# Age Friendly
## Strategy

Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council

Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

# Foreword
By Councillor Thornton

As Chairman of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, I am delighted to introduce the Council's first Age Friendly Strategy for the District.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is committed to establishing a district in which our older people can live active and engaged lives, making a valuable contribution to their communities.

One of the core tenets of the Council's Corporate Plan 2015/19 and indeed of the Fermanagh and Omagh Community Plan 2030 is to help older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives and one of the actions associated with achieving that objective is to work with partner organisations to develop and implement an Age Friendly Plan and to develop, support and participate in appropriate initiatives. The Council's first Age Friendly Strategy and 3 year action plan will enable us to progress, along with our partners, towards achieving this outcome.

The Council has been working collaboratively with South West Age Partnership (SWAP) since 2015 on a range of Age Friendly initiatives, funded by the Public Health Agency. South West Age Partnership (SWAP) is the age sector network of older people's groups representing 75 older people's groups across the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area.

During my term as Chairman of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, I have had the honour of attending many older people's events including events organised as part of Positive Ageing Month which took place in October 2018 and proved to be enormously successful. This was a joint project organised by the Western Health and Social Care Trust, the Public Health Agency, South West Age Partnership and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and its success reinforced the Council's view of the benefits of collaborative working to deliver positive outcomes. It is hoped to continue and build upon the success of this event in 2019.

Our older peoples' groups are some of the busiest across our district offering a wide range of clubs and activities in all areas, both rural and urban. These groups provide a tremendous outlet for our growing older population, and they will have a key role to play in the delivery of the actions within the inaugural Age Friendly Strategy and 3 year action plan.

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is a firm believer in working in partnership with other key stakeholders in the business, voluntary and community sector to deliver initiatives which will make a positive contribution to improving the quality of life of the people of the district. I am certain that this strategy and action plan will ensure our district is a truly Age Friendly place.

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# 1.0 Introduction

This Age Friendly Strategy and associated action plans have been developed to outline how best the growing number of older people across Fermanagh and Omagh can be supported, in recognition of the changing population demographics of the District which project that the figure of 15% aged 65 years or over in 2015 is expected to rise to 23% by 2030.

In recognition of this, the Community Plan for the District has developed an outcome focussed specifically on older people which will be monitored using a range of indicators, including the percentage of older people who:-



The action plans presented in Section 5 of this report seek to make a positive and lasting contribution to these indicators through a range of prioritised actions. The plan has been informed through consultation with older people on both a group and individual basis, in addition to stakeholders, service providers and Community Planning partners.

Consultation was facilitated through Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in association with South West Age Partnership (SWAP) and independently conducted by Venturei Network. The resulting strategy and action plan provide a practical and achievable set of actions to enable the District's older residents to play a full and active role both in their own communities and across the wider District.

The plan recognises the particular challenges faced by our older people and their families and acknowledges that many issues, such as transport and access to services are cross cutting in nature, impacting across a number of areas. The actions identified seek to provide older people with the advice and support needed to tackle issues associated with growing older, better enabling them to continue to play a full role in society. This includes older people feeling involved in community life and contributing to decision making about issues affecting them. It also aims to better support service providers in responding to the needs of older people and improve access to services through encouraging and adopting age friendly approaches to delivery.

# 2.0 Context for the Strategy

### Defining Age Friendly

The World Health Organisation seeks to support Age Friendly environments in cities and communities to foster health, well-being and participation of people as they grow older. It recognises that, without such age-friendly environments, universal health and wellbeing cannot be achieved, adhering to the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve the best possible level of health and well-being, regardless of age, sex or gender, cultural or ethnic background, wealth or health status.

This will be achieved through development and promotion of accessible, inclusive, safe and supportive environments which promote health and provide people centred services. Pursuit of an Age Friendly agenda recognises that older people play a crucial role in their communities through a variety of forms – paid or volunteering work, sharing of experience and knowledge, and caring responsibilities. These contributions can only be ensured if the health and participation of older people is nurtured and promoted.

By committing to an Age Friendly Strategy and action plan, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is best positioning the District to provide environments and opportunities for its older residents to make meaningful and valuable contributions, for individual, family and wider community benefit.

In keeping with the Active Ageing strategy for Northern Ireland, for the purposes of this strategy and action plan older people are defined on the basis set out in legislation which established the Commissioner for Older People; this defines an older person to mean a person aged 60 or over; however, in particular circumstances people aged 50 or over can also be categorised as an older person.

### Fermanagh and Omagh District Council 2030 Community Plan
The Community Plan is the overarching plan for the Fermanagh and Omagh district and sets out a long-term vision of Fermanagh and Omagh in 2030. It provides a framework for partnership working, providing opportunity for stakeholders across the

public, private and community/voluntary sectors to work together for the common goal of improving quality of life for residents. The Vision for Fermanagh and Omagh is of **"a welcoming, shared and inclusive Fermanagh and Omagh district, where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous, and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed"**.

The vision is underpinned by the following three themes, supported by a series of shared outcomes:

**People and Communities**
Shared Outcomes:-
• Our people are healthy and well – physically, mentally and emotionally
• Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives
• Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered
• Our people have the best start in life with lifelong opportunities to fulfil their potential

**Economy, Infrastructure and Skills**
Shared Outcomes:-
• Our economy is thriving, expanding and outward looking
• Our District is a connected place

**Environment**
Shared Outcomes:-
• Our outstanding natural environment and cultural and built heritage is sustainably managed and, where possible, enhanced
• Our District is an attractive and accessible place

In working to achieve this vision and outcomes, the Community Plan has an outcome dedicated to Age Friendly – Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives. This strategy and accompanying action plan provide a framework and mechanisms for achieving that outcome, identifying needs and corresponding actions while also recognising that the nature of Age Friendly issues is such that they impact across a number of strategic and policy areas, including health, transport, housing and inclusion.
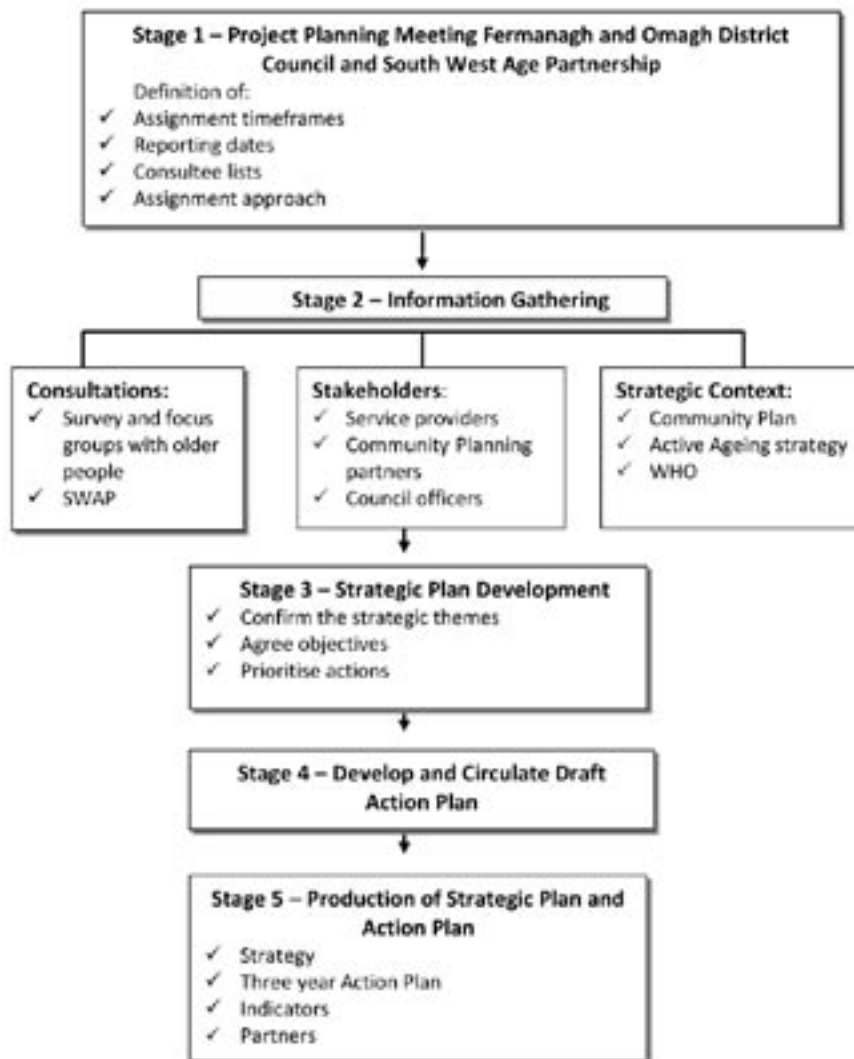
## Summary
It is clear that the policy environment at both local and regional level is concerned with responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by a growing ageing population. There is a clear focus on enabling and empowering older people to live independently, in addition to recognising the contribution they can make to society.

The policy environment highlights the cross cutting nature of the Age Friendly strategy; implementation requires collaborative working across all partners and agencies to ensure joined up working which is strategic and avoids duplication of effort and resources. More  detailed analysis of the policy environment, including the regional context is provided as an Appendix to this report.

# 3.0 Process and Implementation

## Strategy Development Process

The diagram below sets put the process employed to develop the Age Friendly Strategy and action plan.

**Stage 1 – Project Planning Meeting Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and South West Age Partnership**

Definition of:
- ✓ Assignment timeframes
- ✓ Reporting dates
- ✓ Consultee lists
- ✓ Assignment approach

**Stage 2 – Information Gathering**

**Consultations:**
- ✓ Survey and focus groups with older people
- ✓ SWAP

**Stakeholders:**
- ✓ Service providers
- ✓ Community Planning partners
- ✓ Council officers

**Strategic Context:**
- ✓ Community Plan
- ✓ Active Ageing strategy
- ✓ WHO

**Stage 3 – Strategic Plan Development**
- ✓ Confirm the strategic themes
- ✓ Agree objectives
- ✓ Prioritise actions

**Stage 4 – Develop and Circulate Draft Action Plan**

**Stage 5 – Production of Strategic Plan and Action Plan**
- ✓ Strategy
- ✓ Three year Action Plan
- ✓ Indicators
- ✓ Partners

## Implementing the Strategy

Strategy and action plan implementation will be the responsibility of Council working closely with the South West Age Partnership (SWAP) as the sub-regional forum for older people. Implementation will be in line with Council's Community Plan through the Community Planning Strategic Partnership Board and, at delivery level, the designated inter-agency group responsible for implementation and monitoring of Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives. This will take the form of regular progress meetings and completion of the Performance Report card used to chart and monitor progress.

This approach will ensure a joined up approach to delivery and will also take account of the contribution of the Age Friendly Strategy and action plan to many of the other outcomes identified in the Community Plan.

# 4.0 Consultation Summary

The strategy has been informed by a comprehensive consultation process, including older people (groups and individuals), organisations with an Age Friendly remit and/ or working with older people and Community Planning and Interagency partners.

## Consultation with Older People

A series of consultations was undertaken with older people across the District. One aspect of the consultation took the form of surveys distributed in hard and electronic copy to groups through the South West Age Partnership (SWAP) database, with 125 responses being received. Consultation was further informed by a series of five workshops attended by over sixty older people which were carried out across the District in April 2018. Detailed consultation findings are attached as an Appendix to this report.

The importance of groups and clubs was found to be very positive and demonstrated a need to ensure that groups with an older people's remit are supported to be sustainable, particularly given the age profile of the District which reflects an ageing population. This was reflected in responses which tended to highlight the social and mental wellbeing benefits of participation in activity, in addition to learning new things, enabling people's minds to remain active.

Capacity is a significant issue for some groups and stems from the fact that many people aged in their sixties or seventies do not really relate to or identify with older people's groups while others have limited free time to participate as a result of work and/or caring for grandchildren and/or parents. This has a knock-on effect on the membership profile of groups and may hamper their growth and development over the longer term.

Given the rurality of the Fermanagh and Omagh District, transport was a major issue of discussion. Concerns were expressed about accessibility and affordability of transport by both groups and individuals, highlighting the importance of the issue and its cross-cutting impact across all areas of the strategy and action plan.

A wide range of challenges were reported by older people. Health related concerns were the most commonly cited, including loss of mobility, travelling to specialist hospital appointments, failing mental and physical health. These findings were backed up by the focus groups which also reported concerns about accessing early appointments located in Altnagelvin Hospital or Belfast based on first hand experiences and which highlight a need to engage with health service providers to explore alternative options, including potential for more locally based outreach clinics where practical.

In the course of the consultation, it became clear that groups have an existing wealth of knowledge and skills which they can share with other groups, groups

and volunteers participating in the consultation being keen to find out about each other's work and share their experiences. It was felt that the format of local clusters previously employed by SWAP had much to offer groups, facilitating informal discussion and conversations which may not otherwise take place.

Creating space and opportunity for informal contact and discussion can bring about important outcomes around wellbeing and inclusion as participants share experiences, concerns and support. It was felt that space for this type of organic conversation can be lost in pursuit of outputs and outcomes set out by funders and that there should be more recognition of the value of social contact and interaction, particularly given the threat of loneliness faced by many older people. This was supported by survey findings which found that the main benefits older people gained from attending groups and activities were making friends, reducing loneliness and staying connected with their local community.

## Summary

The findings from the survey and focus groups highlight the importance attributed to social interaction and community connections by older people, often underlined by the need to ensure appropriate, affordable and accessible transport connections. There is also a priority need to address issues with health partners and providers, particularly in relation to the issue of timing of and travelling to specialist appointments. This need reflects the crosscutting nature of many issues impacting older people and the Age Friendly agenda, including health, transport and communication.

There is a broad range of activities and groups across the District; promoting and supporting these to their best potential can bring about positive outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing, particularly addressing loneliness and rural isolation which is a key challenge in a rural district such as Fermanagh and Omagh. Learning new skills, including access to capacity building in computer skills, can also help address isolation while contributing to health and wellbeing through new learning. The existing network of groups and activities provides a solid foundation from which to move forward with contributing to an Age Friendly District, building connections and sharing experiences.

As always, engaging with hard to reach individuals presents challenges. In the context of an Age Friendly agenda, this may best be achieved through ensuring open and accessible communication and information channels which other family members can avail of, sharing information with older members and also supporting groups to reach out and remain connected to those older residents in their locality who may not wish to be actively engaged but are keen to be connected in some way to the wider community through local groups or informal community networks.

## Stakeholder Consultation

In addition to consulting with local groups and older people, the strategy and action plan was also informed by consultation with stakeholders, service providers and organisations working in the Age Friendly arena. Summary findings are presented below; detailed consultation with stakeholders is attached as an Appendix to this report.

Building capacity was considered particularly important for all groups, including those working with older people, as administrative requirements increase and funding environments become increasingly complex. Supporting groups through formal and informal approaches, including networking between groups and working with SWAP, can support groups to sustain or grow membership, including outreach to the wider community.

One important mechanism for building inclusion is through inter-generational work in areas such as local history. Stakeholder consultation highlighted the value of older people remaining involved in civic life and exploring how best they can contribute through sharing skills and experience.

It was recognised that terminology is a key issue and suggested that age proofing of materials should be undertaken to ensure that information is clear and jargon free. In terms of development of materials, Age NI have many examples of materials for communication which can be used as templates, thus avoiding duplication and providing some consistency in efforts to promote positive ageing. Ensuring that communication materials and facilities and services including transport and housing are also dementia friendly was highlighted; feedback from the consultation noted the importance of developing and applying dementia friendly tools as part of an Age Friendly Strategy. For the purpose of this strategy it is implied that age friendly actions will also seek to accommodate the needs of those living with dementia and other age related conditions wherever possible. This would include promoting dementia awareness training and developing appropriate support materials where necessary.

Consultation with groups, individuals and stakeholders reinforced the fact that transport is a cross cutting issue, impacting on areas around health, access to service, in addition to inclusion and participation. The cross-cutting nature of transport is such that while it has been identified as a standalone theme in the Age Friendly strategy, it also offers much potential to contribute to other strategic themes, including Social Participation and Inclusion.  While there are dedicated Transportation outcomes in the Community Plan, there is a clear need to address transport provision in relation to Age Friendly activities and programming, particularly in light of consultation findings which identified loneliness and isolation as major challenges. Key to this process will be communicating clear messages to residents on transport options which are available, including those provided through Community Transport operators, through increased community engagement and distribution of information.

Access to services, most especially health, was recognised as being of key significance to older people and their families. Co-ordination of provision amongst providers and dissemination of information were identified as being integral to fully addressing this issue. In terms of communicating with older people, it was felt that opportunity exists to build community connections through a variety of approaches – text, email, newsletter, Age NI's monthly signposting service, group memberships and existing local mechanisms such as SWAP and the Council newsletter.

With regards to skills development, there is much scope to work in partnership with a range of programmes and opportunities including the PLACE-EE transnational project partnership and Libraries NI Digital Literacy project.

## Summary

A key issue for implementation and monitoring of the strategy and action plan will be ensuring adequate resources. Funding and capacity building will be required both for groups on the ground and SWAP for co-ordinating implementation of the action plan. Input from Community Planning partners will also be necessary in strategy implementation and monitoring.

Feeding into the regional environment will be beneficial in terms of ensuring co-ordination, dissemination of learning and sharing of best practice. Establishing links with Age NI as the sectoral lead may prove useful in order to benefit from existing knowledge and progress for example in the development of Age Friendly materials, lobbying and influencing policy and decision makers through the Age Friendly Network.

Participation in the new Age Friendly Network to support the development of Age Friendly environments across Northern Ireland will also assist in pressing actions under strategic themes. This approach highlights the benefits of working in partnership, utilising skills and resources from all partners to identify gaps in provision and avoid potential duplication.

## What Does This Tell Us?

**In summary, the main lessons learned from the consultation and strategy development process can be summarised as follows:**

• Social interaction, community connections and removing
the risk of isolation are vitally important

• Loneliness is a major concern; facilitation of personal contacts
and connections is required

• Groups can benefit from informal meeting opportunities
to share ideas and experiences

• Older people have much to offer to society; these contributions
should be recognised and supported

• Many issues are cross cutting across a number of thematic areas and,
therefore, requiring input from a range of sectoral partners

• Transport provision underpins many of the identified issues, including
health, access to services, isolation and participation

• There are many areas where Community Planning partners can contribute
to the issues identified in pursuit of an Age Friendly District

# 5.0 Action Plans

## Introduction
The Age Friendly Action Plans have been developed following consultation with older people and stakeholders across the District. Themes have been aligned with those identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO), namely:-

Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

Transportation

Housing

Social Participation

Respect and Social Inclusion

Civic participation and Employment

Communication and Information

Community Support and Health Services

## Aim
The Action Plan serves as an implementation tool for the District's Community Plan, assisting in the establishment of Fermanagh and Omagh as an Age Friendly District and contributing to the following Community Planning outcome:-

## Outcome
Older people living more independent, engaged and socially connected lives

## Action Plans
The plans presented overleaf provide a framework for achieving this aim and outcome.

# Theme: Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

**Project Area** | **Promoting Accessible Streetscape**

## Why is it an issue?

There is a need to ensure accessible streetscape, consultation identifying a range of needs including parking and footpaths in addition to fully accessible public toilets and seating in order to better enable older people to safely navigate the wider environment, including town and village centres. Less than one third of the District's population (29%) feel that they can influence local decision making; this action seeks to redress that through promoting engagement by older people in consultation processes

## How will it be tackled?

| SHORT TERM | MEDIUM TERM | LONG TERM |
|---|---|---|
| • Consultation with older people on key capital proposals, services and policy decisions e.g. public realm, town and village planning | • Ensure public buildings have user friendly signage | • Pedestrian crossings are Age Friendly (inc. crossing times) |

**Delivery Partner(s)**

SWAP: Relevant service providers/partners
FODC: Enniskillen Public Realm working group

**Measures**

• Participation by older people in consultation processes

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 8: Our district is an attractive and accessible place
Actions 8.3; 8.6

**Project Area** | **Promoting Access to Public Buildings and Services**

## Why is it an issue?

Concern was expressed about challenges faced by older people in accessing building and services, including health services. This backs up findings from the recent Residents' Survey (Feb 2018) which found that people aged 60 plus scored less than the overall population with regards to accessibility to the local area (scoring 3.5 from a maximum of 4 compared to 3.7 overall). Actions which

increase accessibility awareness in public buildings, community and service centres recognise the District's ageing population and their need to access services, including promoting physical access to buildings and ensuring that buildings are age friendly. The Community Plan notes that in 2015/16 1.9% of car parking spaces across the District catered for people with a disability, slightly below the NI standard.

## How will it be tackled?

**SHORT TERM**
• Representation on Access Advisory groups in order to highlight issues around access to relevant bodies/agencies
• Videos on Council website highlighting accessibility of facilities
• Provision of Access stickers/Age Friendly branding and signage on facilities

**MEDIUM TERM**
• Training for staff on accessibility resources such as hearing loops and Dementia Friendly Communities workshops

**LONG TERM**
• Maintenance of footpaths and roads
• Provision of adequate Age Friendly parking spaces at public services/buildings

**Delivery Partner(s)**
SWAP, FODC
Relevant service providers/partners
Access Advisory Group, Dept. For Infrastructure

**Measures**
• Participation on Access Advisory groups
• Provision of accessibility resources
• Uptake of training

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**
Outcome 8: Our district is an attractive and accessible place
Actions 8.3; 8.6

# Theme: Transportation

| Project Area | Transport |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

The Community Plan notes that the proportion of journeys made via public transport falls below the NI average (19% compared to 23%) and recognises the limited pubic transport service in rural areas. It further notes that 77% of those eligible in the District have a SmartPass. The Feb 2018 Residents' Survey found that people aged over 60 scored lower satisfaction levels with physical connectivity than the wider resident population – scoring 7.6 compared to 7.9 out of a maximum score of 10.

Fermanagh and Omagh is a predominantly rural District and strategy consultation identified a need to better co-ordinate Rural Community Transport across the area, including route planning and promotion of user friendly booking systems. Concerns were expressed about the affordability of transport by both groups (in respect of group hire) and individuals (private hire) and restrictions regarding volunteer mini-bus drivers in recognition of the impact this can have on both access to services and the risk of isolation with associated health and wellbeing implications. In particular, consultation identified concerns in relation to provision of transport to hospitals (particularly Belfast/Altnagelvin appointments) and other public buildings/services as a key challenge facing older people.

## How will it be tackled?

### SHORT TERM
• Promote SmartPass concessionary travel card
• Explore potential to co-ordinate community transport Dial a Lift scheme across the District as a whole
• Promote the Dial a Lift service for individuals living in rural areas with no access to transport (public or private)

### MEDIUM TERM
• Explore options for making booking systems and route planning more user friendly
• Explore scope for better use of existing transport resources (including school buses)
• Promote the JAM (Just a Minute) Card for people living with dementia and others

### LONG TERM
• Ensure Transport providers are dementia friendly, with appropriate knowledge and visibility

**Delivery Partner(s)**

Transport providers
Community Transport operators
Western Health and Social Care Trust
Dept. for Infrastructure

**Measures**
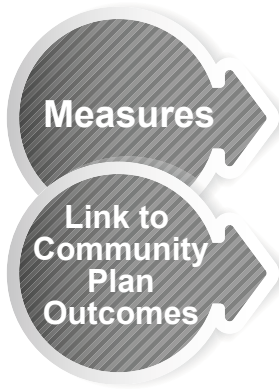
• Provision and uptake of services, including Dial-A-Lift and SmartPass

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 6: Our district is a connected place
Action 6.2

# Theme: Housing

| Project Area | Future Proofing the District's housing stock |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

During strategy consultation concerns were raised about the changing profile of residents in some social housing schemes which has brought about anti-social behaviours and generated concerns about the safety of older residents. Need was also expressed for development of housing schemes which facilitate independent living in a supported environment which is age friendly; many older people wish to remain in their own community. In addition, there is a concern that designation of dispersed rural areas as open countryside may impact planning potential. In addition, the recent Residents' Survey (Feb 2018) found that people aged 60 plus were slightly less satisfied with their living accommodation than the overall population, scoring 8.2 compared with 8.3 out of a maximum 10 among the overall District population.

## How will it be tackled?

**SHORT TERM**
• Liaison with Housing Associations and Northern Ireland Housing Executive to encourage age friendly proofing of residents
• Promote housing needs for older people in Local Development Plan
• Promote Age Friendly guidelines

**MEDIUM TERM**
• Establish Residents' Support groups to provide feedback
• Provision of information for home owners in relation to future proofing, enabling people to remain in their own homes for longer
• Highlight need for Age Friendly housing in rural areas to accommodate independent living

**Delivery Partner(s)**

FODC Planning Service
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Housing Associations
Rural Housing Association

**Measures**
- Older people enabled to remain in their own home/community
- Level of housing developed for older people

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives

# Theme: Social Participation

| Project Area | Encouraging Participation to Sustain Older People's Groups |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

Sustainability is an issue for some groups, including challenges in recruiting younger members. Building a membership base is key to the longevity of groups and their work, requiring groups to reach out to new members. This can be achieved in a number of ways, including reviewing terminology around older people's groups and activities, ensuring locations are age friendly. Groups were keen to broaden their appeal to new members and also offer existing members a wide range of activities, having identified a range of potential activities including:

- Walking groups
- Dance and singing classes
- ICT and Smart phone
- Promote local library services' social activities

- Bring a Buddy/family member days
- Welcome events
- Everybody Active
- Book clubs
- Mental health and mindfulness

Such activity can also address findings from the recent Residents' Survey (Feb 2018) which found that people aged 60 plus recorded lower level of physical activity (2.1 days pw) compared to the overall District population (3.4 days pw). Almost a quarter (22%) reported participating in community activity in the previous 12 months, highlighting the potential to engage with older people through groups and supporting group capacity

## How will it be tackled?

**SHORT TERM**
- Helping to increase membership by transforming the perception of older people's groups and activities through a menu of taster sessions
- Promote use of age friendly forms

**MEDIUM TERM**
- Inter-generational projects, including projects with grandparents
- Promote linkages and encourage joint working with other community based groups in local areas

**Delivery Partner(s)**

SWAP, FODC
Older person's groups
Local community networks
Delivery partners as appropriate.

**Measures**

• Sustainability of groups, including attracting new members
• Linkages created between groups
• Uptake of activities, including inter-generational participation

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 1: Our People are Healthy and Well – Physically, Mentally and Emotionally
Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives
Outcome 3: Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered
Actions 1.1; 2.1; 3.9

# Theme: Respect And Social Inclusion

| Project Area | Tackling Loneliness |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

Loneliness and isolation was identified as one of the main concerns of older people, particularly where there is no/limited family support and given the rurality of the area which presents transport challenges. Older people expressed a wish to remain connected to their local communities and highlighted a need for increased social interaction in order to combat loneliness and promote positive mental health. These findings reinforce the recent Residents' Survey (Feb 2018) which found that people aged 60 plus scored less than the overall population with regards to social contact and control over daily life.

## How will it be tackled?

**SHORT TERM**
• Promote local library services as accessible space and services
• Promote the Dial a Lift service

**MEDIUM TERM**
• Support the development of a Good Morning scheme which is properly resourced and managed
• Support for Men's Shed initiatives across the District

**Delivery Partner(s)**

Omagh Volunteer Centre
Local Community Networks
Community Transport operators,
SWAP, Libraries NI
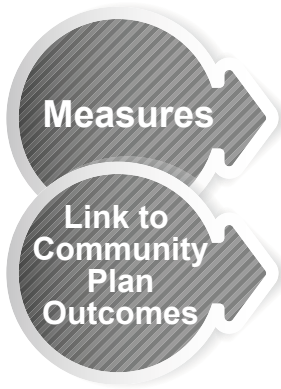
**Measures**
• Uptake of projects/services

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**
Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives
Outcome 3: Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered
Action 2.1; 3.6

| Project Area | Building Respect |
| --- | --- |

**Why is it an issue?**
It was felt that service providers need to be better informed of the barriers to participation faced by older people, building respect and understanding between older people and the wider community.

## How will it be tackled?

| SHORT TERM | MEDIUM TERM | LONG TERM |
| --- | --- | --- |
| • Promote groups and their achievements<br>• Inter-generational projects, including work with schools | • Roll out of learning from PLACE-EE programme (West Tyrone and West Fermanagh DEAs only)<br>• Age awareness training for service providers | • Service providers sign up to an Age Friendly Charter |

**Delivery Partner(s)**
SWAP, FODC
Older person's groups
Local Community Networks, Linking Generations NI

**Measures**
• Inter-generational participation
• Uptake of training
• Age Friendly Charter sign-up

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**
Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives
Outcome 3: Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered
Action 2.1; 3.6

# Theme: Civic Participation and Employment

| Project Area | Volunteering and Participation |
| --- | --- |

## Why is it an issue?

Almost a quarter (22%) of older people responding to the Feb 2018 Residents' Survey reported that they had volunteered (regularly or occasionally) in the previous 12 months, consistent with the District overall response. Promoting volunteering can provide the wider community with the opportunity to benefit from the skills and experiences of older people. This potential can be realised by sharing the skills of older people in running or managing a business or company, experience which can in turn benefit new or inexperienced business owners. This action enables older people to remain engaged with local communities/ businesses while also sharing their learning with the wider community. In addition to increasing participation, consultation identified a need to ensure the voice of older people is heard and their views represented in consultation informing policy proposals or changes.

## How will it be tackled?

### SHORT TERM
• Promote volunteering opportunities, including within Community Transport (such as the Volunteer Car Scheme)
• Representation of and regular consultation with the District's older people on key consultation processes

### MEDIUM TERM
• Encourage older people to act as mentors, including those approaching retirement
• Develop retirement packs with contact details for volunteering

**Delivery Partner(s)**
Omagh Volunteer Centre
FODC Economic Development
SWAP, Volunteer Now, Community Transport operators

**Measures**
• Number of older people volunteering and mentoring
• Participation in consultation

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**
Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives
Outcome 3: Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered
Action 2.1; 3.9

# Theme: Communication And Information

| Project Area | Scoping Study |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

Currently there is a wide range of community based activities and programmes being delivered across a wide spectrum of groups and service providers. Establishing the current position will help to identify gaps in existing provision and avoid duplication, creating co-ordination and improving awareness of activities for older people across the District.

## How will it be tackled?

### SHORT TERM

• Scoping exercise to establish a baseline and mapping of services and activities available for older people

**Delivery Partner(s)**

SWAP
Community Planning
Local older person's groups
FODC Community Services
Local Community Networks

**Measures**

• Completion of study

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 1: Our people are healthy and well – physically, mentally and emotionally
Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives
Action 2.1

| Project Area | Information and Signposting |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

Strong support was recorded for local meeting structures where groups who have a wealth of skills and experience which share learning, generating best practice for all groups. There is also a need to raise awareness of the various services and activities for older people across the District through a central co-ordination point and promotion of activities and opportunities.

## How will it be tackled?

### SHORT TERM

• SWAP to facilitate local cluster meetings across the District
• Production of Age Friendly information leaflet with key contacts

### MEDIUM TERM

• Improve accessibility of Council switch board
• Ensure consultation materials are user friendly – font size, use of

## SHORT TERM (Continued)
and database of venues
• Age Friendly link on Council website; calendar of events

## MEDIUM TERM (Continued)
terminology
• Development of a parish notes/ bulletins database as one means of circulating information, especially to the hard to reach

**Delivery Partner(s)**
FODC Community Services
SWAP
Local older person's groups,
Local Community networks

**Measures**
• Participation at meetings
• Increased accessibility to Age Friendly resources and information

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**
Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives

| Project Area | Positive Ageing Communications campaign |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?
To change the perception of ageing and older people, presenting a positive image, highlighting opportunities and celebrating achievements, including holding a week long celebration and information programme across the District. This action also offers opportunity for participation and promotion of Dementia Action Week to show the work older people are doing to change society.

## How will it be tackled?

### SHORT TERM
• Positive Ageing Week (October) (Promote positive news stories/ case studies; Positive Ageing achievements)

### MEDIUM TERM
• Appoint Age Friendly Ambassadors/ Champions
• Promotion of an Age Friendly village in the District before rolling out across villages and towns in addition to support for ongoing Dementia Friendly projects

### LONG TERM
• Development of Age Friendly branding for businesses and services – sign up to an Age Friendly Charter

**Delivery Partner(s)**
Western Health and Social Care Trust Health Promotion
FODC Community Services
SWAP
Public Health Agency

**Measures**
- Participation in Positive Ageing events and activities
- Sign up to an Age Friendly Charter

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 1: Our people are healthy and well – physically, mentally and emotionally Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives
Outcome 3: Our communities are inclusive, safe, resilient and empowered
Actions 1.1; 2.1; 3.1; 3.10

| Project Area | Information and Communication Technology |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

Research informing the Community Plan noted that the number of people aged 65 and over in the District who have used the internet is on the rise (49% in 2016) and on a par with the NI average. It recognises the potential of the internet to reduce isolation, particularly in respect of accessing services, a point also highlighted in strategy consultation. The Residents' Survey (Feb 2018) saw people aged 60 plus score lower satisfaction rating for broadband/mobile phone connectivity than the overall District population – 7.3 satisfaction rating compared to 7.6 (out of a maximum 10).

Consultation informing the Age Friendly Strategy and action plan found that while capacity is fairly high, there is limited use of the internet among older people in relation to using online booking and banking systems. This may in part be attributed to concerns around internet safety, given that confidence levels are generally healthy. This action seeks to provide older people with the capacity and confidence to make best use of information technology and the accessing of services.
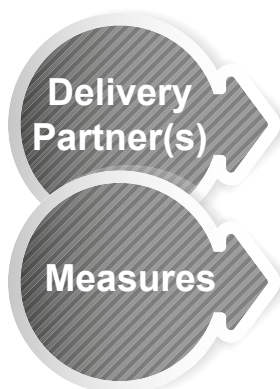
## How will it be tackled?

**SHORT TERM**
- Raise awareness of Libraries NI resources (ICT access, training and staff support) and community centres/hubs with broadband access
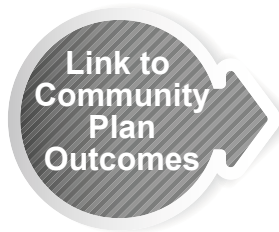
**MEDIUM TERM**
- Roll out of Place-EE programme and subsequent learning points
- Promote ICT training opportunities for older people

**Delivery Partner(s)**

FODC Community Services and PLACE EE project
SWAP
Libraries NI (Digital Literacy project)

**Measures**
- Participation in training
- Uptake of services

## Theme: Community Support And Health Services

| Project Area | Health Planning and Delivery |
|---|---|

### Why is it an issue?

Research informing the Community Plan identified that 88% of the over 65 population reported being in good health, while the recent Residents' Survey (Feb 2018) found that 72% of those aged 60 years+ considered their health to be good/very good and recorded a satisfaction rating of 7.7 out of a maximum 10 with their physical health (overall District = 8.1) while a satisfaction rating of 8.1 was recorded by people aged 60 years+ in relation to mental health/emotional wellbeing (overall District = 8.3).

The Community Plan and associated Age Friendly action plans aim to maintain if not improve these trends. Strategy consultation highlighted a need to work to improve the accessibility of (specialist) health services (e.g. preventing early appointments at Altnagelvin/Belfast where possible) and address the lack of pharmacy at Omagh Health Centre. These issues are particularly important given the rurality of the District and associated challenges in accessing services by older people.

### How will it be tackled?

| SHORT TERM | MEDIUM TERM | LONG TERM |
|---|---|---|
| • Positive Ageing Week (October) (Promote positive news stories/case studies; Positive Ageing achievements)Meeting with relevant statutory bodies to agree approach<br>• Participation in Western Health and Social Care Trust Pathfinders initiative | • Explore potential for outreach clinics | • Lobbying in relation to care in the community provision |

**Delivery Partner(s)**

Western Health and Social Care Trust
Public Health Agency
Community Development Health Network

**Measures**

• Ongoing efforts to improve access to services

**Link to Community Plan Outcomes**

Outcome 1: Our people are healthy and well – physically, mentally and emotionally
Action 1.5

| Project Area | Independent Living |
|---|---|

## Why is it an issue?

To continue to support people to remain in their own homes for longer through a series of focussed and practical interventions, reinforcing the message that the District is a safe environment for older people. It is also recognised that many unpaid carers are at risk of isolation, often contributing to poor mental and emotional well-being. Addressing their needs will assist older people remain in their homes. The risk of falling increases as people age and Council's Community Plan notes that targeted interventions to reduce the risk of falling have been effective, better enabling people to live in their own home and community.

## How will it be tackled?

| SHORT TERM | MEDIUM TERM | LONG TERM |
|---|---|---|
| • Awareness raising of targeted interventions - Home Safety, Affordable Warmth, Falls prevention initiatives<br>• Assistance with recycling and refuse collections<br>• Promote awareness of advice and benefits services for carers | • Work with Policing and Community Safety Partnership on targeted programmes<br>• Explore potential to pilot a befriending/sitting service to relieve carers for a few hours<br>• Support for older people and/or carers isolated following bereavement | • Ensure service providers have appropriate age and dementia friendly knowledge so services are accessible to older people and their carers<br>• Explore options to develop a pilot Handyman scheme with pre-determined tasks for basic maintenance |

**Delivery Partner(s)**

FODC Community Services and Environmental Health,
Health Improvement Team, Western Health and Social Care Trust,
Local Healthy Living Centres
SWAP, Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Local Care providers, Omagh Independent Advice Service/
Community Advice Fermanagh, Community Transport Providers

| Measures | • Uptake of services and programmes |
| Link to Community Plan Outcomes | Outcome 2: Older people lead more independent, engaged and socially connected lives<br>Actions 3.12 |

# 6.0 Conclusion

The action plans provide focused direction across a number of key strategic areas in taking forward age friendly measures. SWAP will act as a conduit for the representation of older people's views, providing ongoing feedback through mechanisms such as Cluster meetings across the District. This will ensure that the strategy and action plans remain tailored to older people and responses are informed by locally evidenced needs.

All activities will be monitored on a regular basis by the Age Friendly inter-agency group and associated subgroups. This approach will enable Council, SWAP and the Community Planning partners to take ownership of the strategy and action plans and play a full role in implementation and monitoring.

# Appendix 1 – Strategic Context

## Policy Context

**The Age Friendly strategy and action plan seeks to contribute to the Community Plan for Fermanagh and Omagh at the local level, while also contributing to the wider strategy and regional policy environment. This section considers the key policy areas impacting on older people and the Age Friendly agenda and how best these can be addressed.**

### Programme for Government Framework
The Programme for Government outcomes framework contains 12 strategic outcomes supported by 49 indicators and covering a wide spectrum of areas, including attainment of good health and education and confident and peaceful communities.

A key feature of the Programme is collaborative working between organisations and groups, whether in the public, voluntary, or private sectors and it is a Programme in which an integrated Age Friendly strategy and action plan can play an active part in contributing to a number of stated outcomes, including:-

Outcomes:
- We enjoy long, healthy, active lives
- We have a more equal society
- We care for others and we help those in need
- We are a shared, welcoming and confident society that respects diversity
- We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential

The multiplicity of outcomes applicable to the Age Friendly strategy illustrate the cross cutting nature of the topic and its impact across a wide range of sectors and strategic priorities, highlighting the need for a partnership approach in implementation and monitoring of actions.

### Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021
Promoted by the NI Executive, the strategy is designed to make a real difference to the quality of life of older people, enabling as many people as possible to enjoy the benefits and rewards of life for as long as possible.

**Vision**

"Our vision is one of Northern Ireland being an age friendly region in which people, as they get older, are valued and supported to live actively to their fullest potential; with their rights respected and their dignity protected".

The strategy recognises the contribution made by older people to society, including:-

Older people make a major contribution to our society in many ways including:
- leadership and membership of many local organisations, groups and societies
- contribution to community safety through Neighbourhood Watch and helping children travel to school safely
- sharing their skills and experience
- contributing to childcare for their families

The challenges which can be faced by older people are also acknowledged, including:
- Poverty and fuel poverty
- The need for more appropriate housing
- Better access to transport
- Appropriate health and social care provision
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Access to education
- Improved access to leisure opportunities
- Better employment opportunities
- Freedom to live without fear of crime

The Active Ageing strategy has drawn up a series of outcomes which this Age Friendly strategy and action plan seeks to support, namely:-
- Older people live independently for as long as they can, free from poverty and in suitable, safe homes
- Older people are involved in their family and community and in civic life
- Older people are healthier for longer
- Older workers remain in employment for as long as they wish or need to
- Older people participate in cultural, educational and physical activity
- Older people's dignity and human rights are effectively safe guarded

### Office of the First and Deputy First Minister – Lifetime Opportunities
Lifetime Opportunities is the Northern Ireland government's anti-poverty and social inclusion strategy. It outlines the actions to be taken by the government departments to eliminate poverty and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by 2020. It has a number of objectives, including:

- To ensure older people are valued and respected, remain independent, participate as active citizens and enjoy a good quality of life in a safe and shared community

The strategy notes that changing family structures, such as migration of younger people away from rural areas have resulted in a greater concentration of older people in areas vulnerable to poverty and social isolation. Given the rurality of the District and associated access to services challenges, this point is particularly relevant to Fermanagh and Omagh. The subsequent risk of isolation and impact on well-being is recognised by the Lifetime Opportunities which also acknowledges the

cross-cutting nature of issues in supporting an ageing population:-

*"It is important also to help older people maintain an active and healthy lifestyle and thereby prevent social isolation and exclusion.*
*In addition accessibility of public services, including access and provision to decent housing is central at a time where many may experience health problems or have difficulty with mobility."*

The narrative above outlines the importance of co-ordination of services to support older people. As the Age Friendly strategy and action plan moves forward to implementation, it will be important that local organisations are supported by regional and statutory agencies in order to respond to locally identified needs in a practical way with meaningful results.

# Appendix 2 – Fermanagh and Omagh Interagency Forum for Older People

South West Age Partnership
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council
Western Health & Social Care Trust
Alzheimers Society
Dementia NI
Fermanagh Rural Community Network
Omagh Forum for Rural Associations
Carers Support Network
Public Health Agency
British Red Cross
Oak Healthy Living Centre
Arc Healthy Living Centre
Devenish Health Project
Department for Communities
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
mPower
Age NI
Centre for Independent Living
Lakeland Community Care
Easilink
Fermanagh Community Transport
Action on Hearing Loss
Royal National Institute for the Blind
FACT (Fermanagh Armagh Connected Together)
Addiction NI
Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service
Omagh Volunteer Centre
Omagh Women's Aid
Fermanagh Women's Aid
Shopmobility Omagh
Policing and Community Safety Partnership
Patient Client Council
Volunteer Now

# Appendix 3 – Detailed Consultation Findings

The strategy and action plans were informed by a comprehensive consultation process, including older people (groups and individuals), organisations with an Age Friendly remit and/or working with older people and Community Planning partners. Section 3 provides a summary of findings which are presented in fuller detail in this Appendix.

## Survey Findings

Consultation with older people took the form of surveys distributed in hard and electronic copy to groups through the South West Age Partnership (SWAP) database, with 125 responses being received. As a result, findings largely reflect those of groups and members across the District as evidenced by the profile below:-

### Activity Provision

Respondents participate in a range of activities, with church-based groups being particularly popular. Over one third of respondents also reported using Community Associations. While reflecting the breadth of activity provision uptake by older people, these findings also provide direction in how best to get information out to older people by using tools such as church based groups and community organisations.

A wide range of benefits were recorded through attendance at activities with benefits around participation and interaction receiving the highest rankings. The forging of friendships, staying connected to the community and reducing isolation generate the greatest benefits for older people and highlight the importance in supporting such initiatives in order to support positive mental health and wellbeing. It is recognised that the Good Morning Service response should be seen in the context of there currently being no District wide programme.

In terms of other activities, these were principally related to church based groups, Healthy Living Centres, Leisure Centres and women's groups highlighting the range and variety of activities available.

### Benefits of Participation

The importance of groups and clubs was very positive and demonstrates a need to ensure that groups are supported to be sustainable, particularly given the age profile of the District which reflects an ageing population. This was reflected in the responses to other benefits which tended to highlight the social and mental wellbeing benefits of participation in activity, in addition to learning new things such as local history, enabling people's minds to remain active.

## Community Engagement

Almost half of respondents felt that they were very involved in community life; given that the majority of respondents are club based, this again reflects the importance of local groups.

## Challenges to Participation

Transport and caring were the key challenges which need to be addressed in order to better enable older people participate in their local communities. In other responses, work commitments were cited while some respondents said that their pride prevented them, highlighting a need for confidence and outreach work to promote engagement.

## Challenges to Ageing

A wide range of challenges were reported by older people. Health related concerns were the most commonly cited, including loss of mobility, travelling to specialist hospital appointments, failing mental and physical health. These findings are backed up by focus groups which also reported concerns about accessing early appointments located in Altnagelvin Hospital or Belfast and highlight a need to engage with health service providers to explore alternative options, including potential for more locally based outreach clinics where practical.

Other concerns included loneliness, fear of crime and maintenance issues both inside and outside the home, including public realm, linked to the fear of falling.

## Information Technology

As online based services become increasingly common, respondents were asked about their access to IT resources and skills. Over two thirds of respondents do have access to a home computer/iPad, with the majority of those without reported that they have no access at all.

While the majority of respondents stated they were quite/very confident using a computer/iPad and using the internet, over one third stated that they were not confident at all, highlighting a need for access to skills and capacity building in these areas.

While capacity is fairly high, there is limited use of the internet among older people in relation to using online booking and banking systems. This may in part be attributed to concerns around internet safety, given that confidence levels are generally healthy.

While broadband coverage was generally viewed positively, over one fifth did report poor/very poor/ no coverage, reflective of the rurality of the District and highlighting a key issue in relation to access to services.

## Looking Ahead

Older people were asked about the type of activities and services they would like to see provided in their local community. Feedback can be summarised as follows in order of priority:-

1. Affordable transport and improved public transport
2. Exercise classes including dance and exercise
3. Social functions and activities, including luncheon clubs and befriending
4. Access to health services
5. Maintenance including footpaths

Clearly provision of activities and access to them is a key priority; given the rurality of the Fermanagh and Omagh District this is a challenge which must be addressed in order to ensure that older people can access services and activities which play a pivotal role in health and wellbeing, including overcoming the threat of rural isolation and loneliness.

Respondents were asked how best the voices of older people could be heard. Responses to this very much highlighted the need for local provision and input in the form of local panels and meetings, including meetings in villages across the District while the role and work of SWAP was also noted as being very valuable. These findings reflect feedback from focus groups which identified a clear need for meeting and sharing of information and ideas at the local level among groups in an informal meeting structure. Such a model is reminiscent of the local structures operated by SWAP and interest has been expressed in re-establishing this model.

Feedback also identified a desire for local Councillors to be more involved and articulate the needs of older people while it was felt that simpler funding application processes could be beneficial. Steps have already been undertaken in this regard, with SWAP delivering a pilot grand aid scheme for Council, which is receiving positive feedback.

When asked about the best way of getting older people involved in local plans for the area, responses were put forward as follows in order of ranking:-

1. Local groups, including community and church based groups
2. Local press
3. First hand personal contact/ face to face/ word of mouth
4. Attend local housing schemes
5. Provision of transport
6. Inter-generational programmes

## Summary

The findings from the survey highlight the importance attributed to social interaction and community connections by older people, often underlined by the need to ensure appropriate, affordable and accessible transport connections. There is also a need to address issues with health partners and providers, particularly in relation to the issue of timing of and travelling to specialist appointments.
There is a broad range of activities and groups across the District; accessing these

to their best potential can bring about positive outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing, particularly addressing loneliness and rural isolation which is a key challenge in a rural district such as Fermanagh and Omagh. Learning new skills, including access to skills and capacity building in computer skills can also help address isolation while contributing to health and wellbeing through learning new skills. The existing network of groups and activities provides a solid foundation from which to move forward with contributing to an Age Friendly District, building connections and sharing experiences.

**Consultation with Older People (Focus Groups)**

**This section outlines key consultation findings, informed by a series of five workshops which were attended by over sixty older people and carried out across the District in April 2018. These focus groups had input from urban and rural based residents, being held in Omagh, Enniskillen, Trillick, Derrygonnelly and Newtownbutler. Groups were asked about their views on how best to make the District Age Friendly and the types of issues which should be addressed by any strategy and action plan.**

## Transport

Given the rurality of the Fermanagh and Omagh District, transport was a major issue of discussion. Concerns were expressed about accessibility and affordability of transport by both groups and individuals, highlighting the importance of the issue and its cross-cutting impact across all areas of the strategy and action plan.

Discussion took place around rural community transport with a desire expressed to explore potential for co-ordinated provision between the Fermanagh and Omagh legacy Council boundaries, including the possibility of making booking systems and route planning more user friendly. Some concern was expressed by groups in relation to drivers aged 70+ no longer being able to drive community mini buses – to clarify in relation to Community Transport Self-drive Group Hire, any driver aged over 70 should be named on the Insurance Policy and a copy of their license forwarded to the insurance company.

The cost of private transport was an issue in some areas, although some town based groups reported good working relationships with taxi operators, resulting in more affordable options. The issue of public transport to hospitals and other public buildings was raised frequently across the District while wheelchair accessible transport was a particular concern. This reflected survey findings where 44% of respondents felt a major challenge faced by ageing was accessing specialist appointments. The challenges facing volunteer drivers were also noted with some groups highlighting their concerns that drivers aged over 70 may no longer be eligible to drive community mini buses.

## Health

A number of health-based issues were raised in relation to access. These took the form of physical access to GP surgeries (lack of parking at Lisnaskea; footpath outside surgery in Derrygonnelly being in poor condition) and also issues in securing GP appointments. There were mixed experiences in relation to the latter - some positive, some less so. In some areas there were no issues securing an appointment quickly while others had a longer wait.

What there was consensus on, however, was the issue of travelling to Belfast or Altnagelvin for specialist appointments in the early morning. Concerns were also raised about the new hospital in Omagh, including inaccessibility of the set down area, raising awareness that car parking fees can be validated in some cases, lack of seating in GP waiting rooms and lack of pharmacy. These are issues which can be highlighted to Community Planning partners and fed back to Western Health and

Social Care Trust.

With regards to carers and caring it was felt that carers were too limited in the tasks which they can carry out and visits were too timebound. The shortage of carers overall was noted as was the fact that many people would like more time for conversation and company. This reflects the overall tone of the consultation with older people which identified loneliness and the need for social interaction and community connections as major issues.

### Housing
This emerged as an area of some concern. There is a clear lack of housing in the District for its older population in the form of single level two bedroom units. Consultees expressed support for housing projects which facilitate independent living within an overall supported environment, similar to the Fold model. With regards to some housing association residences, concerns were expressed that residents with substance abuse issues are moving into these units and this may present issues for older residents, particularly if the trend continues. Older people expressed a desire to remain in their own communities where possible; given the rurality of the Fermanagh and Omagh District which sees many dispersed rural areas designated as open countryside there is a concern that this may present challenges in accommodation provision.

### Information and Communication
The main sources of information were identified as SWAP communications and Council's Community Newsletter. Both these sources were felt to be useful and valued. SWAP is regarded as a valuable source of information for example on topics such as Make the Call service to check benefit entitlements. Local press and radio in addition to information leaflets and word of mouth were also noted while social media was less used.

The idea of an awareness raising week of activities to promote Age Friendly was very positively received with groups seeing this as a valuable opportunity to both learn more about various programmes and services in addition to sharing their own work and activities with others. Village notice boards were suggested as one way of circulating information to local people through notices and leaflets. In terms of communication, direct and personal contact was highly valued, again highlighting the importance of maintaining and promoting social connections.

### Capacity
This is a significant issue for some groups and stems from the fact that many people in their sixties or seventies do not really relate to or identify with older people's groups while others have limited free time to participate as a result of work and/or caring for grandchildren and/or parents. This has a knock-on effect on the membership profile of groups and may hamper their growth and development. In some cases very practical challenges are encountered such as physical effort in setting up room and moving furniture or equipment while in other instances membership may be dwindling.

This can be addressed in some part through information and awareness raising activities and programmes which can give groups opportunity to promote their activities and look at ways of broadening appeal and growing membership. Increasing the volunteer base may also entail reaching out to other community based organisations to work together and illustrating how retired people can put their skills to very practical use. Many respondents are also involved in community associations and church based groups, opening up potential for joint working, including inter-generational working.

## Terminology

The language around older people and older people's group can also contribute to new members not coming forward. Some groups have overcome by changing their name away from references to senior citizens clubs or groups. Again, an awareness raising week or programme can help address this issue and promote the message that groups have a wide and very varied programme of activities, working to change the perceptions of older people's groups as "senior citizens clubs".

## Activities

Groups across the District are engaged in a wide variety of activities with exercise and physical activity classes being particularly popular. It was felt that taster sessions could be a useful way of groups trying out new ideas without having to commit to a time bound programme e.g. 6/8 weeks. Activities which can help mental health such as singing were noted as being valuable.

Survey respondents also identified outings and functions as the type of activity they would like to see provided in their local community, offering the opportunity to meet people and get out more.

## Local Clusters

In the course of the series of workshops, it became clear that groups have a wealth of knowledge and skills which they can share with other groups. Groups and volunteers participating in the consultation were keen to find out about each other's work and share their experiences. It was felt that the format of local clusters previously employed by SWAP had much to offer groups, facilitating informal discussion and conversations which may not otherwise take place.

Creating space and opportunity for informal contact and discussion can bring about important outcomes around wellbeing and inclusion as participants share experiences, concerns and support. SWAP expressed strong support for the re-establishment of local clusters, recognising the value these can have at grass roots level. It was felt that space for this type of organic conversation can be lost in pursuit of outputs and outcomes set out by funders and that there should be more recognition of the value of social contact and interaction, particularly given the threat of loneliness faced by many older people. This is supported by survey findings which found that the main benefits older people got from attending groups and activities were making friends, reducing loneliness and staying connected with their local community. Survey findings also identified that outreach and local meetings are the best way of ensuring older people's voices are heard across the District, in addition

to SWAP and engaging with local elected representatives.

## Access and Infrastructure

A number of concerns were raised around access and the need for buildings to promote accessibility, including accessible toilets and signage. It was felt that efforts should be made to make buildings age and dementia friendly. With regards to the public realm, issues around kerbs, footpaths, size of parking bays and timing of pedestrian crossings were all raised; it was noted that a SWAP representative will be involved in consultation on the Enniskillen public realm scheme and this appointment was welcomed. Practical assistance for people in putting out bins for collection was also raised; this process has been time consuming and it was felt clearer Council communication was needed.

## Safety

Generally older people reporting feeling safe in the District and many had availed of home safety resources through the Policing and Community Safety Partnership.

## Summary

The findings from the survey and focus groups highlight the importance attributed to social interaction and community connections by older people, often underlined by the need to ensure appropriate, affordable and accessible transport connections. There is also a priority need to address issues with health partners and providers, particularly in relation to the issue of timing of and travelling to specialist appointments. This need reflects the crosscutting nature of many issues impacting older people and the Age Friendly agenda, including health, transport and communication.

There is a broad range of activities and groups across the District; promoting and supporting these to their best potential can bring about positive outcomes in relation to health and wellbeing, particularly addressing loneliness and rural isolation which is a key challenge in a rural district such as Fermanagh and Omagh. Learning new skills, including access to skills and capacity building in computer skills can also help address isolation while contributing to health and wellbeing through learning new skills. The existing network of groups and activities provides a solid foundation from which to move forward with contributing to an Age Friendly District, building connections and sharing experiences.

As always, engaging with hard to reach individuals presents challenges. In the context of an Age Friendly agenda, this may best be achieved through ensuring open and accessible communication and information channels which other family members can avail of, sharing information with older members and also supporting groups to reach out and remain connected to those older residents in their locality who may not wish to be actively engaged but are keen to be connected in some way to the wider community through local groups or informal community networks.

**Stakeholder Consultation**

**In addition to consulting with local groups and older people, the strategy and action plan was also informed by consultation with stakeholders, service providers and organisations working in the Age Friendly arena. Feedback is presented below under the thematic priorities selected by the World Health Organisation.**

## Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings

The need to ensure that facilities and buildings accommodate the needs of older people was highlighted through the stakeholder consultation. This included raising awareness and promoting Age and Dementia Friendly services, including branding on buildings, display of Age and Dementia Friendly resources and staff awareness. It was felt that ensuring staff are dementia friends, including actions such as wearing dementia friendly pins, could support people living with dementia access public buildings and services.

## Social Participation

Building capacity is particularly important for all groups, including those working with older people, as administrative requirements increase, including General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Charities Commission and increasingly complex funding environments. Supporting groups through formal and informal approaches, including sharing experience between groups and working with SWAP, can support groups to sustain or grow membership, including outreach to the wider community.

Organisations such as Local Rural Support Networks can also support actions in this area, using their existing skills and experience to assist groups and highlighting the benefits of a strategic approach to developing an Age Friendly District through co-operation and shared learning, including best practice.

With regards to working with groups, the need to ensure that the location of the group is dementia friendly was also highlighted, in addition to encouraging groups to become dementia friends so that members feel encouraged and supported after a diagnosis.

## Respect and Social Inclusion

One important mechanism for building inclusion is through inter-generational work in areas such as local history. There are resources in place which can add significant value to project actions, including Libraries NI heritage resources in Omagh, Enniskillen and the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies Libraries. In addition, initiatives such as Linking Generations can provide opportunities for different generations to learn from, support, meet and enjoy each other.

It was also suggested that inter-generational work could take the form of schools partnering with care homes, in addition to learning from work in other areas such as that undertaken by Linking Generations NI's use of Dementia Friendly Communities workshops.

## Civic Participation and Employment

Stakeholder consultation highlighted the value of older people remaining involved in civic life and exploring how best they can contribute through sharing skills and experience. Much support was noted for mentoring programmes where retired business people could work with new business owners, sharing their own business skills and experiences to benefit new or inexperienced entrepreneurs or mentor young people, including under-achievers to realise their full potential and explore self-employment opportunities.

Actions such as these will engage the local business community, further increasing awareness of the Age Friendly strategy and establishment of the District as an age friendly region. In addition, such measures will contribute to personal growth and mental wellbeing of both older people and those they are sharing their skills with through contributing to society and gaining confidence.

Age NI's Project Retain is another opportunity for volunteers, seeking to recruit Age NI Peer Facilitators to assist with the facilitation of focus groups involving a range of nursing staff across all five Health Trusts to identify and discuss those issues which are of key concern to older people who are receiving health and social care services.

Men's Sheds were also identified as an important mechanism for participation; Northern Ireland Housing Executive has worked with Men's Sheds in Omagh and Enniskillen providing funding, via Community Cohesion, to assist both initiatives in project development as part of its wider work to support community development and regeneration. This is indicative of the work which can be undertaken to promote an Age Friendly district through partnership working.

## Communication and Information

It was felt that opportunity exists to build community connections through a variety of approaches – text, email, newsletter, group memberships and existing mechanisms such as Age NI's monthly signposting service.

It was recognised that terminology is a key issue and suggested that age proofing of materials should be undertaken to ensure that information is clear and jargon free. In terms of development of materials, Age NI have many examples of materials for communication which can be used as templates, thus avoiding duplication and providing some consistency in efforts to promote positive ageing.

In terms of skills development, scope exists to work in partnership with a range of programmes including the PLACE-EE transnational project partnership which seeks to improve the quality of life for and build capacity of older people and the Libraries NI Digital Literacy project which will provide basic level IT learning opportunities for adults in group and one-to-one settings across the public library network with particular focus on people from deprived areas, people from rural areas, people with disabilities and older people.

## Community Support and Health Services

Consultation recognised that this action area is of significance to older people and their families. Co-ordination of provision and dissemination of information were identified as being integral to fully addressing this issue. The Community Navigator model operated by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust was identified as an effective approach to this issue. This is a partnership approach between the Trust, Age NI and community partners and funded by NHSCT and Public Health Agency. The service assists older people in the Trust area to access local services and activities, to improve their health, wellbeing and independence and supports NHSCT staff by providing links to the community and voluntary sector.

Actions undertaken include referrals from individuals, healthcare professionals and the community and voluntary sector for people over the age of 50, supporting the sustainability and capacity of community groups including information sharing and signposting in addition to promoting awareness of older people's issues through participation in relevant forums, events and consultations.

Models such as this and the Public Health Agency Five Ways to Wellbeing offer structured approaches to health and wellbeing, beneficial for both older people and their families. In terms of other models of best practice, Milesian Manor in Magherafelt and Ballymena Health Centre were identified as examples of good practice in terms of responding to the needs of older people in both design and service provision.

It was suggested that Council staff could be encouraged to attend Dementia Friendly Communities training. Staff could then opt to avail of further training to become a Dementia Friendly Champion. The champion would highlight the needs of people living with dementia and deliver workshops to staff ensuring the programme's sustainability.

Partnership working under this theme is also reflected under efforts to promote Community Safety, including joint working on Neighbourhood Watch schemes and Community Safety Wardens by partners including Policing and Community Safety Partnership and Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

## Housing

It was recognised that a partnership approach is required to address housing, NIHE recognising the need to work within the community in responding to anticipated population growth among older people. Work currently underway includes the Supporting People initiative, which sees twenty accommodation based service schemes benefiting 340 service users being provided throughout the District during 2017/18.

NIHE analysis of the overall social housing waiting list and allocations information for households in FODC found that at March 2018 18.3% of applicant households on the waiting list in housing stress were older persons and 18.7% of allocations were made to older person households over one year to March 2018.

With regard to housing schemes, suggestions included encouraging age proofing of residents and developing policies around residents' conduct in addition to establishing Residents' Support groups to provide feedback. The needs of people living with Alzheimer's should also be considered, incorporating Dementia Friendly design when housing is redecorated/refurbished (for further reference: https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/making-your-home-dementia-friendly).

Consultation with older people identified a need for support with basic household tasks which could potentially be addressed through provision of a handyman scheme.  Bryson Energy currently operates a service for over 60s living in the Belfast area, which has been developed in response to calls to help older people with small repair jobs around the home, providing a potential model for consideration.

## Transportation

Consultation with groups, individuals and stakeholders reinforced the fact that transport is a cross cutting issue, impacting on areas around health, access to service, in addition to inclusion and participation. The cross-cutting nature of transport is such that while it has been identified as a standalone theme in the Age Friendly strategy, it also offers much potential to contribute to other strategic themes, including Social Participation and Inclusion.  While there are dedicated Transportation outcomes in the Community Plan, there is a clear need to address transport provision in relation to Age Friendly activities and programming, particularly in light of consultation findings which identified loneliness and isolation as major challenges.

In relation to Civic Participation, it was noted by Community Transport operators that opportunity exists to promote volunteering opportunities within Community Transport through initiatives such as the Volunteer Car Scheme to help provide transport to local activities and programmes. Such an action carries the dual benefit of enabling the volunteer to make a contribution to society while older people benefit from access to transport.

Consultation feedback highlighted the challenges of transport for both groups and individuals and the associated impact on access to services and community engagement by older people. Rural Community Transport operators provide a service in the District through Fermanagh Community Transport in Co Fermanagh and Easilift in Omagh (also covering Strabane and Foyle). With regards to community transport it is important that the distinction between group and individual provision is recognised – Rural Community Transport providing transport through the DfI funded Dial a Lift service for individuals living in rural areas who are without access to (public or private) transport to attend services or activities. This service represents the core business of the Rural Community Transport scheme, group hire services being an additional and therefore not core funded service, instead being delivered on a full cost recovery basis.

The issue of Rural Community Transport boundaries for the Dial a Lift service was also raised, as consultation with older people highlighted a desire for improved

coordination across the District (Fermanagh Community Transport covers County Fermanagh while Easilink covers Omagh legacy Council area). These operational boundaries are dictated by The Department for Infrastructure as the funding body; funding cuts mean the resources are not available for travel across the new Council boundary as a whole - this is one area where Community Planning can explore options for co-ordination with its transport partners.

## Pensioners' Parliament feedback

**Strategy development was also informed through analysis of feedback from the Pensioners' Parliament held in Enniskillen in April 2018. Three quarters of those attending had an email address and almost half (48%) on Facebook, while 82% were members of an older person's group indicating good levels of interaction.**

There was a strong feeling that Council should engage more with older people, over three quarters being of the view that this is currently not happening. When asked about awareness levels of Council services and initiatives for older people, 40% felt they knew less than two years ago and 43% reported they knew the same as two years ago. These findings would suggest that there is scope for Council to increase awareness levels of services and opportunities, lending weight to the need for awareness raising events and activities.  At a regional level, 61% were of the view that the collapse of the Assembly had negatively impacted on their quality of life, further highlighting the need for locally driven initiatives focussing on older people.

When asked if they felt they had ever been discriminated against, responses were mixed: 45% stated Yes, 49% No and 6% were unsure. Three quarters felt NI Departments were not doing enough to reduce fuel poverty, with one third of respondents reporting that they had had to cut back on essentials in order to heat their home. Clearly therefore, addressing fuel poverty is a priority issue. In relation to health service provision, 65% of older people did not feel that they had experienced health care improvement as a result of service transformation.

Almost one quarter of respondents (23%) reported feeling lonely a few times a week while almost two thirds (64%) reported that their concerns about being a victim of crime were of a similar level to that of two years ago. Over half (54%) had previously heard of the ScamWiseNI initiative previously.

Attendees were asked to list their top concerns and responses were as follows:

| CONCERN | RESPONSE |
| --- | --- |
| Access to health and social care | 72.84% |
| Transport | 70.37% |
| Keeping warm | 50.62% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Food Prices | 33.34% |
| Info on benefits/ entitlements | 30.86% |
| Fear of crime | 29.63% |
| New technology | 29.63% |
| Suitable housing | 24.69% |
| Lack of respect | 23.46% |
| Age discrimination | 22.22% |
| Isolation | 22.22% |
| Elder abuse | 18.52% |
| Not enough money | 17.28% |
| Loneliness/ boredom | 13.58% |
| Access to education/ training | 13.58% |
| Employment issues | 4.94% |
| Other | 4.94% |

These findings reinforce the focus groups and surveys informing the Age Friendly strategy and action plan and in particular highlights the importance of the cross cutting themes of access to health and transport, these being especially important in a rural District such as Fermanagh and Omagh.

# Notes