



social participation

communication & information

civic participation & employment

community support & health services

respect & social inclusion

housing

transportation

outdoor spaces & buildings

meath

Age Friendly County

STRATEGY

# Meath Age Friendly County Strategy

Meath Age Friendly Alliance  
&  
Community Department,  
Meath County Council

*July 2012*



comhairle chontae na mí  
*meath county council*



# Foreword

A journey to make Meath an Age Friendly County commenced in September 2011 and has now reached a significant milestone with the Launch of this Strategy in this the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012.

The Members of the Age Friendly Alliance gave a commitment in Summerhill, Co. Meath on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2011 to base the Strategy on the eight themes of the World Health Organisation. This allowed the signing of the global Dublin Declaration of Age Friendly Communities on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

There are approximately 43,000 people aged over 50 residing in County Meath and there is an increasing importance to provide services to meet their needs as they get older. The vision outlined in this Strategy and the actions to deliver on the vision will require significant commitment by the Alliance Members in the coming months and years to ensure maximum progress can be achieved. I am confident that this commitment is there.

The Strategy recognizes a need for improvements to outdoor spaces, buildings, transport and housing. There are also needs identified in the areas of respect, social inclusion, social participation, civic participation, employment, community support and health services. A key to the success of the Strategy will be the provision of good communication and information to older people. This Strategy was based on



consultation and we need to continue listening to the voices of older people to ensure change happens in an inclusive way.

All the members of the Alliance are committed to playing their role in ensuring all the citizens of County Meath are valued, recognised, supported and enabled to live full independent lives. We will continue to work with our neighbouring counties in the North East to make a real difference and I look forward to the benefits that will be shared by all.

## **Tom Dowling**

Chairperson of the  
Meath Age Friendly Alliance

# Réamhrá

Cuireadh dlús i mí Meán Fómhair 2011 go ndéanfaí Contae a thacaíonn le Daoine Breacaosta de Cho. na Mí. Tá sprioc shuntasach bainte amach anois le seoladh na Stráitéise seo sa Bhliain Eorpach um Aosú Gníomhach agus um Dhlúthpháirtíocht idir Glúine 2012.

I gCnoc an Línsigh, Co. na Mí ar an 20<sup>ú</sup> Meán Fómhair, dhearbhaigh baill den Chomhaontas a thacaíonn le Daoine Breacaosta an stráitéis seo a bhunú ar na hocht téamaí atá ag an Eagraíocht Dhomhanta Sláinte. Ceadaíodh síníú an dearbhú domhanda 'Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Communities' ar an 28<sup>ú</sup> Meán Fómhair 2011 dá bharr sin.

Tá tuairim is 43,000 duine ina gcónaí i gContae na Mí a bhfuil ós cionn 50 bliain slánaithe acu agus tá sé ríthábhachtach go gcuirfí na seirbhísí a theastaíonn uathu agus iad ag dul in aois ar fáil dóibh. Beidh cúram shuntasach ar Bhaill an Chomhaontais ins na míonna agus blianta amach romhainn maidir leis an fhís a aithnítear sa Stráitéis seo agus na gníomhaíochtaí a bhaineann léi a chur i gcrích, chun dul chun cinn maith a chinntiú. Táim muiníneach go bhfuil an díogras seo ann.

Aithnítear sa Stráitéis an gá atá le feabhas a chur ar láithreacha faoin aer, foirgnimh, córais iompar agus tithíocht. Sainaithnítear freisin riachtanais a bhaineann le meas, cuimsiú sóisialta, páirtíocht shóisialta, rannpháirtíocht pobail, fostaíocht,

tacaíocht pobail agus seirbhísí sláinte. Beidh rath na Stráitéise ag brath ar dheachumarsáid agus an t-eolas a chuirfear ar fáil do dhaoine scothaosta. Is ar shainchomhairliúcháin a bunaíodh an Stráitéis seo agus ní mór dúinn leanúint ag éisteacht le daoine scothaosta chun a chinntiú go dtarlaíonn na hathruithe go cuimsitheach.

Tá baill uile an Chomhaontais tiomanta don ról atá acu a chomhlíonadh chun a chinntiú go bhfuil meas, aitheantas agus tacaíocht le fáil ag saoránaigh Chontae na Mí agus go bhfuil ar a gcumas saol iomlán neamhspleách a chaitheamh. Leanfaimid orainn ag comhoibriú len'ár gcomharsain i gcontaetha an Oirthuaiscirt chun difríocht a dhéanamh don saol agus táim ag súil go mór leis an tairbhe a bhainfear as.

## **Tom Dowling**

Cathaoirleach Chomhaontas na Mí a thacaíonn le Daoine Breacaosta



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# An invitation to all Older People in Meath

This document outlines a strategy to improve the lives of all older people in Meath. You are invited to take part by making your own contribution to Plans which are being developed.

The aim is to make Meath 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 a great place to grow old in.

Meath joins with four other counties, Louth, Cavan, Monaghan and Fingal with the ambition to achieve an Age Friendly Region.

## How the Strategy was Developed

The Strategy, and the very specific plans it contains, was developed by Meath's Age Friendly County Alliance, a newly-established partnership lead by Meath County Council and chaired by Mr. Tom Dowling, County Manager.

The members of the Alliance are:

- Meath County Council
- Meath County Development Board
- Mid East Regional Authority
- Meath Vocational Educational Committee
- Heath Services Executive NE
- An Garda Síochána
- Meath Partnership
- National University of Ireland, Maynooth
- The Netwell Centre, Dundalk (DkIT)
- Ageing Well Network
- Flexibus
- Third Age Foundation
- Older People's Forum Representatives

## Older Peoples Participation

Older people are at the heart of the Strategy and this Strategy and Action Plan have grown out of earlier consultations with older people and organisations working with them. It presents the vision of the new partnership of the Alliance Members and the Older Peoples Forum.

## 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.

It is noted in the statistics taken from the 2011 Census, Meath had overall population increase of 13% since 2006. This increase in population is to Meath's benefit and Meath in the future will be able to count on a youthful and vibrant community as an asset for its future development.

Policies and practices everywhere have been slow to reflect these new realities. However, the Programme for Government has committed to completing and implementing the National Positive Ageing Strategy so that older people are recognised, supported and enabled to live independent, full lives. A considerable amount of preparatory work has already been completed by the Department of Health in this area.

The new action - focused strategy and plans in Meath will bring about change through innovative use of existing resources, including the resources of older people themselves and will not be dependent on greatly increased expenditure.

## How did the Meath Initiative begin?

The initiative was launched in Summerhill Community Centre on 20th September 2011, by Mr. Shane McEntee, T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture. The launch followed the inaugural meeting of the Meath Age Friendly Alliance.

## What is the thinking behind the Strategy?

The 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 positive resource
- 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 provide 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 Meath will set standards and join with other counties in leading the way.

## What's in the Strategy?

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

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

## Consultation

Following the launch in Summerhill, a Workshop took place with over 150 invited guests participating. Facilitators assisted the discussions around the issues which effect older people in County Meath, using the 8 themes from the World Health Organisation Guidelines for Age Friendly Cities and Communities.

A second Consultation workshop took place at the Ardboyne Hotel, Navan on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011 where over 40 people participated.

Consultation by questionnaire was also invited from :

- Community & Voluntary Forum
- Members of 12 Branch Libraries
- HSE Public Health Nurses
- HSE Home Help Staff
- Active Retirement Groups
- Meals on Wheels Groups
- Social Inclusion Measures Group
- County Development Board
- Meath County Council Area Offices
- Meath County Council website



#### **Signing of Dublin Declaration**

**Back Left to Right:** Anne Connolly, *Director, Ageing Well Network*, Andrew Montague, *Lord Mayor of Dublin*, Minister Kathleen Lynch, *Minister of State with responsibility for Older People*, John Beard, *World Health Organisation*

**Front Left to Right** Mrs. Rosa Icela Rodríguez Velázquez, *Mexico City* and Councillor Eoin Holmes, *An Cathaoirleach, Meath County Council*

A template was also prepared to record the current and planned Age Friendly Practices of the Alliance Members. The Strategy seeks to ensure that all actions arising from its consultations with older people will contribute to the quality of life of everyone in the county as they age and inform the National Positive Ageing Strategy. An on line survey was also made available.

An Cathaoirleach Councillor Eoin Holmes on behalf of Meath and its citizens signed the Age Friendly Communities Declaration at City Hall, Dublin on Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2011. This Declaration (now known as the Dublin Declaration) was endorsed by the World Health Organisation – Global Network of Age Friendly Cities, Irelands Age Friendly Counties Programme and the International Federation on Ageing.

# An Age Friendly County: Vision, Aims, Outcomes

## The Vision

- Meath - its rural and urban environments, will be a great place to grow old in, enjoyed and appreciated by everyone for its quality of life;
- 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 Meath will be a county in which older people will:

- Be leaders in revitalising and strengthening the well being of their communities
- 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 Members of the Meath Alliance will carefully monitor and measure progress towards implementing the actions included in this Strategy with intended review to take place annually.

As a result of the strategy preparation, the Alliance have developed more effective ways of working in partnership in terms of planning, implementing and reviewing their services and supports to older adults.

# An Age Friendly County: the Alliance's Approach

Implementation of the Strategy will include the following

## At County Level

- **Building on achievements** to date of initiatives and 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 Meath 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 an Older People’s Forum** to be the active voice;
- **Changing mind-sets about ageing and older people** – moving beyond a view of older people as frail and dependent, to one in which older people play a role in all aspects of their community and may create new opportunities for economic growth, ensuring a better quality of life for people of all ages;
- **Building local recognition and support**, encouraging all the citizens of Meath to take their own initiatives to make Meath a great place to grow old in.

### At Regional Level

- **Meath is playing a strong role in the regional roll out of the Age Friendly Initiative** across the North East working closely with colleagues in Counties Cavan, Louth, Monaghan and Fingal looking at ways in which we can link up essential services and think outside the land borders;
- **Meath is participating with our Regional partners in the European Innovation Partnership** in Active & Healthy Ageing with a view to strengthening capacity to meet the commitments set out in the Dublin Declaration as well as sharing best practices and promoting service innovation in age friendly buildings, neighbourhoods and environments.

### 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 Meath initiative with other Irish counties who decide to develop their own age friendly programmes;
- **Demonstrating the benefits and challenges** of working through the Meath County Development Board and existing local partnerships to develop more effective, professional and citizen centred services.

### At International Level

- Strengthening the County Meath initiative by linking with and learning from similar initiatives in other countries.

# 1 Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

*Physical environments that are Age Friendly can make the difference between independence and dependence for all people, but especially for those growing older.*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- There is a lack of recreational areas such as small parks for older people or community buildings for holding social events.
- There is not enough rest/seating areas or public toilets within towns and villages.
- More public lighting is needed within Towns/Villages and in public and community facilities.
- Accessibility is poor if you have a disability or are a wheelchair user.
- Planning – There is a need for more planning and consultation between state service providers such as the Health Service Executive and Local Authority when choosing sites for purpose built buildings and provisions made to account for accessibility outside these buildings.
- Pedestrian Crossings - There is a lack of pedestrian crossings within both towns and villages and specifically at prime locations such as hospitals and post offices. Timing of crossings is also a significant issue.

## Key Partners

- Meath County Council
- Older People's Forum
- Meath Partnership

## Actions

- The Older People's Forum and the Age Friendly Alliance will work with all agencies including Meath Local Authorities, Meath Partnership, the HSE, and local community groups to assess and make improvements to outdoor spaces and buildings.
- Access Audits previously carried out by Meath County Council in large towns in the County will be updated and verified by Older People Forum (sub group) with a view to addressing issues identified.





# 2 Transportation

*Research shows that transport for older people is linked to independence, autonomy and quality of life.*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- Flexibus is a great service but there is a need to extend its services as there is an urgent need for increased provision of public transport across the County.
- Public Buses do not always go where we want them to go or can be difficult to access – i.e. rural areas to other rural areas or to services such as Health Services, shopping areas etc.
- There is a lack of Public Transport throughout the day.
- There should be more transport provided to Health Services such as clinics and hospitals to enable people to attend appointments and facilitate those wishing to visit patients. There can also be issues with parking availability and costs and a lack of wheelchair spaces.
- Public Transport is expensive for older people who are living on a pension and who may be using travel services regularly whilst undergoing treatment at hospitals.
- There are many underused public transport vehicles.
- Transport Service Providers don't always understand the needs of older people.
- Transport is a problem when living in rural areas and there is a requirement for various different transport routes connecting rural areas with other rural areas.

## Key Partners

- Meath County Council
- Flexibus
- Older Peoples Forum
- National Transport Authority
- Bus Eireann





## Actions

- Flexibus (Rural Transport Service) will be supported to further expand its services working with the Meath Volunteer Centre, the HSE and public bus companies to bring greater choice and options to the public. Planned developments include extension of shopping and health related appointments service and the Community Car Scheme. Other initiatives include newly retired people volunteering under the Community Car Schemes and opportunities for Active Retirement Groups to up-skill to drive vehicles under the self-drive initiative. Flexibus will also provide transport for all new Active Retirement Groups and work with public health nurses to provide transport where possible.
- It is Meath County Councils policy to co-operate with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and other relevant agencies on reviewing the network of bus services in Meath, and to work with public transport operators to provide improved bus services in, and through, the county. This is in line with the Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future,<sup>1</sup> policy, which has as one of its key objectives, improvement of quality of life and accessibility to transport for all.
- Meath County Council will assist in influencing the transport networks, particularly public transport networks, by undertaking Transport Plans for towns and areas in the County. These plans are an objective of the draft County Development Plan 2013 – 2019, and will address the implementation of the relevant measures contained in the NTA's draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area.

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*In the Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future the Government reaffirms its vision for sustainability in transport and sets out five key goals: (i) to reduce overall travel demand, (ii) to maximise the efficiency of the transport network, (iii) to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, (iv) to reduce transport emissions and (v) to improve accessibility to transport. To achieve these goals and to ensure that we have sustainable travel and transport by 2020, the Government has set targets in the policy relating to, for example, increased use of alternative modes of transport and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.*



- The NTA's draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area supports the retention of the Navan Town bus service, and advocates that 'local bus services (including those serving Hinterland villages) should integrate with longer distance bus and rail services, by linking to intercity/commuter bus stops and rail stations. Local bus timetables should match longer distance bus and rail arrivals and departure times as closely as possible. The Strategy also includes measures supporting the provision and retention of ranks at rail and bus stations and examining the potential for incorporating taxi fare payment into integrated ticketing.
- Meath County Council recognises that accessible taxis are often the only means of public transport available for those using wheelchairs or with mobility impairments. An accessible integrated public transport service is an essential prerequisite to enable people with disabilities to participate in the normal activities of daily living. An accessible and affordable taxi and hackney service has the potential of being the most efficient and economic means of meeting this need and Meath County Council has framed a specific policy and objective in the draft County Development Plan 2013-2019 to address this.
- Community Gardaí and Traffic Corps Members will give Road Safety Presentations at Neighbourhood Watch/Community Alert Meetings, Older People's Groups and Senior Citizens Groups.





# 3 Housing

*Research on quality of life found that older people feel their home and neighbourhood has a strong influence on the quality of their lives. Research also states that most people would like to grow old in their own home*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- Independent Living – Older residents in Meath should have access to appropriate supports to help them remain in their own homes.
- Information on access grants for adapting the home to meet changing needs should be readily available to everyone.
- There is a real need for information and access to reputable tradesmen to carry out home maintenance for older people.
- Suitable house type – Older people need more choice in types of housing for example being able to downsize when children have moved out and move to housing with lower maintenance costs.
- There is a need for more integration of generations within purpose built housing estates.
- Many older people do not feel safe in their homes and there is a need for a stronger Garda presence and information sharing on types, costs and installation of security alarm systems.

## Key Partners

- Meath County Council – Housing Department, Planning Department
- Older Peoples Forum
- HSE
- Voluntary Housing Associations

## Actions

- Community Gardaí will be more visible in the community and continue to give advice to Older Persons Groups and community activists regarding security and safety in the home.

- Community Gardaí will continue to share information on safety and security through Muintir Na Tire and Community Alert Schemes.
- Meath Joint Policing Committee will focus on improving the safety and security of older people in Meath.
- Seniors for Themselves Initiative (Pilot).- This EU initiative was initiated in the Czech Republic in 2007 by a team of police officers as a peer to peer crime prevention initiative which targets the most socially and spatially isolated seniors in an area. The 'messengers', who are older people, visit marginalised people in their neighbourhood on a regular basis informing them of simple security measures they can take to make their homes and communities safer.
- Meath County Council will increase follow up consultations with older tenants through its Tenant Liaison Officer with regard to their housing needs following allocation of a Local Authority dwelling.
- Meath County Council will continue to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out through the annual Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme.
- The Draft Meath County Development Plan 2013-2019 includes a number of specific policies to promote age friendly communities as follows:
  - To support the concept of independent living for older people and people with disabilities and ensure where possible that housing for such groups is integrated with mainstream housing in their existing communities. Such housing shall generally be located close to existing or committed community and convenience retail facilities, where possible.
  - To pay special attention to older people on low incomes in substandard, privately rented accommodation when planning and allocating accommodation for older people.
  - To support proposals for day/resource centres for people with special needs within, or close to, town, village and neighbourhood centres, subject to normal planning requirements.
  - To ensure that all new housing is designed in a way that is adaptable and flexible to the changing needs of the homeowner (Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes Sustaining Communities 2007).
  - To facilitate consultation with approved Voluntary and Co-operative housing associations through the life of the Development Plan in order to identify and agree opportunities for their participation in the provision of a suite of social housing delivery options

# 4 Respect & Social Inclusion

*The positive impacts of social connections and social networks are well known, and several international reports have shown that all people, regardless of age, who have active social networks, tend to feel happier about their lives*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- There are very limited opportunities for older people to interact with younger people.
- Dignity is extremely important to an older person. Older people want to take part, be recognised as having a valuable role to play within society and be on an equal level with all other members of society.
- There is a negative attitude/image of older people within society and this stereotype needs to change.

## Key Partners

- Meath County Council – Community Department, Library Service, Heritage office
- Older Peoples Forum
- Meath Partnership
- VEC
- County Development Board – Social Inclusion Measures Group
- Community & Voluntary Forum
- An Garda Síochána
- Meath Volunteer Centre

## Actions

- Community based intergenerational activities will be developed further.
- The Older People's Forum will actively promote events and activities available.



- Community Groups will encourage new members from the older population and make community facilities suitable for all.
- Community Grants by state agencies e.g. County Council, VEC will consider developing categories relating to Age Friendly initiatives. This could be by way of funding for small projects.
- Community Groups, for example, the Mens' Shed<sup>2</sup> project will be supported to bring together men with various skills to create initiatives at a local level. Grants are currently available from Meath Partnership and may be made available by state agencies to support the work.

- Older people will be encouraged to participate in new and existing Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert Initiatives.
- Older Members of the community will be invited to talk to youth groups and youth clubs as guest speakers, accompanied by Gardaí.
- The Draft Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 sets out a range of strategies to create better physical environments and provide access to housing, community facilities and public transport for all.
- Meath Partnership is committed to ensuring the direct involvement of older people in deciding priorities, shaping actions and bringing about change.
- Meath Volunteer Centre will introduce the 'Friend and Mend Scheme' to help with DIY tasks around the home.

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<sup>2</sup> The Irish Men's Shed Association (IMSA) is a member-based organisation formed to share information freely between Sheds and support communities and organisations wishing to establish a Shed. The IMSA as a national organisation represents the collective issues of Men's Sheds in Ireland. The Irish Men's Shed Association will work towards a future where all men have the opportunity to improve and maintain their health and well-being by participating in a community Men's Shed.

# 5 Social Participation

*TILDA 2011 (Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing) found that approximately 90% of older adults visit with family and friends once a week or more and also found that older persons with poorer self-rated health are most likely to be socially isolated*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- There is a need for a simpler process for Garda Vetting of volunteers.
- Removing services away from small villages and towns such as shops and post offices reduces social interaction and leads to isolation among older people.
- Loneliness and isolation is common among older people living in rural areas where there is a lack of access to services and social events.

## Key Partners

- Older Peoples Forum
- Community Garda
- Community & Voluntary Forum
- Third Age Foundation
- Meath County Council – Arts Programme, Library Service
- Comhairle na nÓg

## Actions

- The Older People's Forum will recommend improvements to the Garda Vetting procedure.
- Community Gardaí will travel on Flexibus throughout the county to engage with older people.





- The Community & Voluntary Forum will work with the Older People's Forum to increase contacts and reduce isolation in both rural and urban areas.
- The Older People's Forum will work with Comhairle na nÓg to develop Intergenerational Projects.
- Senior Help Line will be included in promotional material relating to the Age Friendly County initiative.
- Meath County Council Arts Office will continue to develop an extensive Bealtaine Festival that celebrates intergenerational initiatives and creativity as we get older, by liaising with artists, arts appreciation groups, active retirement groups and groups representing older people to create a fully inclusive, cultural and diverse festival that represents the creative heritage in Meath.
- The Library service will continue to provide an extensive calendar of events to attract all ages of society.
- The Draft Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 includes policies that seek to ensure that social, community and cultural needs of all persons and communities are catered for through the provision of well dispersed and easily accessible social and community infrastructure.

# 6 Communication and Information

*Research highlights the importance of staying connected with people and getting timely information to manage life and meet personal needs for active ageing*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- There is too much reliance on sharing computer based information which is inaccessible for many older people. A communications strategy should be developed that utilises community newsletters, community notes, local radio and outreach approaches that ensure coverage across the whole County.
- Information is complex, continually changing and difficult to understand. Step by step information is best.
- Care workers who are trusted by older people are a great resource for giving reliable information on support services already in existence if they were trained to do so.
- More information and awareness of current services is needed across all agencies and there should be centralised information points and a sharing of resources.
- Deadlines for grants and the completion of application forms to avail of services should consider older person. They are currently too tight.

## Key Partners

- Meath County Council – IT Department, Library service
- Older Peoples Forum
- Citizens Information Service
- Meath Partnership
- HSE
- An Garda Síochána
- VEC

## Actions

- The Older People's Forum and Alliance Members will work together to identify and use a variety of communication methods to reach all.
- Increase the use of the County Library service by Older Peoples Groups for communication of activities and events.
- Community Forum meeting equipment will be made available to older peoples groups to borrow through the County Library service.
- Emphasise for all Gardaí the importance of engaging and communicating with older people.
- Garda slots on LMFm radio station as well as articles in local newspapers will be used to keep communities informed of policing issues relevant to older people.
- The VEC will pilot development of the W@ve Project which aims to meet the social needs of senior citizens through Web 2.0 technologies. This will be achieved through learning modules that will utilise digital technology to enhance the quality of services and quality of life of the target group.
- The VEC will continue to offer IT training, education grants and information on courses to interested older peoples groups.
- Meath Partnership will continue providing beginner, 'Laterlife' curriculum computer classes throughout the county specifically designed for older people.
- Meath Partnership will continue to host an annual showcase and information dissemination event for older people in which agencies and service providers promote a range of social, recreational and educational opportunities available throughout the County.

# 7 Civic Participation and Employment

*There is evidence that many people prefer to phase their retirement and the TILDA 2011 report (Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing) found evidence that many have the opportunity to do so*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- There is a lack of fora or representative organisations to connect older people and problem solve.
- Volunteering is difficult and the process of becoming a volunteer within different organisations should be less difficult. (This issue is dealt with under theme 5 Social Participation).
- Agencies should encourage participation in Community Projects as sometimes two thirds of grant allocations are spent on Health & Safety and Administration costs leaving only one third for roll out of the project.
- There is a need to identify and include older people who find it difficult to engage especially older men.
- There is limited accessibility to physical activity programmes.
- Training opportunities for older people following retirement are extremely important.
- Many older people have good ideas and are interested in starting their own business but due to costs are not sure “if it is worth it”.
- More and more older people are restricted in gaining employment or getting involved with voluntary organisations due to their “role as grandparents” minding grandchildren while their own children work.
- There is a stronger need for inclusion of older people on decision making boards and all ages should always be represented.

### Key Partners

- All Alliance Members
- Older Peoples Forum

### Actions

- The Older People's Forum will be put in place in collaboration with Meath Partnership who will facilitate the network.
- The Older People's Forum will put forward a proposal for the improvement of assessment procedures for volunteers.
- The establishment of Men's' Shed Projects across the County.
- Raise awareness of Meath Local Sports Partnership Programmes among Older People.
- Progress uptake of EU sponsored Project 'Senior Enterprise' led by the Mid East Regional Authority, which was specifically designed to encourage a greater involvement with enterprise by those aged 50 and over.
- The Library service will continue working with active retirement groups through its events programme including the Bealtaine festival and providing a service to local nursing homes in the county.
- The VEC will support initiatives such as an Intergenerational Art Projects and educational courses.
- NUI Maynooth will, under its new Strategic Plan, extend its activities in service learning, student volunteering and civic engagement which will target older people among others. This will happen in partnership with a range of voluntary and public bodies.
- Meath Partnership will continue to provide 'Ageing with Confidence' skills training throughout Co Meath and will deepen awareness of career guidance services and enterprise supports provided by Meath Partnership

# 8 Community Support & Health Services

*Increased longevity is largely an outcome of improvements in health care, life-styles and diet. As a result providing health care for older people requires the collaboration of a number of different professionals*

## Issues Raised by Older People

- There is a need to improve accessibility to hospitals and clinics. (This issue is also dealt with under theme 2 Transport).
- Older people are concerned about maintaining local services such as hospitals, Post offices, shops and ATM machines.
- With reductions in home help support there is a need to make people aware of other supports which are in existence and may help people remain living independently, within their own homes.
- There should be adequate access to services with no delays in obtaining benefits when required for example when a spouse passes away.
- There is a need for older people to be educated by way of courses and information sessions on topics including housing, legal advice and fire prevention.
- Breast Check provides screening for women between the ages of 50 – 64. There is a need for it to be expanded to include all ages.
- There is a need for collaboration of state agency supports to work together under the one umbrella.
- There is a lack of support services to prepare people for getting older – “breazing into old age without planning”.
- In the event of severe weather vulnerable older people should have an immediate contact and be secure in knowing they will have meals and heat.

## Key Partners

- Health Service Executive
- All Alliance Members
- County Development Board – Social Inclusion Measures Group

## Actions

- The HSE plan to develop a Day Hospital in Co. Meath to reduce the need for older people to avail of acute in-patient treatment and support older people to live at home longer.
- The HSE will expand services provided to older people in its Primary Care settings, which will include specialist clinics/programmes to avoid or reduce the need for acute inpatient treatment for older people and support older people to live at home longer.
- The HSE will design and roll out a programme to promote health and well being through its Day Care Centres for older people.
- The HSE will invite voluntary groups and state services such as the Citizens Information volunteers and Gardaí Crime Prevention Officers into the Day Centres to inform older people about the services they provide within the local community.
- The HSE will develop a communication and information folder for all HSE Primary Care Staff who provide services to older people so that the staff have information leaflets to hand and are able to explain to older people the services and supports that are available from both the state and volunteers in their community.
- The HSE will support the development of support groups through its primary care and day care services, which support older people to live at home longer, for example, carers support group for spouses of older people who are ill and being cared for at home.
- The HSE will deliver workshops on common ailments relevant to older people.
- The Library service will continue to support its existing partnerships with agencies such as the HSE, Educational and Community groups.
- The HSE will continue to support community lead projects e.g. Meals on Wheels and will further develop and support new groups in the County.

- All Alliance Members will further develop supports to older people.
- The Older People's Forum will update and advise Alliance members on older people's needs.
- Bogus Caller Check Cards will be distributed to older people through Community Gardaí and Neighbourhood Watch/Community Alert Meetings.
- Meath County Council, Community Department will continue to support community initiatives for older people through links with the members of the Social Inclusion Measures Group.
- Meath County Council, Social Inclusion Unit, Community Department will collaborate with partner agencies and the Older Peoples Forum to develop user friendly contact details for emergency services at a local level e.g. fridge magnet/pocket guide.
- The Age Friendly County website will be updated to reflect any changes in the Strategy and to provide a link with older people.





# Acknowledgements

Mr. Tom Dowling, Chairman together with the Alliance Members, wish to acknowledge the collaboration and interagency working which took place in the preparation of this Strategy. Particular thanks are extended to Ms. Catherine McGuigan, Regional Programme Manager, Age Friendly Initiative, Ms. Sinead Begley and Associates Ltd., Mr. Des Foley, Director of Services, and the staff of the Community Department, Ms. Assumpta Kelly, Ms. Maureen McKinley, Ms. Olivia Carpenter, Ms. Fiona Casserly, Ms. Marion Tobin and Ms. Mairead Maguire.

We would especially like to thank all older people of Meath who responded to the consultation process and hope that this Strategy reflects their opinions.

# Appendix I

## Membership of Meath Age Friendly Alliance - June 2012

### Name

Tom Dowling, *Chair*  
Seamus O'Shea  
Mary O'Hare  
Anne Connolly/Regina Buckley  
Michael Devine  
Rodd Bond, *Director*  
Peter Kierans  
John Farrelly (*Cllr*)  
Michael Ludlow  
Mary Nally  
John Byrne  
Dr. Philip Nolan  
Miriam McKenna

### Organisation

Meath County Council  
HSE NE  
HSE NE  
Ageing Well Network  
An Garda Siochana  
Netwell Centre, Dundalk  
Meath VEC  
Meath County Development Board (Chair)  
Meath Partnership  
Third Age Foundation  
Mid East Regional Authority  
NUI Maynooth  
Flexibus

# Appendix II

In April 2011 the Census showed that there were 43,133 people aged 50 and over living in County Meath.

Population of County Meath classified by age group  
2002, 2006 and 2011

	2002	2006	2011
Total	134,005	162,831	184,135
0 - 4 years	11,205	14,228	17,502
5 - 9 years	9,932	12,800	15,495
10 - 14 years	10,529	11,122	13,469
15 - 19 years	10,842	10,605	11,064
20 - 24 years	9,817	11,356	9,908
25 - 29 years	10,164	14,131	13,041
30 - 34 years	11,278	15,485	16,235
35 - 39 years	11,114	14,382	16,791
40 - 44 years	9,952	12,493	14,856
45 - 49 years	8,851	10,370	12,641
50 - 54 years	7,757	8,927	10,320
55 - 59 years	6,449	7,764	8,879
60 - 64 years	4,462	6,144	7,612
65 - 69 years	3,593	4,168	5,914
70 - 74 years	2,939	3,315	3,962
75 - 79 years	2,347	2,432	2,915
80 - 84 years	1,622	1,791	1,931
85 years and over	1,152	1,318	1,600
<b>Total</b>			<b>43,133</b>

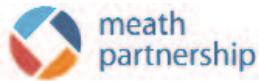
Total Population of County Meath 2011      184,135

# Appendix III

- Meath County Council [www.meath.ie](http://www.meath.ie)
- County Library Services [www.meath.ie/library](http://www.meath.ie/library)
- HSE [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)
- Support Services Directory [www.meathsupportservices.ie](http://www.meathsupportservices.ie)
- Meath Care portal [www.meathcareportal.ie](http://www.meathcareportal.ie)
- Education and Training Website [www.metd.ie](http://www.metd.ie)
- Citizens Information [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)
- Flexibus [www.meathtransport.com](http://www.meathtransport.com)
- Meath VEC [www.vec.ie](http://www.vec.ie)
- Department of Social Protection [www.welfare.ie](http://www.welfare.ie)
- Meath MABS [www.mabs.ie](http://www.mabs.ie)
- Older and Bolder [www.olderandbolder.ie](http://www.olderandbolder.ie)
- Meath Sports Partnership [www.meathsports.ie](http://www.meathsports.ie)
- Meath Partnership [www.meathpartnership.ie](http://www.meathpartnership.ie)



comhairle chontae na mí  
*meath county council*



Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae na Mí  
Fiúntas agus Nuálócht in Oideachas  
**County Meath VEC**  
Excellence and Innovation in Education



THIRD AGE  
NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT AGEING



**HE** Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive



NUI MAYNOOTH  
Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

