a trial basis, outside of peak traffic times, and the experiment will be based on the findings from the national TRIL (Technology Research for Independent Living) project. The results of the trials will help the partners in the Alliance to plan and carry out a longer-term programme.

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Personalised transport services

The Age Friendly County Office (see p.22) will develop a personalised transport programme for isolated older people who have no access to public transport. It will be based on models that have worked well elsewhere, such as 'Driving Miss Daisy' or ITN (Independent Transportation Network) arrangements, in which older people's organisations provide volunteer drivers to take people to engagements such as hospital appointments. These drivers, who are sometimes given a small fee, are trained to explore other needs the older person may have, and to link them into existing social networks.

Assisting private drivers

The County Council will work with the Older People's Forum and others to improve street and road signs, making them more visible.

It will also increase the provision of car parking spaces for older people close to their destinations.

Driver awareness campaigns

The Gardai and the County Council will join with the Older People's Forum to mount a public awareness campaign to make drivers more aware of older pedestrians and their concerns, such as the time they need to cross busy roads safely.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance aims to achieve:

Improved bus routes

The Alliance will work in partnership with the main public transport providers to ensure that the routes they offer meet older people's needs – for example, stopping at community centres, hospitals etc.

From time to time older people will be surveyed, to assess their satisfaction with transport services, including the extent to which services link older people to the destinations most important to them.

3. HOUSING

What you have told us are the challenges

- Houses need to be adapted as people get older and frailer
 - Many older people don't feel safe in their own homes and neighbourhoods
 - Older people need more choice of types of housing
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, Alliance members will put in place:

Staying at Home

The Alliance will prioritise efforts to enable older people live in their own homes and communities. Louth County Council and the HSE will work together to reconfigure how some resources, currently given to long-term residential care, might be used to support people living at home or in supported accommodation and how they might be tailored to people's needs as they change over time.

County housing plan for older people

Louth County Council will develop a *County Housing Plan for Older People*, setting out the level and mix of housing required over a ten year period.

The Plan will aim to provide the optimum mix of housing – including private rented accommodation, Local Authority housing, supported accommodation and long-term residential care – in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of the older population. It will also ensure that planning permission for such new developments requires that appropriate standards are met.

The Council will review its own programme for supported housing, and endeavour to provide more community-based small housing schemes, learning from initiatives such as the new Barrack Street Project in Dundalk.

Housing list amendments

Louth Council Council and the HSE will seek approval for including on the Housing List older people who are in acute hospitals and nursing homes and who otherwise would have been eligible to be on the list for social housing and for home support.

Safety in the home

The Community Gardai will work with Louth County Council, the Older People's Forum and others to strengthen older people's sense of safety in their own homes. This programme will include:

- providing safety advice at the design stage of new house planning;
- providing advice to individual older people and older people's groups to improve the safety measures in their own homes;

- working with providers to increase older people's safety through better security lighting, alarms and other mechanisms.

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Supported housing initiatives

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the County Council, HSE, social housing associations and others to increase the supply of suitable supported accommodation in the community.

This form of housing is intended for older people who wish to live independently, but with the security of some supports such as provision of meals, communal laundry facilities, rapidly accessed health care services and security arrangements like on-site wardens.

Lifetime adaptability guidelines

The Age Friendly County Office will develop *Lifetime Adaptability Guidelines* for architects, developers and others, to ensure that new housing is able to adapt easily to meet different demands as people's lives change over time.

Home adaptations

Louth County Council and the HSE will simplify and speed up the process for supporting and funding home adaptations, so that more people can continue living independently in their own homes or in supported accommodation.

Smart homes programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the Ageing Well Network and others to develop a 'Smart Homes' programme, which will provide an integrated package of new technologies to enable older people to remain living independently in their own homes. Smart metering will be used to reduce fuel bills and insulation will increase the warmth of their homes.

Household model of care in long-term nursing homes

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the HSE and other nursing home owners to introduce the household model of care and other improvements for those living in long-term residential care.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance aims to achieve:

'House mates' programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the Older People's Forum to develop a new social entrepreneurship programme which provides a 'house mates' vetting service to older people living alone who wish to have someone share their homes. The service will also identify families who would like to have an older person come to live with them.

Improved location and standards for nursing homes

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the HSE, Louth County Council, Nursing Homes Ireland, HIQA (Health Information and Quality Authority) and others to ensure that nursing homes are situated within communities, that they are designed to appropriately high standards, and if possible that they are located alongside supported housing, so that older people can move easily between the two.

4. RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

What you have told us are the challenges

- Many older people, particularly those living alone and in rural areas are lonely
 - There need to be more opportunities for men to become involved
 - Older people are often depicted in the media and elsewhere as being frail and burdens on society
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, the Alliance undertakes to put in place:

Older People's Forum

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will support the establishment of an Older People's Forum, to give all older people in the county an opportunity to have their voices heard, either as individuals or through their own organisations.

Twice-yearly local public meetings will be held in the north and south of the county, at which older people can meet and form networks, communicate their views about the priorities for the Age Friendly County initiative, and identify what they and their organisations can do to contribute to it.

Men's clubs

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the Older People's Forum, the GAA, Barrack Street project and others to increase the range of opportunities for older men, particularly those living on their own.

Age awareness training

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the members of the Alliance, the County Development Board, the Business Forum, the Service Providers' Forum (see p. 22) and others to develop and carry out a training programme for staff who provide services to older people. Its aim will be to increase their awareness and improve their responsiveness to the needs of older people, and the training will cover practical matters such as improving signs, providing seating, eliminating queuing and improving audibility of messages on public address systems.

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Positive ageing campaign

The Louth Age Friendly County Office and the Older People's Forum will work together to change the public perception of ageing and older people from that of a group who are 'frail, dependent, burdens and victims', focusing instead on their achievements and contributions to their communities and the wider society. They will work to increase coverage of the services older people provide to the community, older people's activities and events in the print and broadcast media.

Older People's Charter

The Older People's Forum and the Louth Age Friendly County Office will together develop an *Older People's Charter* for the County and devise a system of accreditation for businesses and organisations which commit themselves to abide by it.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance will engage in:

Combating loneliness

The Louth Age Friendly County Office and the Older People's Forum will work together to develop a new programme to combat the level of loneliness experienced by many older people.

The programme will take account of the findings of a study which the Nestling Project in DKIT will conduct among older people, and the work being done through the TRIL project.

It will look for ways to address the needs of people who are 'socially lonely', and examine ways of involving them in much-needed community volunteering activities.

5. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

What you have told us are the challenges

- There are very limited opportunities for older people to interact with younger people
 - There are few places for older people to go to, to socialise
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, the Alliance will initiate:

Intergenerational programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the Older People's Forum, Third Age Foundation and others to design a programme with a number of locally based initiatives providing intergenerational activities.

Older people's local sports programme

The Local Sports Partnership will develop an older people's sports programme with the aims of (i) increasing the number of older people actively engaged in sports and (ii) recruiting people shortly before they retire and thereafter as coaches, referees and other volunteers in sports organisations.

A county clubhouse

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will seek the support of the GAA and others to develop a dedicated clubhouse and outdoor gym providing a range of leisure and social supports e.g. hydrotherapy, indoor bowls, outdoor gym stations.

Meeting Places

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will set up a data-base of appropriate meeting place facilities that might be available for older people's organisations and will seek to make community facilities as open to them as they are to other groups.

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Volunteer programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the main volunteer organisations in the county to increase opportunities for older people to volunteer their services, matching people's interest with the volunteering opportunities available.

Safety in the community

The Gardai, in cooperation with the Older People's Forum and other key agencies, will put in place a number of measures designed to make older people feel and be safer in their own communities. These measures will include:

- a designated and trained Older Person's Garda in every large Garda station, who older people will know is there to deal with their concerns;
- in-service training for Gardai, increasing their awareness of older people's concerns and specific problems they may face, including elder abuse – whether physical, psychological or financial;
- placements of trainee Gardai in relevant organisations including the Older People's Forum, supported housing schemes, and nursing homes;
- a register of older people with particular problems, such as very isolated older people and victims of attacks or abuse;
- youth awareness initiatives, to make younger people aware of the fear they may cause simply by going around in groups, and what can be done to address that.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance will aim to:

Extend Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert programmes

The Gardai will work with the Older People's Forum and other groups in the county to reach out and engage more older people in their Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert groups, and to take new initiatives to make communities safer.

6. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

What you have told us are the challenges

- Its difficult to know where you can get information you need, for example on supports and services – there is no one place to source it
 - Sometimes the information available is complicated and difficult to understand
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, the Alliance undertakes to establish:

'One Stop Shop' information programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the HSE, the Local Authority and other statutory agencies and forums involved in the strategy to publish a comprehensive *Louth Directory of Services for Older People*.

They will also publish a quarterly newsletter, providing updated information on developments relevant to older people, making a major effort to develop the circulation list to include addresses of all older people in the county, where possible using email.

The HSE will work with the Older People's Forum to extend the information provided by their National Helpline in Ardee.

The Forum and local public meetings

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the Older People's Forum to reach out to all older people in the county, advising them of opportunities to get involved in the work of the Forum.

They will also organise twice-yearly public meetings in the four areas of the County: Cooley Peninsula, Dundalk and North Louth, Drogheda and South Louth and Ardee and West Louth. These meetings will be open to individual older people in the county and will give them an opportunity to influence the priorities of the Age Friendly Initiative.

Age-friendly branding

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will develop the WHO Age Friendly Cities logo to be a widely recognised symbol of this Initiative and one which is used to identify and advertise 'age-friendly' provision of services for older people. Service providers will be encouraged to design new services for their older customers, and devise innovative approaches to improving their existing services.

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

'Digital divide' programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office and the Older People's Forum will develop a training programme for older people in the use of the internet, mobile telephones and other new

technologies. This training programme will build on the achievements of initiatives such as the 'Silver Surfers'.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance will aim for:

National Roll-out

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work at national level to help roll out County Age-Friendly Initiatives in other Local Authority areas.

7. CIVIC PARTICIPATION and EMPLOYMENT

What you have told us are the challenges

- It can be dreadful to have to retire when you don't want to
 - There should be more opportunities to continue working or doing different type of work
 - Many older people are afraid of not being able to afford the things they might need in their later years – health care
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, the Alliance undertakes to establish:

Business Forum

The planned Louth Older People's Business Forum will agree a programme of initiatives to make the business community more aware of the current and emerging needs of older people as consumers, customers and service users.

It will aim to identify ways in which businesses can better understand the needs of older people, and respond to them imaginatively and profitably.

Senior 'Start Your Own Business' programme

The Business Forum, with the support of the Louth Age Friendly County Office, will work with the County Enterprise Board, Enterprise Ireland, Dundalk IT and FAS to develop a 'Start Your Own Business' programme designed specifically for recently retired people with good levels of expertise.

Allotments

Louth County Council will identify a number of areas of unused public land suitable for allotments where older people can grow their own vegetables.

The Alliance will encourage and support older people in turn provide training to younger people, and will support older allotment holders in selling their surplus produce at local farmers' markets

Community time banks

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the Older People's Forum to create a community time bank, and to seek sponsorship for it. The time banks will develop a database of community development initiatives which need volunteers, and of people in the community willing to exchange their time, profiling their skills and talents.

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Encore career programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will develop a first-of-a-kind 'Encore Career' programme for Ireland, aimed at giving people, before or after they 'retire' a structured

period of 'time-out' to explore new career opportunities using talents and creativity they haven't been able to in their careers to-date.

Mentoring programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the County Enterprise Board, Enterprise Ireland and others to build up a database of older people willing to act as mentors to young entrepreneurs in the early stages of their business development.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance aims to establish:

Social entrepreneurship programme

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with the Business Forum and the Older People's Forum to design a new social entrepreneurship programme.

This programme will explore opportunities for new social enterprises, and will provide suitable training and support for people interested in running such initiatives.

Older people's champions

The Louth Age Friendly County Office will work with businesses in the county to appoint designated 'older customers' champions' among their staff, or to draw on suitable volunteers willing to provide such advice to businesses.

The role of these 'champions' will be to identify how businesses can better respond to the needs of older consumers.

8. COMMUNITY SUPPORT and HEALTH SERVICES

What you have told us are the challenges

- Health services aren't geared around the needs of older people, or you have to go to many different places for them
 - There aren't enough facilities for support when you leave hospital
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THE PLAN

Short term – by the end of 2010, the Alliance will put in place:

Links to national centres of excellence in geriatric care research

The HSE together with the Age Friendly County Office and others, will seek to create satellite links to national centres of excellence in geriatric care research.

Health pathways programme

The HSE, in partnership with other organisations, will establish a series of 'pathway' health programmes, intended to enable people with specific problems access specialist clinics and avoid or reduce their need for acute inpatient treatment - including clinics dealing with respiratory conditions, cardiac care, falls and blackouts, memory, diabetes, stroke and other conditions..

Medium term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Rehabilitation and step-down facilities

The HSE will reconfigure its existing services and resources to provide rehabilitation and 'step-down' residential and day-care facilities in the Louth County Hospital. These facilities will enable older people – particularly those recovering from hip fractures and strokes – to leave hospital earlier than they might have otherwise, and to avail of effective specialist rehabilitation support, so they can move to supported accommodation or return to live at home

Developing full spectrum of options to prolong independent living

The HSE, in cooperation with the County Council and other organisations, will reconfigure a proportion of existing resources currently tied up in expensive long term residential care towards providing the health and social care input to a range of assisted independent living options.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance will aim to establish:

Healthy ageing preventative screening programme

The HSE will develop a targeted preventative screening programme, which will assess older people's overall health and well-being and enable early detection of potentially disabling conditions. The full screening programme will be offered in partnership with the Louth County Hospital, and in time satellite services will be provided through primary care teams based in the community.

IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

What the Alliance aims to do

Short term – by the end of 2010, the Alliance undertakes to initiate:

Louth: Age Friendly County Strategy

The key agencies in the newly formed Age Friendly County Alliance will jointly plan and oversee the implementation of Louth's Age Friendly Strategy, developing it through a series of consultations with older people's organisations and service providers in the county.

They will seek funding for an Age Friendly County Office, which will be responsible for working with them to ensure the strategy is implemented.

3 Forums

The Age Friendly County Office will also work with the three new forums that have been agreed by the partners: an Older People's Forum, a Business Forum and a Service Providers' Forum.

National group

The Ageing Well Network will establish and coordinate a national group comprising the Assistant Secretaries in four government Departments: Health and Children, Transport and Environment, and the Department of the Taoiseach, together with the HSE's Assistant National Director with responsibility for Older People, the Louth County Manager and the Director of the Ageing Well Network.

The role of this group will be to support the County Alliance in implementing the strategy.

Independent evaluation by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF)

The NESF will act as an independent 'embedded reporter', providing analysis and assessment as the strategy develops, and identifying the challenges involved in the implementing government policy through the Strategy Plan.

This evaluation will provide the Age Friendly County Alliance, Ageing Well Network and National Group with valuable feedback on the experience of their partnership approach to bringing about change.

Base-line study

A base-line study, carried out by the Age Friendly County Office, through the Nestling Project in DKIT, will provide comprehensive information on the current situation of older people in Louth. From this starting-point the progress of the strategy can be monitored over time, and its contribution to improving their quality of life can be measured.

Medium Term – by the end of 2012 the following will be under way:

Targets and ‘key performance indicators’

The Age Friendly County Office will devise and get agreement for a set of ambitious but realistic targets for the initiative, and will monitor its progress in relation to those targets.

National ‘roll-out’

The Age Friendly County Office will contribute to the development of a plan for establishing Age Friendly County initiatives in all other local authority areas in Ireland over a three to five year period.

International conference

The Age Friendly County Office will host an international conference for Age Friendly initiatives at home and abroad, enabling them to learn from each other and to test the applicability of an age-friendly accreditation process.

Links with TRIL and TILDA research

The Age Friendly County Office will forge a partnership with the TRIL (Technology Research for Independent Living) and TILDA (the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing) studies, with the aim of contributing an additional dimension to their activities.

Longer term – from 2012 onwards the Alliance will aim to establish:

Certification process

The Age Friendly County Office will work with the WHO at international level to develop a system of age-friendly accreditation for cities and counties.

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