

# Age Friendly Towns | A Guide

Age Friendly Ireland





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# Foreword



As life expectancy increases, the need to ensure that Ireland becomes a great country in which to grow old is increasing too.

Having citizens who are empowered to participate in the development of their communities, both rural and urban, is central to the new model of local governance and service delivery.

Age Friendly Alliances in every city and county in Ireland are now bringing together diverse organisations, groups, services and businesses to streamline their work, with the expressed interests and needs of older people at their heart.

It is recognised that where we live – our immediate physical, social and cultural environment – impacts hugely upon how we live. Under the aegis of the Age Friendly City and County Alliances community groups and individuals are therefore coming together to form Age Friendly Town Action Groups to complement the higher level city and county approach and to make our towns, villages and neighbourhoods more age friendly.

Very often simple things will improve everyone's quality of life. Secure neighbourhoods are safe for children, youth and older adults. Barrier free buildings and streets enhance the mobility and independence of both younger and older persons with disabilities. The whole community benefits from the participation of older persons in volunteer work and civic activities.

Age Friendly Ireland sees this document as a source of very practical guidance for those involved in setting up an Age Friendly Programme at town, village or neighbourhood level. The guide takes readers through the key stages involved in setting up such a Programme while the appendices include a series of further supportive templates and references.

Our joint vision, our ambition is to make Ireland a great country in which to grow old. If we all work together across our towns, villages and neighbourhoods we can do it.

**Brendan Kenny**

*Chair, Age Friendly Ireland  
Deputy Chief Executive, Dublin City Council*





# Acknowledgements

This resource would not have been possible without significant input from across the Irish Age Friendly sector and beyond. We would like to thank and acknowledge all contributors to this toolkit.

The toolkit has been informed by the on the ground experience of those towns, villages and neighbourhoods that have participated in the Age Friendly Towns Programme across 2014-2015. We would like to thank and acknowledge all of the many people who have helped develop these Age Friendly Town Programmes.

We would also like to thank each of the Town Planners who facilitated these towns' programmes across 2014 and who shared their knowledge and expertise with us as part of a series of fact finding interviews. This input has greatly informed and enhanced the toolkit.

Both this toolkit and the Age Friendly Towns Programme are indebted to the pioneering work undertaken by the Louth Age Friendly County Programme in supporting the development of Ardee, Co. Louth as the first specific Age Friendly Town in Ireland. This experience has been a key point of reference for the many towns across Ireland who have now taken on such an approach.

In particular, Age Friendly Ireland gratefully acknowledges the philanthropic funding support provided for this toolkit, without which the development of this resource would not have been possible.

Roslyn Molloy

Researcher and Toolkit Author

Aisling Costello

Age Friendly Ireland  
Head of Projects and Age Friendly  
Towns Programme Manager





# Introduction

## Well done!

By opening this toolkit you have taken the first step towards making your town a great place for people to live and grow old in. Following the steps in this toolkit will enable your town to join a global network of towns, neighbourhoods and cities that meet the World Health Organisation's age friendly standards.

You'll be joining a great movement in Ireland. Large towns, including Letterkenny, Carlow and Cavan, have run the programme, as have smaller towns and villages, like Mohill and Foxford. Neighbourhoods such as Limerick North Side and Waterford Sacred Heart Neighbourhood have already taken part, as well as urban villages like East Wall and Crumlin. Throughout this toolkit the programme is referred to as Age Friendly Towns. But the programme is not limited to towns, and is open to all communities. See page 1 for a full list of the places in Ireland which are already part of the programme.

Your town can join the global age friendly movement which is enabling older people all over the world to contribute to their communities. It's all based on a very simple philosophy:

**"If you design for the young you exclude the old but if you design for the old you include everyone"**

If we follow that simple rule, many more people will be able to stay living in their communities, and maintain and enhance the quality of their lives, as they grow older.

Young or old, we all want the same things: to be listened to and taken seriously, to be able to work or volunteer, enjoy a good social life, and have access to good information and healthcare. Neighbourliness, a sense of belonging, feeling safe, feeling valued. Age Friendly Towns make it possible for everyone to achieve that kind of life.

In this toolkit Age Friendly Ireland has put together all the processes, practices and tools which it has developed since the start of the Age Friendly Towns Programme in 2013. We hope that the toolkit will make it easy for local communities and local authorities to work together to become world-class Age Friendly Towns.

True, it will take some effort. Some of the steps are simple. Some are more ambitious. Not every step will be suitable for every town, but Age Friendly Ireland has already seen how towns and communities have become truly age friendly by following this proven plan.

Stay in touch with us. Let us know what has worked best for you.

Enjoy using the toolkit.

Good luck!

## How to use this toolkit

The toolkit offers practical advice on how to run an Age Friendly Towns Programme. It applies to towns, villages and distinct urban areas.

The toolkit outlines the stages and steps involved in creating an Age Friendly Town. It explains what to do and what information to collect, as well as how to find out what local older people see as the key issues which need to be improved. The toolkit contains questionnaires that you can use to collect information, guidance on how to carry out walkability audits, advice on how to let the local community know what you are doing, samples of action plans and templates that you can use to help you to write up your findings.

The toolkit is laid out in **seven sections**:

- The one you are reading now, which introduces the Age Friendly Towns Programme, and describes what an Age Friendly Town is, what is involved in running the Programme, and what supports are there to help you.
- The next four sections describe the four stages of the Age Friendly Towns Programme. The key steps in each stage are explained in detail, with links to the examples, templates, tools and questionnaires which you can find in the appendices.
- A Frequently Asked Questions section provides answers to some of the questions you may have.
- The Appendices contain copies of questionnaires, sample letters, examples, and much more. Everything in the appendices relates to a step in the toolkit.

## Why now?

Populations are getting older all over the world. That includes Ireland. The 2011 Census shows that 11.6% of the population (that's nearly 536,000 people) are over 65. That marked a rise of 14% from 2006, while the overall population grew by only 8%. The over-85s increased by a striking 22% during the same period. The Central Statistics Office projects that more than one out of every four people living in Ireland in 2046 will be aged 65 or over. The number aged 85 and over is set to quadruple in the same period (Department of Health, 2012).

Now is the time to prepare for this major change. Through Age Friendly Ireland initiatives, Ireland can rise to the challenges that lie ahead in a positive way and improve the lives of older people now and into the future.

## Where did the Age Friendly concept come from?

The Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme is part of a worldwide movement, inspired by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which is enabling older people to contribute to their localities and communities on every continent. The results are positive ageing, better cities and counties, and more relevant and effective local government, service delivery and business opportunities. The WHO defines an age-friendly community as one in which all organisations, and everyone from all walks of life:

- recognises diversity among older people
- promotes the inclusion of older people
- values their contribution to community life
- respects their decisions
- anticipates and responds flexibly to ageing-related needs and preferences.

Ireland's Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme is part of this worldwide initiative which aims to make sure that as we age, we can all:

- have a real say in what happens in our own lives and what happens in the areas in which we live
- enjoy good health and excellent services
- live in a safe environment
- participate fully in everything that is going on in our communities, cities and counties.

Dundalk in County Louth was one of the original 33 cities in the world that took part in the development of the WHO Age Friendly Programme in 2007, and Louth was the first county to launch a county-wide Age Friendly Programme. Since then the programme has expanded rapidly, with all local authorities in Ireland committed to participating in the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme.

In 2014 Age Friendly Ireland produced the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Handbook which provides practical guidance on how to set up an Age Friendly Programme. You can access it at <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/resources/afccp-2014-handbook-resources/>

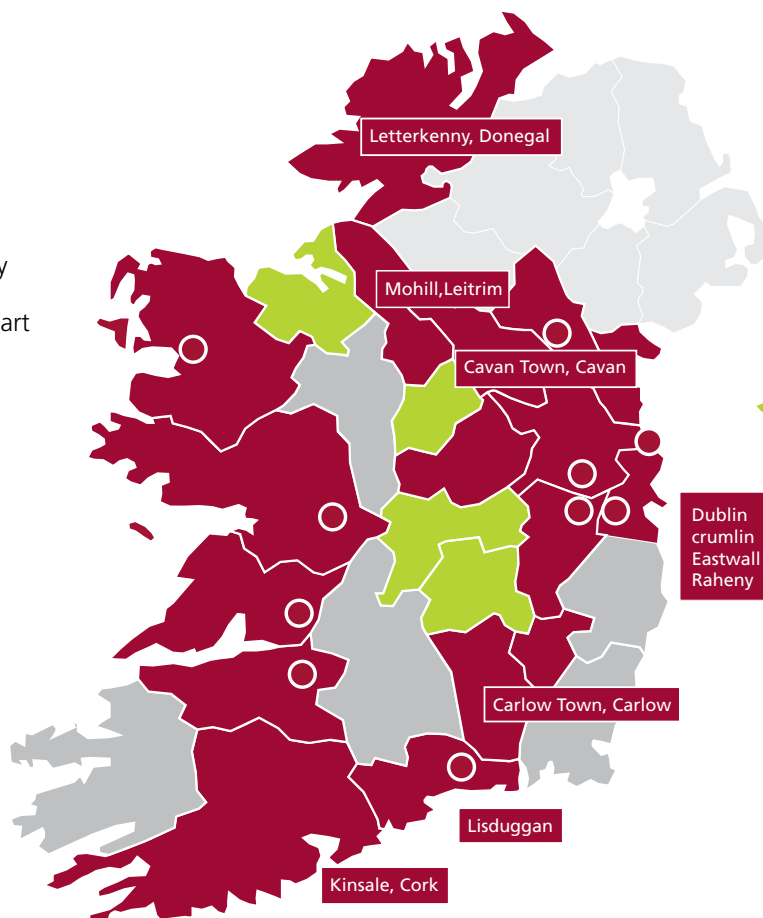


## Which towns are already Age Friendly?

At the time of writing this toolkit 22 Irish towns were involved in the Age Friendly Towns Programme. When we write the next edition we hope that there will be many more, and that your town will be among them!

The following is a list of the towns that have already ran the Age Friendly Towns Programme.

Raheny	Castleblayney
East Wall	Ballinasloe
Crumlin	Callan
Mohill	Limerick North
cavan	Waterford INter City
Carlow	Waterford Sacred Heart
Letterkenny	Rathcoole
Kinsale	Naas
Trim	Skerries
Foxford	Waterford
Ardee	



## What is an Age Friendly Town?

An Age Friendly Town is one in which older people are actively involved in social, economic and cultural life and in creating a better local environment, to everybody's benefit. Age Friendly Towns respond to what the older community needs. They come about when older people get together and work with other groups in the community, such as local authorities, health services, transport companies and/or local businesses, to transform where they live to benefit both themselves and the wider community.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) identifies eight Age Friendly themes which define the quality of everyday life for older people. Age Friendly Ireland has added to these by showing what can be achieved, in practical terms, across each of these thematic areas. In this way they can be used in consultations to judge how Age Friendly a town is. The themes and outcomes appear overleaf.

## WHO Age Friendly Themes and Outcomes



These eight themes are represented in the Age Friendly flower logo which appears throughout this toolkit. Each petal represents one of the age friendly themes.

## Why become an Age Friendly Town?

It is an opportunity for towns to develop a strategy that has actual achievable outputs that doesn't require large financial outlays, it is a chance to make all our lives a little bit better.

**Local Authority Engineer,  
Castleblaney, Monaghan.**

By prioritising the participation of older people, Age Friendly Towns improve life for everyone in the community. Many of the key determinants of quality of life are decided at local level, and quite often it is the smaller things that make the difference. The list below includes some simple changes that have come about as part of the Age Friendly Towns Programme and which are really helping to improve everyone's quality of life.

- Connected transport routes, linking people to where they need to go
- Age friendly services, such as restaurants, hotels, post offices, banks, hairdressers and supermarkets, that feature good signage, reasonable noise levels, adequate seating, managed queuing, adequate spaces for trolleys, price tags that can be read...all the little things that make life easier
- Community spaces for people to meet and socialise
- Introduction of an over-65s day at a Citizen Information Office
- Intergenerational activities, such as developing community gardens, where younger and older people can spend time together doing something worthwhile
- Use of community noticeboards, websites and information leaflets to provide appropriate information about local services and events happening in the area
- Plenty of benches in the streets for people to rest on and chat to friends
- Level pavements, free from obstruction, reducing the fear of tripping and falling and enabling more people to feel safe when out and about
- Traffic lights giving sufficient time to cross, and pedestrian crossings where they are needed
- Message in a Bottle scheme which encourages people to keep their personal and medical details in a container in the fridge where it can be found easily in the case of an emergency.

The national Age Friendly Towns Programme supports local, community-driven projects. The local focus means that everyone can experience real change and impact on their lives.



“The Age Friendly Towns Programme gives people a great opportunity to see changes on the ground in a short length of time

The case study below shows what one urban village has achieved through participation in the Age Friendly Towns Programme.

**Aisling Costello,**  
Head of Programmes, Age Friendly Ireland



## East Wall, Dublin 3: An Age Friendly Town

The city village of East Wall is nestled between the North Wall, Fairview and the North Strand and was once the flood basin of the river Liffey. There is a strong sense of place, community and belonging among the people of East Wall, but the end of the boom left many abandoned sites, buildings, brown-field sites and redundant warehousing.

In 2014 the East Wall community took part in the Age Friendly Towns Programme. Through consultation they developed their vision to:

“Enhance the quality of life and health of older people in East Wall.”

From the vision emerged five actions:

**ACTION**  
**1**

### The Physical Environment

The Nascadh Community Development Project, the Men’s Shed, Dublin City Council and the local community cleared and landscaped a large abandoned strip of land that had been used as a ‘fly by’ dump.

**ACTION  
2**

### Education and Training

Following on the success of the environmental clean-up project, 14 older local Men's Shed members were safe pass trained and certified so that they could participate in ongoing community projects in the East Wall area. An added bonus is that the certification enabled the men to apply for jobs as construction workers.

**ACTION  
3**

### Community Park and Garden

East Wall has no green space or parkland. The only green space available for community enjoyment was on Catholic Church property. A multi-agency approach to this challenge proved successful. The local parish priest agreed to the development of a very large green space on the church grounds to be turned into a civic community park and garden with raised flower-beds which facilitate the participation of older people.

**ACTION  
4**

### Inter-generational day

East Wall is a very close-knit community. An inter-generational workshop day aimed to enhance the relationship between younger and older members of the community through designing, and writing verse for, an East Wall community Christmas card.

Local primary school children and the Nascadh Community Development Project worked together on what is now intended to become an annual event.

**ACTION  
5**

### Planning Process, Monitoring of Planning Applications

East Wall missed out on the last building boom and was left with many brown-field sites. This could prove to be a very positive advantage for the Age Friendly Town as Ireland emerges from recession. Planning applications for the area can incorporate community and age-friendly conditions. Enforced by the city's Planning Department area upgrades will incorporate the principles of universal design.



You can find more information, videos, examples and reports on East Wall and other Age Friendly Towns on the Irish Age Friendly website: [www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie)



## What supports are there to help you?

The Age Friendly Towns Programme is one part of the larger Age Friendly Ireland initiative. Each local authority area in the country has signed up to the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme. In each county an Age Friendly Alliance, made up of older people and key representatives of the public, voluntary and community sectors, runs the Age Friendly County Programme. Cooperative working makes sure that things get done. Each Alliance, informed and monitored by an Older People's Forum, is responsible for producing a strategy, based on wide consultation, which details what steps will be taken to improve the county for older people. You can find county strategies on the Age Friendly Ireland website at <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/resources/strategy-documents/>

It is worth looking at your county's Age Friendly County Strategy before embarking on an Age Friendly Town project. The broad actions outlined in the strategy can be localised in your town. If your town plans and activities are endorsed by your county's Alliance and linked with their strategy, you'll have their higher-level support to ensure that your priorities are acted on.

### City or County Age Friendly Alliance

Each city or county programme is led by an Alliance, chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority, comprising senior decision-makers from key public, private and not-for-profit agencies involved in providing supports and services to older people. In most counties this includes the local authority, HSE, Gardaí, VEC/University, Leader Programme, carers' groups, community and voluntary organisations, Chambers of Commerce and the County Enterprise Board (now Local Enterprise Offices). Also at the Alliance table are representatives from Businesses and Service Providers and a representative from the Older Peoples Council. You can find the name of the Chair of your Alliance on the Age Friendly Ireland website at <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/about-the-programme/>.

### Older People's Council

There is a local Older People's Council in each Age Friendly City and County. The Council is open to all older people. Through it older people can raise issues of importance, identify priority areas of need and inform the decision-making process of the City or County Age Friendly Initiative. They also offer a user perspective in monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. Councils aim to be representative of the diversity of the older population in the city or county, linked with local older people's groups and supportive of the participation of the most marginalised. Your Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator (see below) can put you in contact with your county's Older People's Council.

### Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator

Each local authority has an Age Friendly Coordinator who is responsible for integrating the Age Friendly Programme in the County. This person will be able to help and provide advice on the programme. Contact details for your local Age Friendly Coordinator appear on the Age Friendly Ireland website at <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/about-the-programme/>

### Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant

An Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant supports the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programmes of several local authorities. They are there to help you. You can find them on <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/about-the-programme/>

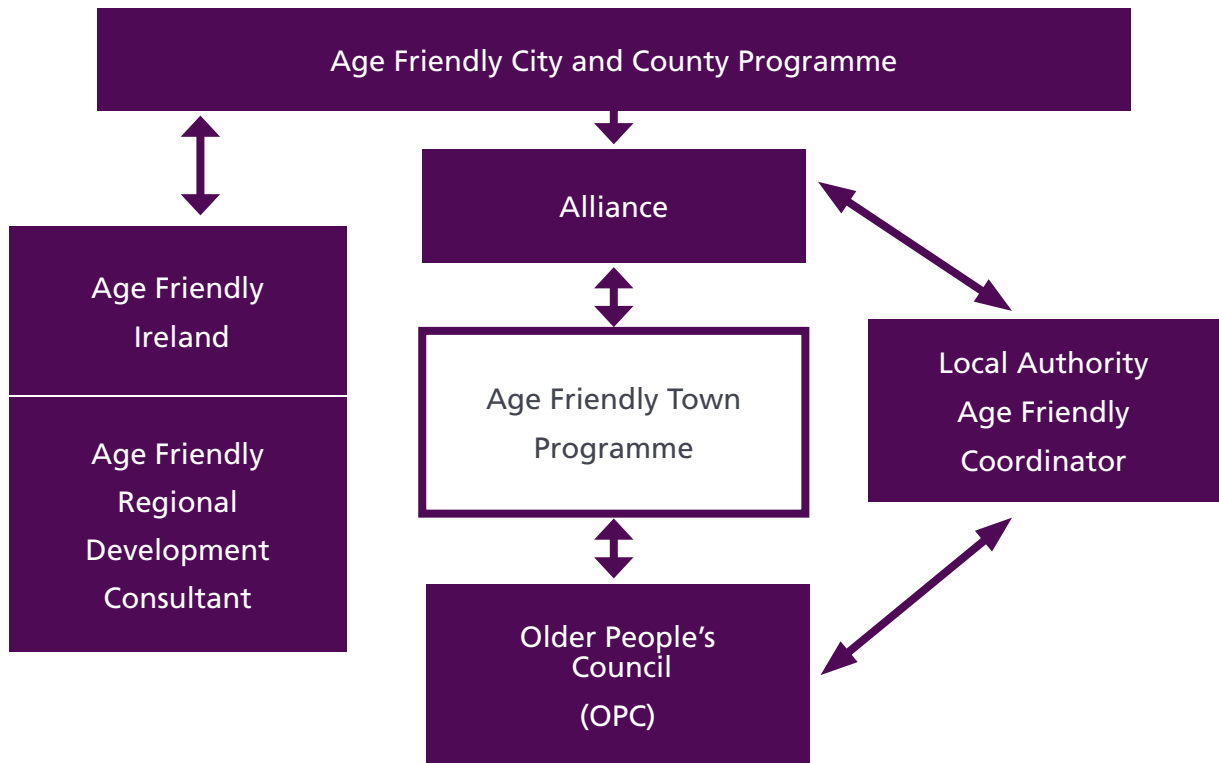
### Age Friendly Ireland

Age Friendly Ireland coordinates the national programme and has experience of running the Age Friendly Town Programme.

#### CONTACT

3 Palace Street  
Dublin 2  
t 01 2226266  
e [info@agefriendlyireland.ie](mailto:info@agefriendlyireland.ie)

The diagram below shows the relationship between the Age Friendly Towns Programme and the other parts of the Age Friendly network.



## Stages in the development of an Age Friendly Town

There are **four steps** in developing an Age Friendly Town:

### 1 Set-Up

- register your interest with Age Friendly Ireland
- form an Age Friendly Town Action Group
- identify the area to be covered
- involve local decision-makers
- engage with your local Age Friendly Alliance
- find out about supports and funding
- tell the community about the programme.

### 2 Audit and Consult

- map the town's assets
- look at existing plans for the town
- consult, using on-street surveys, walkability audits and conversations with key influencers
- collate issues and suggestions for action.

### 3 Plan

- hold public consultations
- write the Age Friendly Town plan.

### 4 Act

- communicate what you are doing
- begin actions
- gain Age Friendly Town recognition
- bask in glory!

1

- Register with Age Friendly Ireland
- Form an Action Group
- Identify Area
- Involve local decision makers
- Engage with the AF Alliance
- Involve the community

2

- Asset map the town
- Collect Data on Current Plans
- Onstreet Surveys
- Walkability Audits
- Consult Key Influences
- Collage Issues

3

- Hold Public Consultations
- Analyse Consultations
- Write Age Friendly Town Plan

4

- Communicate Age Friendly Town Plan
- Begin Implementation
- Review and Monitor Actions
- Gain Age Friendly Town Recognition
- Attend Awards Ceremony



# Stage 1

## Set-up

### Introduction

Under the aegis of the Age Friendly City or County Alliance community groups and individuals can come together to form an Age Friendly Town Action Group to make their town more age friendly.

To be successful you need to:

- know the town well
- be enthusiastic about improving it for older people
- be able to attend meetings and events regularly.

Having a selection of people with different interests and from different sections of the community on the Age Friendly Town Action Group really helps to make the programme successful.

The Age Friendly Towns Programme is active and participatory. It can also be very interesting: you will find out more about your town and get to know what residents really want. Taking part in organised walks to check how accessible the town is for older people, and running public consultations, can be very rewarding, as well as being informative and constructive. The programme is a great way of working with the local authority to put in place much-needed changes.

In Cavan Town older people pointed out that one of the wheelchair-accessible parking bays was on a steep slope, so not suitable for use. The local authority is now reviewing it.

Many people in Cavan also said that it wasn't easy for them to get into town if they didn't have a car. The transport unit in the local authority is now looking at the feasibility of running a shuttle bus into the town centre.

These positive developments may never have happened without the Age Friendly Towns Programme!

The Age Friendly Towns Programme takes about two years to complete. Incorporating the Town actions into the overall Age Friendly City or County Programme workplan will help keep momentum for long term actions.

This part of the toolkit outlines the seven steps in the Set-Up stage of the Age Friendly Towns Programme.

## Step 1



# Register your Age Friendly Towns Programme

Once we decided to set up an Age Friendly Town the knowledge and support of the Age Friendly Office really helped

**Sarah, Mohill**

The first step is to register your interest in running an Age Friendly Towns Programme.

After you register you will be:

- connected with the people within the Age Friendly Ireland who are there to support you
- provided with support materials
- able to use the Age Friendly logo in your communications and on your posters
- provided with technical support when you need it
- able to submit your town for an award at the annual Age Friendly Ireland Awards.

Follow this link to register your town as being interested in starting the programme:  
[www.agefriendlyireland/towns.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland/towns.ie)

## Step 2



# Set-up an Age Friendly Town Action Group

### Why set up an Age Friendly Town Action Group?

Once you have registered and secured the support of the Age Friendly City or County Alliance, the next step is to form a group of people to work on the project, with the common objective of improving the town and making it a better place to for older people to live in. The action group will harness the energy, lead the actions and develop the plan for improving the town. Successful action groups include a broad mix of representatives from the community, including people from local community groups, local retirement groups, businesses and public bodies. The group is expected to meet regularly – about every 4-6 weeks) to run the programme.

### Who to include in the Age Friendly Town Action Group

Experience shows that having people from as many different areas and backgrounds as possible makes the action group very effective. Forming a group of people with different backgrounds means that ideas and expertise – and also the work - can be shared across the group.

It's really important to have representatives from:

- older people's groups, and older people from the general community
- the local authority
- local business interests.

In addition it is great to have:

- a local representative of the HSE
  - a local representative of the Gardaí
  - a local authority planner and/or engineer.
- Other possible Action Group members include:
- representatives of local authority enterprise, arts and/or sports sections
  - representatives of local partnership companies
  - representatives from local nursing or long-term residential care homes
  - other key local community or volunteer groups
  - a local architect.

The Raheny Age Friendly Town Action Group was made up of people from the Older People's Forum, local authority, Tidy Towns committee, local business association, Gardaí, GAA, HSE, local care services and a town planner. This gave the action group access to a wide range of expertise.

Your Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator or Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant can help you with ideas about who to recruit for your action group.

## How to recruit people to the Age Friendly Town Action Group

In Appendix 1 you will find a sample letter inviting people to participate in the action group. You can adapt it to suit. Appendix 2 includes a short presentation on what an Age Friendly Town is. You can use it to explain the process to possible group members.

## Where and when to meet

Think about a suitable age-friendly venue for action group meetings. The library, community centre or local authority might be able to provide a meeting space. Is it accessible to people with mobility impairments; is it easy to reach by public transport; is Wi-Fi available? What's the best time of day to meet?

## How to choose the Age Friendly Action Group chairperson

The Age Friendly Town Action Group in Carlow Town was chaired by Senator Mary White. She was energetic and innovative and has really helped move the Programme along

**Derek Whyte, town planner, Carlow**

Experience shows that a skilled chairperson is crucial for the long-term success of the programme. The tips below will help you to pick the right person.

<b>A good chairperson will:</b>	<b>A good chairperson will not:</b>
Make all members feel valued	Be the person who talks most at the meetings
Keep calm	Make all the decisions
Strive for consensus, using his/her casting vote sparingly	Allow one or two people to dominate meetings
Listen to others	Cut people out of discussions
Encourage new faces onto the committee	Allow meetings to become unproductive
Plan for the future	Make people feel foolish or useless
Make new members feel welcome	Force people to contribute to discussions
Allow others to take responsibility	Lose his/her temper
Know when to stand down	Stay too long

## Age Friendly Town Action Group Terms of Reference

It can be helpful to set out a structure for the Action Group, so that everybody is clear about what is expected. Terms of reference set out the aims and purpose of the group, and the roles of different members. An example of terms of reference for an Age Friendly Towns Action Group appears in Appendix 3.

### Step 3

## How to Identify the Area



An Age Friendly Town could actually be a town, village, neighbourhood or local city area. You will probably already have a good idea of the area that makes sense, but it is useful to define it clearly and specifically. This avoids scope creep and keeps the project focussed.

Appendix 4 contains some suggestions on how to do this. The larger the area, the more complicated and longer the project.

In Letterkenny the boundary was defined by the town's two electoral districts. In Trim the old town council boundary was used, while in Crumlin electoral districts defined the neighbourhood.

### Step 4



## Getting Local Decision-makers on Your Side

Elected representatives can play a vital role in supporting and promoting the Age Friendly Programme, so it is good idea to inform them about the programme at an early stage in the process. Getting them involved early means that they will be more likely to be engaged later on. Write to local councillors, and at later stages consider you can invite them to take part in walkability audits and/or public consultations. Keep them informed, and they will be more likely to be supportive and helpful in getting any actions carried out.

Appendix 5 contains a sample letter to adapt and send to local representatives to tell them about the Age Friendly Towns Programme. The presentation in Appendix 2 could also be useful. Your Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator or Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant can provide relevant support and facilitate introductions.

In Cappamore a local councillor, who is also on the Cappamore development committee, was engaged from an early stage in the Age Friendly Towns Programme. Because of his knowledge of the area and its residents he was instrumental in finding solutions to identified problems. He was able to keep the Age Friendly Towns Programme on the agenda of the local authority, and helped to secure funding for the delivery of particular actions.



## Step 5

# Engaging with your County or City Age Friendly Alliance



Each county in Ireland has already, or is in the process of forming, an Age Friendly Alliance. Each of these Alliances is made up of key leaders from the public, voluntary and community sectors within the community, as well as the local authority Chief Executive. Some Alliances have already completed their strategies and plans for the county. Establishing Age Friendly Towns in their county may be included in their strategy.

By engaging with your county Alliance from an early stage you will get help with:

- identifying potential members for your Age Friendly Town Action Group
- becoming familiar with plans which already exist in the county
- finding out what people have already said in age friendly consultations that might be relevant for your town
- gathering support for your Age Friendly Town Action Plan.

Your Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator will play a key role in connecting the town project with the city or county Alliance.

In Skerries, having Alliance members on board like Fingal County Council, the Education and Training Board and HSE representatives made it easy to get support from their organisations. This support enabled a key action to happen, as this extract from their report shows:

*“Message in a Bottle is a simple scheme that encourages people to keep their personal and medical details in a container that is stored in the fridge. The aim of Message in a Bottle is to give our more vulnerable neighbours and friends the most efficient care possible and ultimately lead to the saving of lives. With completed message bottles readily available to the Emergency Services, vital minutes can be saved when treating patients in the event of an emergency. Fingal County Council has sourced a number of units [8000] through Dublin City Fire Brigade. These bottles were distributed to as many households as possible in Skerries through mobilising local volunteers, students from Skerries Community College, existing religious communities, Skerries Health Centre staff and all known health professionals in the town.”*



## Step 6



# Who can help with funding?

Try to find out if there is funding available to help with the costs of any projects that might be run as part of the Age Friendly Towns Programme, or even the administration costs of running the programme, such as printing, refreshments or room hire. Grant applications often have deadlines, so check these, too. Some possible sources of funding appear below.



For example, in Skerries, a public consultation was held in the Prosper Fingal facility in Piercetown as part of the Age Friendly Towns Programme. The meeting was organised by the Fingal Development Board, and attendees were transported from Skerries Town by a bus provided by Fingal County Council.

### Local Authority Grant Scheme

Local authority municipal grants are available to support community groups and local organisations which want to undertake development projects in their area in conjunction with local authorities. Check your local authority website for more information. Your Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator will also be able to help.

### Other potential sources of funding

Appendix 6 contains a list of other potential sources of funding, though it is not exhaustive and it is worth also searching for other options if needed.

A community garden, with sensory and dementia-friendly features, was developed in Callan, Co Kilkenny as part of the Age Friendly Towns Programme. The development was supported by the County Kilkenny Leader Partnership and local community groups.



## Step 7

# Letting people know about the Age Friendly Towns Programme



Once you have decided that your town is going to work towards becoming an Age Friendly Town, it is a time to start telling people. Use local media such as parish newsletters, local radio or local newspapers or put up posters.

Using the media effectively can really boost the success of the Age Friendly Towns Programme. Here are some potential benefits:

- Attract new action group members and volunteers to take part in consultation or to become involved in actions when agreed
- Attract potential sponsors, for example local hotels and bars have hosted the walkability audit events.
- Letting local people know about the programme will help it to become a truly community-driven initiative
- Publicity can really help the consultation phase. People are more likely to participate in the on-street survey, walkability audits and attend the public consultations if they know about the programme.

In Raheny the Age Friendly Towns Programme was described in the Northside People, while in Trim there was a write-up in the Meath Chronicle. In Cavan and Fofford the Age Friendly Town Action Group put up posters to tell people about the programme. In Carlow and Fofford the programme was discussed on local radio stations.

## What works well?

Successful actions include:

- building relationships with local media by inviting them to briefing sessions or consultations
- use of local notes (in the press) or notices on local radio shows. This is especially useful for advance publicity
- newspapers or parish newsletters publishing photos taken during walkability audits or consultations
- local personalities and celebrities, such as local sports stars, launching or publicising events.

## How are you going to present your message?

Tips for working with local media appear in Appendix 8. Press releases are the key

mechanism for getting your message across, as they give journalists a clear message in a useable format. Appendix 8 contains some key pointers for writing press releases, and also includes a sample press release. You can also refer to Task 5 in the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme Handbook on the Age Friendly Ireland website <http://agefriendlyireland.ie>



# Stage 2

## Audit and Consult

### Audit: Introduction

The aim of the audit and consult stage is to find out:

- how age friendly your town is
- what plans already exist for your town and what services are currently available
- how the town could be improved for older people
- what solutions people can suggest for dealing with issues in the town.

This part of the toolkit outlines the **six steps** in the Audit and Consult stage of the Age Friendly Towns Programme.

### Step 1

#### Mapping the Town's Assets



When out doing the on-street survey it was really useful to know which community services were already available, as some people were asking for ones that existed, such as a community café. The issue here was people being better informed.

Roslyn Molloy

Creator of the Age Friendly On-Street Survey

Every town has many services and facilities. Along with its residents, these are a town's assets. Knowing what they are, where they are and what else is needed is a vital part of building an age friendly plan.

List all the main services available in the town, and the key people involved in these services. As well as telling you what resources already exist in your town, listing its assets helps to get an idea of who to consult with, what services are available and what is missing. Your Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator can help you with appropriate contact names and numbers. The template in Appendix 9 can help you to organise the information and point to what you might look for in your town. There is also an example of an asset map of Ardee, undertaken as part of the Age Friendly Towns Programme, in Appendix 11.

A useful website provided by the HSE shows the location of their services: <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/>. By zooming in on your town on the map function you can see the location of HSE-provided services in the town.

Knowing where services are located can also help when choosing a route for the walkability audit.

## Step 2



# Finding out what plans already exist for your town

Before embarking on developing an age-friendly programme for your town it is useful to find out what plans already exist for the area and what funding has already been committed. It is also useful to know if research has been done with the older population in the town already. In-depth consultation may have been carried out recently as part of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme, and some of this could relate to your town.

### Local Authority Development Plans

Every town and area in Ireland is included in a local authority's County Development Plan. You can look up your local authority website to find the County Development Plan which applies to your area.

Many towns also have a Local Area Plan (LAP), also created by the local authority. Understanding what is in these plans might save you time and effort later on.

### Age Friendly County Strategy

After a local authority has signed up to the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme it undertakes a programme of consultation with older people and other key stakeholders in the city/county. From the results it then draws up a strategy on how to improve the city/county for older people. Reading your city/county's strategy will tell you what people in your city/county have said about what it is like to live there and what types of things could be improved. Not all counties have completed their strategies, but once they have they are available on the Age Friendly website: <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/resources/strategy-documents/>

### Department of the Environment

The Department of the Environment has responsibility for developing the relationship between the state and the community and voluntary sector. The Department of the Environment's website is useful to consult for information on what community and voluntary activities currently exist in the town: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/>

### Tidy Towns

A very useful group, whose work relates to that of the Age Friendly Towns Programme, is the local Tidy Towns committee. The Tidy Towns website contains a list of local contacts: [www.tidytowns.ie/links.php?id=65](http://www.tidytowns.ie/links.php?id=65)

The Volunteering Ireland website also lists many of the Tidy Towns in Ireland, along with other local volunteering opportunities: [www.volunteer.ie](http://www.volunteer.ie)

### Consult: Introduction

Before you can make a plan you need to find out how Age Friendly your town is at the moment. The best way to do this is by talking to people, using the age friendly themes and outcomes as prompts for discussion. Using these will also help in sorting and prioritising actions at a later stage when the Action Group come to develop an Age Friendly Town Action Plan.

### WHO Age Friendly Themes and Outcomes

#### Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

To be enabled by the built and social environment and to feel and be safe at home and out and about.

#### Transportation

To get where we want to go when we want to.

#### Housing

To stay living in our own homes and communities.

#### Social Participation:

To participate in social, economic and public life.

#### Respect and Social Inclusion

To be truly valued and respected.

#### Civic Participation and Employment

To continue to learn, develop and work.

**Communications and Information**

To have the information we need to lead full lives.

**Community Support and Health Services**

To lead healthier and active lives for longer.

The Age Friendly Towns Programme has developed and tested four different ways of finding out what the community thinks. All **four** are important steps in the programme. They are :

**1 On-street survey**

This is a short survey or questionnaire, asking older people what they think about the town.

**2 Walkability audit**

Groups of people, most of them older people, walk specific routes in the town and rate what was good and what could be improved along the way.

**3 Interviews with Key Influencers**

Conversations with people who have a good insight into specific issues or services that impact on older people in the town, such as the community garda, the public health nurse and community service providers like meals on wheels.

**4 Public Consultation**

After the first three steps are completed, the Action Group holds a 'town hall' meeting to discuss the findings and what action needs to be taken to put the recommendations in place.

## Step 3

# On-Street Survey



Consultation is at the heart of the Age Friendly Towns Programme. On-street surveys are an easy way of gathering the views of people in the town. As well as being a valuable method of finding out what the issues currently are, on-street surveys can also form the basis for future improvements in the town for people.

All that is involved is that you stop people in a busy place (such as the main street, the entrance of a shopping centre, outside the post office) and ask them a few questions about the town. The questionnaire takes about five or six minutes to complete. There is also a self-completion questionnaire that you can use to gather the views of people who might not be out and about.

The aims of the on-street survey are to:

- find out how age friendly people think the town is
- provide pointers about what could be improved
- find out what is really important to people
- reach people who might not necessarily attend other forms of public consultation
- provide information that is useful for creating a draft action plan.

The on-street survey was tested in eight towns in 2014. It proved extremely useful in gathering information in an easy, accessible and user-friendly way. There are two versions of the questionnaire in the appendices: one for on-street interviews (Appendix 12) and one for self-completion (Appendix 13). These questionnaires are officially approved as part of the Age Friendly Towns Programme. If your town wants to be recognised as an Age Friendly Town, these are the surveys to use.



## How many people should complete the on-street survey?

The survey is aimed at people aged 55 and over who either live in the town, or visit regularly.

About 50-80 questionnaires are sufficient. At a certain point the same themes recur in people's answers. A lot of repetition shows that enough information has been collected.

East Wall Age Friendly Action Group conducted only 35 on-street surveys as consultation had recently taken place in this area as part of the Dublin City Age Friendly Programme.

## How to collect a Representative Sample

You need to make sure that you collect information that is representative of all the different kinds of older people in the town. You can make sure that you do this by:

- choosing central, busy locations
- being aware of the need to target people of all ages over 55
- getting a good balance of replies of men and women
- using the self-completion questionnaire to access older people who might not be out and about on the street. For example, you could approach local community groups, homecare associations or residential care homes in the town to ask residents to participate
- leaving self-completion questionnaires in places like community centres, post offices or libraries. Make sure it is clear where the questionnaire should be returned to.



In Cavan home care workers brought the questionnaire with them so that older people could complete them during their visits.



Always try to conduct the survey at a time of day when older people are out and about, and near places that they are likely to visit. Be flexible. For example, the plan in Carlow to conduct the survey on the main street. However, in the morning the street was very quiet, so the survey was moved to the nearby shopping centre.

## Plan and prepare

- Conducting the survey can be tiring, so half-day sessions are best. You can always do more than one session.
- It is more successful if two people work together. You can support each other and it creates more impact on the street.
- Understand the contents of the questionnaire; try testing it on friends or family first.
- Think about good locations, such as busy spots with lots of older people passing, such as post offices, churches or shopping centres. Think about the time of day, too. Have a Plan B if you are outside and it starts to rain.
- Get agreement from a shopping centre or other place if you want to survey inside or very nearby.
- Consider asking local churches to mention that the on-street survey will be happening.
- Create a good visual effect on the day. Banners and seating can have real impact. Your Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant can help you with this.

### What you will need on the day:

- 1 chairs and tables
- 2 high-visibility vests
- 3 identification badges
- 4 warm clothes
- 5 pens and clipboards
- 6 copies of questionnaire printed out and/or downloaded on mobile devices.



Ask your local authority if they can provide chairs, tables and high visibility vests.



## Completing the on-street survey on the day

The questionnaire takes no more than six minutes to complete. Some of the people you ask will be in a rush, while others will take the opportunity to chat. Be flexible about whether you ask people to sit and answer the questionnaire, or to stand if they are in a rush.

When asking people to participate think about how you will first approach them, as you don't want them to think you are selling something.

You might start with something like,

*"Hello, Do you know Town X has an age-friendly programme? We are working to try and make Town X a nicer place to grow older in. Could you tell me what the town is like and how it could be improved?"*

Try **not** to start with

*"Have you got a few minutes?"*

people will often answer "no" straight away.

As well as the answers, there is space in the questionnaire to record useful comments or strong opinions as you go along.

## Analysing the results of the on-street survey

Entering the questionnaires onto Survey Monkey will automatically analyse the results, Appendix 13 contains an example of the kind of information you will be able to get. Age Friendly Ireland have set up the survey which can be found here, [www.surveymonkey.net/home/](http://www.surveymonkey.net/home/) your Regional Development Consultant will explain how to access it so that you get useful information that can help you to develop your plan.

## Step 4 Walkability Audit



### What is a walkability audit?

A walkability audit involves a group of people getting together and walking a short, planned route of between 800 metres and one kilometre (half to three-quarters of a mile) in order to assess it for how easy or difficult it is to walk that way.

Walkability audits are a great way of understanding how a town works for older people, and how it could be improved. People assess things like how easy it is to cross the road, if the footpaths are level, if there is any street furniture blocking the way, what the bus stops are like. It is recommended that older people with a mixture of abilities walk the route – some who find it easy to walk, others who for various reasons find it more difficult.



### Why do a walkability audit?

Walkability audits are a fun way of engaging with people and finding out how easy it is to get around the town. It also is a good way for local town planners and road engineers to get involved in the Age Friendly Towns Programme.

In Raheny the local road engineer took part in the walkability audit so he could see for himself how difficult it was to cross the road if the timing of the crossings was too short.

On the Age Friendly website you will find a report produced by Age Friendly Ireland on the walkability audits carried out in eight Irish towns and villages in 2014: [www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie). The report shows how impactful it is to take photos and to capture the real voice of older people through the use of quotes.

Appendix 16 contains an information form for participants in the walkability audit. Appendix 17 includes a copy of the walkability audit that participants are asked to fill at the end of the walk.

Read on below to find out how to run a walkability audit.

## 1 Getting started

From your Action Group choose a walkability coordinator and a couple of people who will support them. The walkability coordinator's job is to plan the walkability audit, get people to take part and prepare the results.

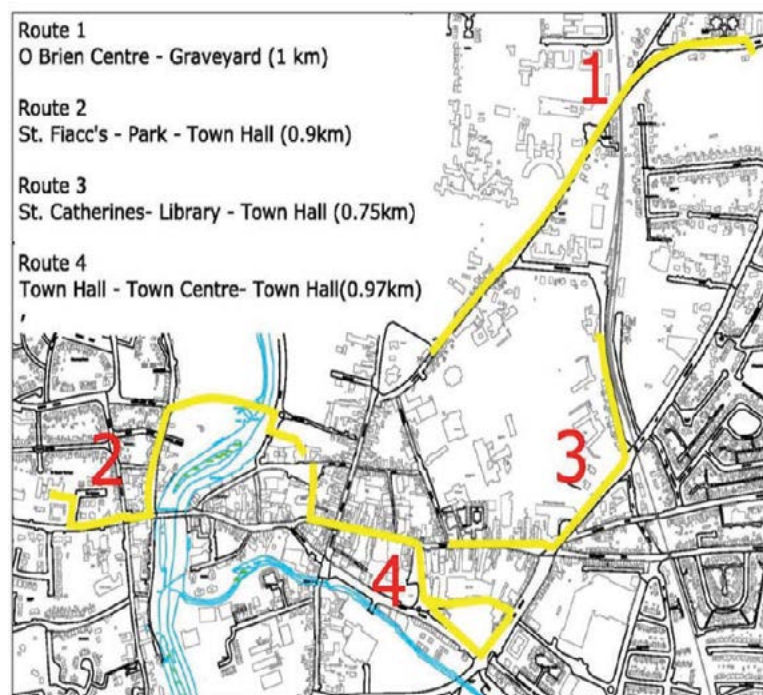
## 2 Choosing the walkability audit route

Choose the area that you will audit. Select one or more routes which you think will have the greatest impact on most older people in the community, such as busy pedestrian routes. Each route should be about 800 metres to a kilometre long. The routes should contain key amenities and services that older people use and visit. Think about including:

- community services
- medical practices and pharmacies
- shopping areas
- cinemas
- leisure facilities
- community centres
- restaurants/cafes
- parks
- playgrounds
- churches
- transport links
- post office
- any area with a high population of older people
- a route that has a high incidence of traffic accidents.



In Sligo town three routes were chosen, each of a different length. On the day, depending on their personal level of ability, participants were able to choose shorter or longer routes.



Walkability Routes - 4 Routes

Route shown as

Once you have chosen the route or routes which make the most sense for your town, create a simple map of the route for those taking part in the audit. Appendix 14 shows the one used in Cavan.



If the route is in a straight line, rather than circular, walk up one side and return on the other side of the road.

### 3 Get influential people involved

As well as getting local people with a range of abilities to do the walk, involving key people from the local authority is critical to the success of the walkability audit. Having the local town planner or road engineer take part in the walkability audit can really help with getting the results of the audit acted upon later. When influential people are involved they can see at first hand the issues that older people face in trying to move around the town.

Collaboration in walkability audits can be very powerful.

### 4 Plan and Prepare

Plan for success:

- Choose a date and time that reflects older people's usage of the routes.
- Book a venue to gather before the audit, and organise refreshments for before and after the walk. It could be a hotel, community centre or even a local authority space that is close to the



Each route requires a leader, note-taker and photographer.

start and end point of the audit routes.

- It is important to include 7-10 people with a range of abilities in each audit walk. Recruit participants from the local community by contacting older people's groups and community groups. Consider advertising the walk through local media.

## 5 Conduct the walkability audit

### How to set up the event

- arrange the room you are meeting in before the walk with a large round table for each of the routes
- organise refreshments (see above)
- provide sufficient route maps, information forms (Appendix 15), questionnaires (Appendix 16), pens and paper for each table
- make sure digital cameras or camera phones are available for each route
- organise a registration table and sign-in form; record participants' contact details and give them each a name tag
- give a short presentation to the group, including:
  - 1 an overview of the project
  - 2 the walkability audit process
  - 3 guidelines for the audit (see Appendix 15 and Appendix 16)

### How to conduct the walkability audit

- Split the participants into groups. Each should have participants with a range of abilities.
- The walkability audit should take between 30 and 60 minutes to complete, depending how the length of the route and the mobility of the participants.
- The leader assigned to each group can highlight potential issues and the notetaker can record participants' comments as they walk along. They can also prompt the participants to share their views whilst walking.
- Assign a person in each group to take photographs on any issue or area for improvement that participants identify along the route.

### After the audit walk

- At the venue, each group can discuss the walk with the leader prompting the discussion and recording views.
- It is important that each participant completes the walkability audit questionnaire (Appendix 16).



Before starting the walk, check if any of the participants needs help completing the questionnaire after the audit. If so, provide somebody to do this. Not everyone can read, or people may have forgotten their glasses

The Walkability Coordinator should make sure that photos and leaders' notes are gathered at the end of the audit.

## 6 Compile a short report

Look at what people told you. Depending on the numbers participating you might decide to carry out a simple pen and paper analysis or to use an analytical tool such as Survey monkey. Entering the questionnaires onto Survey Monkey will facilitate a more ready analysis of the results. Appendix 14 contains an example of the kind of information you will be able to get. Age Friendly Ireland has set up the survey which can be found here, [www.surveymonkey.net/home/](http://www.surveymonkey.net/home/) your Regional Development Consultant will explain how to access it so that you get useful information that can help you to develop your plan. will explain how the questionnaires can be entered and analysed to give you meaningful data.

You can then produce a short report which lists the top issues for each route, illustrated with photos, quotes, qualitative and quantitative data collected during the audit. populated.

## 7 Take action

The results of the walkability audit provide information which will be useful for putting together the overall Age Friendly Town Plan. Some towns may run the walkability audit on its own or as a way of engaging citizens in the getting an Age Friendly Towns programme started. If this is the case then you should consider tackling of the following actions:

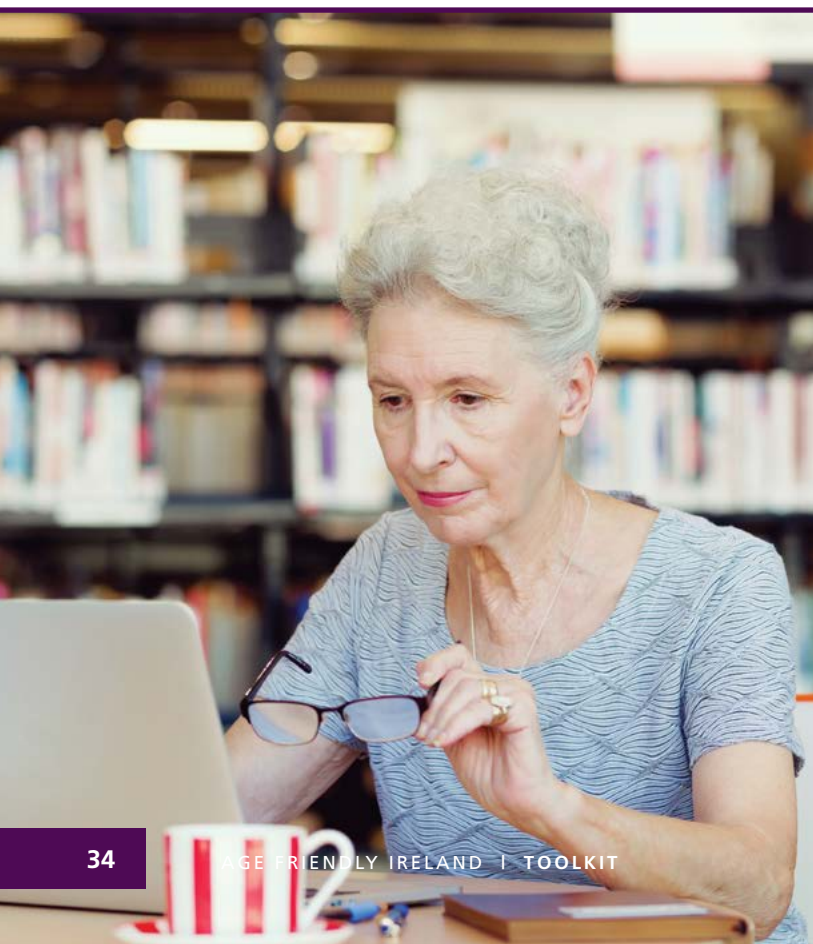
**Thank everybody who participated: send a copy of the short report to everyone who participated in the walkability audit.** This will reassure them that their views were heard and valued.

**Communicate the results of the audit to influential people in the locality:** send a copy of the report to the planners, engineers and age friendly coordinator in the local authority, councillors and local business people.

Consider presenting the **key results to the relevant local authority**, the age friendly coordinator can help organise this. The council meet regularly, and getting on the agenda on their monthly meeting will help share the findings. Presenting to the Director of services and his team, which includes planners and engineers can help get agreement from the Chief Engineer to add the action points to the annual maintenance plan This can address many of the key issues.



The findings of the walkability report in Naas were sent to the Roads Department of Kildare County Council, and were presented to councillors and local businesses. The local authority Chief Engineer built the recommendations into the following year's programme of works.



Send a copy of the report to Age Friendly Ireland for the Age Friendly Website. Contact [info@agefriendlyireland.ie](mailto:info@agefriendlyireland.ie)

## Step 5 Conversations with Influential People



Gathering opinions and views on the age friendliness of the town from community leaders and other influential people is an important part of the consultation stage. When you mapped the town's assets you noted the key local people whose opinions can be important for your work. Some of these people may already be members of the Action Group. To gather their views:

- Invite community leaders and influential people to a special round-table meeting of the Action Group.
- Organise a facilitator and note-taker.
- Discuss each of the Age Friendly Town outcomes, with the aim of finding out what the influential people think about the town and how it could be improved.
- Ask the note-taker to write up what was discussed, including the suggested solutions.

If an important person cannot attend the round-table discussion described above, consider a one-to-one interview.

In Skerries a service providers' session gathered information in response to three

- 1 In Skerries a service providers' session gathered information in response to three Do you think Skerries is a good place for people to grow old in?
- 2 What are the main issues facing older people in Skerries on a daily basis that you have experienced through your professional and personal life?
- 3 What three improvements would you make that would have the greatest effect on the daily lives of older people in Skerries?



## Step 6 Collate Issues and Suggestions for Action



After the on-street surveys, walkability audits and conversations with influential people are completed it is time to look at what has been said. What are the issues which are raised repeatedly in the town?

Write a list of the issues based on the consultation and suggested solutions. It is best to do this under the WHO themes and Age Friendly Outcomes, as this will help in the next stage of the programme.



# Stage 3

## Plan

Now that you have done all the research you can start planning what needs to happen to make the town age friendly. To do this, you pull together the results of the on-street surveys, walkability audits and consultations with influential people and present them to a wider section of older people in the community, so as to gather their opinions, too.

During this process you can agree the most important things to deal with, decide on what action to take and who can do it. The outcomes of this process will form the Age Friendly Town Plan.

There are **two key steps** to this stage: running public consultations and writing and agreeing the Age Friendly Town Action Plan. Both are outlined below.

### Step 1

## Public Consultations



Pull together the issues and suggestions made during the consultation activities. It is now time to take what you have learnt so far – both the issues and the suggested solutions – to a wider group of older people in the community to see if:

- they agree with what you have already found, and with your suggestions for change
- there are other issues that haven't been mentioned so far
- people can think of any other solutions and actions to improve the town's age friendliness.

### Plan and prepare

- Set a date, book venue and invite people, such as members of active retirement groups, local media, town mayor and other elected representatives, business groups,
- Use posters, church noticeboards, the Age Friendly County website and other means to publicise your event.

- Organise facilitators, such as members of the action group members, the Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant and the Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator for your area.

Inviting a local dignitary or celebrity to open the event can make it more attractive. For example, in Clare, Ger Loughnane, the famous Clare GAA player, launched the strategy. In other towns the mayor opened proceedings.

### Hold the public consultation

- Organise registration and refreshments
- Launch by local dignitary or celebrity.
- Present a short ( 10 minute) overview of what is an Age Friendly Town and how the programme in your town fits into the county and national programme. The Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator or Regional Development Consultant can help with this
- Ask the chairperson of the Action Group to give a short presentation of key issues and solutions suggested so far. If you print these out, or write them on flipchart paper, you can pin them on the walls so people can refer to them during the discussions (remember,

though, that not everyone may be able to read them). Appendix 17 contains an example of the presentation given at the start of a public consultation session in Raheny.

- Split those present into smaller groups of around 8 people for round-table discussions. Assign a facilitator and note-taker to each table. Give each group one or two WHO themes and Age Friendly Outcomes to discuss. Each facilitator should have a list of the issues and draft actions to be discussed through asking the following questions.

The following is a list of questions the facilitator can use to discuss the themes:

- Did the presentation under this theme cover all the issues relevant to our town on this topic?
- If not, what else should be added?
- Are each of the issues identified low, medium or high priority?

- Which changes have the biggest potential to improve the quality of life of older people in the town?
- If the Age Friendly Town Action Group was to do one thing in the next 12 months what should it be?

### Analyse and write up

- Immediately after the public consultation hold a short meeting with all the facilitators and note-takers to discuss their impressions.
- Collected their notes.
- Using the points that emerge, and write up the public consultation by theme, using direct quotes, suggestions and offers of action and results.

The Age Friendly Cities and Counties Handbook includes detailed information on how to run successful public consultations. It also contains examples of templates and an example of a post-consultation report. You can access the Handbook at [www.agefriendlyireland.ie/handbook](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie/handbook)

## Step 2

### Writing the Age Friendly Town Plan



Now you have all you need to put together the action plan. This will translate the vision and aims (see below) into a practical set of strategies and action steps.

Developing an action plan is a critical step toward ensuring the success of the Age Friendly Towns Programme. Mobilising the Action Group and the community and encouraging people to share responsibility for solving the problems and improving the town will give the best outcome. Commitments captured in the action plan supports this. Appendix 18 contains a template which you can use you when writing your town's action plan.

A good town plan contains:

- the overall age-friendly vision and mission for your town
- some key information about your town
- what people told you in the consultations
- the key issues you have identified, split up by WHO theme and age friendly outcomes
- the action steps you will take to achieve your objectives
- who will be responsible for carrying out the actions.



## Create a vision and mission statement

The aims for the plan should include the overall vision for how your town will be for older people in the future. Doing this will help you to focus on what is important. It will also make it easier to explain what the Age Friendly Towns Programme is about.

Creating a vision statement for your Age Friendly Towns Programme sets out the dream for your town. It sets out what you believe are the ideal conditions for older people in your community – what the town would be like for older people if the issues that arose during the consultation were completely addressed.

A mission statement grounds the vision in practical terms. It describes what the Age Friendly Town Action Group is going to do and why. Like vision statements they describe the “big picture” but are more concrete and action-orientated.



Tips for vision statements:

- Short phrases or sentences
- Easy, clear language
- Inspiring and uplifting
- Easy to communicate

For example, Foxford said,

*The overarching aim of the process is to make Foxford an “Age Friendly Town with all the key agencies and organisations working together to promote and maintain the best possible quality of life and health of older people and to make Foxford itself a great place to grow old.”*

Another example of a mission statement:

*“To create a thriving community for older people through improvements in public infrastructure, communication and housing.”*

## Some key information about your town

This section can contain any relevant information you have found out about your town, such as trends in demographics or information from local development plans, Tidy Town plans etc. Appendix 19 contains an example of some data that the Action Group in Cavan collected. The goal is to provide statistics about older people and where they live, what services are available in the town and what makes it special.

## What people told you

Include evidence from your consultation process: the key issues from the walkability audits, on-street survey, conversations with influential people and public consultation. Direct quotes and photos really help to make it all come alive.

## The key age friendly issues in your town

Describe the issues and suggested solutions that you have identified by WHO Theme and Age Friendly Outcome. You may not have actions identified under each heading, but doing it this way will help you to capture and organise the issues and to prioritise them.

## What action steps you are going to take and who is responsible

The Age Friendly Town Action Group has to discuss, decide and plan together the key issues to be tackled under the Programme and what actions need to happen to get the work done (see below).

## Format your plan

You now have the issues and action points organised by theme and outcome. Depending on the length of your list you can now prioritise the actions that:

- align most closely with your vision
- make the most impact
- the Action Group can influence
- are realistic
- could take place within a two-year timeframe.

Now decide and agree on who should be responsible for getting the individual actions carried out, and when they will do them. This is where having an Action Group made up of many different types of people from the community can really help with implementation. Some of the actions may require a response from a government agency (eg the HSE, the Gardaí). You need to get agreement about these before the plan can be finalised.

For each action step or change to be accomplished, list the following, with a due date for each:

- What the issue is
- What your objective is
- What actions or changes will take place, and by when
- Who is responsible
- What does success look like? Write down what performance measures you will use to assess the success of each action.

Including performance measures will help with understanding how successful the implementation of the Plan will be. You could decide to look at the level of activities taking place, or what was done (outputs) or the impact or what difference is made (outcomes).

Appendix 22 contains an extract from the 'Healthier and Active Lives for Longer' theme from the Raheny Action Plan. Appendix 21 contains a section of the Cavan Action Plan.

Now that your Plan is completed, it is time to let everyone in the town know what you are doing. The next part of this toolkit outlines how to make your plan a reality.



# Stage 4

## Act

### Introduction

You have now reached the stage where you can start taking action. You'll need to monitor and follow up on the actions to make sure that you get the results you seek. This part of the toolkit gives you some pointers to help ensure the success of your plan.

### Step 1

#### Keep the Action Plan alive



#### Go back to those who took part in the consultations

Tell all the people who took part in the consultations what is happening. Keeping a record of people's email or postal addresses enables you to send them a copy of the completed Action Plan.

#### Speak to the media

Use local radio, newspapers, and newsletters to tell people what will be happening in your town over the coming months as part of the Age Friendly Towns Programme.

#### Get the support of county councillors

Send copies of your Action Plan to local councillors. It is really worth presenting what you have found out and what has been agreed in your Action plan at Council meetings,

#### Enlist the support of the Age Friendly Alliance

Tell your local Age Friendly Alliance and Older People's Council about your AFT Action Plan. This can make a big impact and can help you to gain more buy-in from groups and agencies in the county. Your Regional Age Friendly Coordinator or Local Authority Coordinator can help you make this happen.

As part of the implementation of the Castleblaney Action Plan a wooden seat was installed in the park on a pilot basis. After the Plan was presented to the local authority, local councillors secured funding for eight more seats in the town.

## Submit your Action Plan to the Local Community Development Committee

Each local authority has a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). The remit of the LCDCs is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development by preparing, implementing and monitoring the community elements of the six-year local economic and community plan. Depending on the timing of your Age Friendly Town Action Plan you could submit it for consideration to the next local area development plan. Your Local Authority Age Friendly Coordinator can help you with this.

## Step 2

### Implement and monitor the actions



Your Action Plan outlines who is responsible for each of the agreed actions. As well as putting them in place, it is a good idea to review and keep a check on what is happening and to revisit the Action Plan regularly. Here are some suggestions to help with this:

- Individual members of the Action Group can take responsibility for one theme, and can check on progress.
- Every 4 to 6 weeks hold an Action Group meetings to review progress under each theme.
- If there are blockages, work together to find a solution.
- Begin gathering data for each action to check the progress
- Revise activities as needed.

## Step 3 Gain recognition as an Age Friendly Town



Now it is time to gain recognition for all the work you have done. Once your Action Plan is completed, and a minimum of three of the actions on the plan have taken place, your town is eligible to be recognised as an Age Friendly Town.

Each year there is an annual national awards ceremony for age friendliness. Towns which have worked their way through the Programme are eligible for an award and all members of the Action Group committee are invited to attend. See here for images from the 2014 Awards Ceremony – direct to place on website <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/age-friendly-recognition-and-achievement-awards-2014/> and <http://agefriendlyireland.ie/celebration-of-work-to-make-communities-more-age-friendly/>

**If your town registered with Age Friendly Ireland when you first set up the Action Group you will automatically be contacted about submitting your town for Age Friendly recognition.**

## Step 4 Complete the Programme



Age Friendly Towns Programmes take approximately two years to complete. At the end of the Programme, with all actions completed, you can review what happened, what worked well and what was more challenging. The performance measures set during the planning stage will help you to judge your success.

If after two years there are actions that have not been completed the Age Friendly County Alliance can continue to monitor your plan as part of their overall strategy. Your Local Authority **Age Friendly** Coordinator can ensure this happens. You may also decide that it is worth continuing the Programme. Additional concerns and issues may have arisen. Consult again, take a look at what else is needed and start again!

# FAQs

## **Do we have to do the whole Programme?**

If you would like your town to become an Age Friendly Town then yes, you do need to do the whole programme. However, you are welcome to take elements of the programme and incorporate them into other projects you may be working on.

## **Can we do it in stages?**

The toolkit has broken down the Programme into four key stages. It is easier to work through the stages logically, one after the other, rather than stopping and starting.

## **How can we get more information?**

Look at the Age Friendly Ireland website: [www.agefriendlyireland.ie](http://www.agefriendlyireland.ie) or contact Age Friendly at telephone 01 2226230

## **Can we just do the walkability audit?**

Yes, the walkability audit works as a stand-alone project. Use the guidance notes and information sheet. Some towns start by doing a walkability audit and then decide to run the full Age Friendly Towns Programme.

## **How can we get help to analyse the data?**

The walkability audit and on-street survey questionnaires can be analysed using SurveyMonkey. The Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant will direct you the survey and can advise you about how to do this.

## **Can we make changes to the questionnaires?**

The questionnaires in the toolkit are tried and tested. All Age Friendly Towns in the Programme use these questionnaires. Talk to the Age Friendly Regional Development Consultant if you want to add questions about any other aspects or topics.







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