



Age Friendly
Laois



Laois Age Friendly County Strategy 2023-2027



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1. INTRODUCTION

Laois, like the rest of Ireland, is ageing. It is important to plan for an ageing population and to have the older person at the front of our minds in building our County for the future. As part of this planning, it is vital that the older person living in Laois is consulted to help inform this and future strategies, not only for our current older population, but for our future older persons also.

We are living to an older age, remaining healthier for longer and our society needs to adapt to this. If you design for the young, you may exclude the old but if you design for the old you include everyone, and this benefits all people in Laois.

An Age Friendly County has been described by Age Friendly Ireland as a county that recognises the great diversity among older people and promotes their inclusion in all areas of community life. It is a county that respects older people's decisions and lifestyle choices and responds to related needs and preferences.

It is important that older people are recognised as a valuable resource and have much experience and resources to assist the county's growth. The Laois Age Friendly Strategy is a framework plan to make Laois a great place in which everyone, regardless of age, is valued and respected. It provides the structure for cross-sector cooperation which is essential to improve the quality of life for older people in Laois. The strategy outlines that a multi-agency approach will be undertaken in an effort to address the issues and challenges that have arisen through the consultation process.

Our ambition to be Age Friendly means that Laois will:

- Become a great place to grow old
- Have easily accessible public buildings, shops, and services
- Incorporate older people's views into significant decisions being made about Laois
- Promote a positive attitude to ageing and address stereotypes about older people
- Create opportunities for older people to be engaged with their county socially, as employees and as volunteers

2. Context for our Strategy

2.1 DEFINING AGE FRIENDLY

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), an age-friendly community is one where policies, services, settings and structures support and enable people to age actively by:

- recognising the wide range of capacities and resources among older persons
- anticipating and responding flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences
- respecting decisions and lifestyle choices
- protecting those who are most vulnerable; and
- promoting inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life.

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



3. How we developed this Strategy

The process used to develop the new Age Friendly Strategy was as follows::

Step 1: Review of the outgoing strategy

This took place on the 9th March 2022 in the Parish Centre, Portlaoise. It took the form of a facilitated strategy workshop. Present at this workshop were members of the Older Person's Council, members of the Age Friendly Alliance and various stakeholders.

Step 2: Audit of important documents and consulting with stakeholders

To help inform us, we did an audit of these documents. We focused on:

- Local Area Plans
- Complementary strategies such as the Healthy Ireland plan and Healthy Laois research
- Preliminary Census results,
- Age Action reports, and
- Agency and Ageing in Place in Rural Ireland research document

Consult

We consulted with the older community - using:

1. Surveys handed to individuals and representative groups to complete.
2. Online consultation surveys.
3. A round-table in person consultation meeting in Bloom HQ, Mountrath on the 26 July 2022. At this meeting, we had a facilitator to help guide feedback on eight WHO themes:
 1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
 2. Transportation
 3. Housing
 4. Respect and Social Inclusion
 5. Social Participation
 6. Communication and Information
 7. Civic participation and employment
 8. Community support and health services

In all, 255 people contributed to our consultation. Most (155) through survey feedback and 100 people through the in-person consultation. The information received from strategy workshop and the survey results were presented at the 26 July consultation event. Findings from the consultations on this day were presented by facilitators and divided into the eight themes.

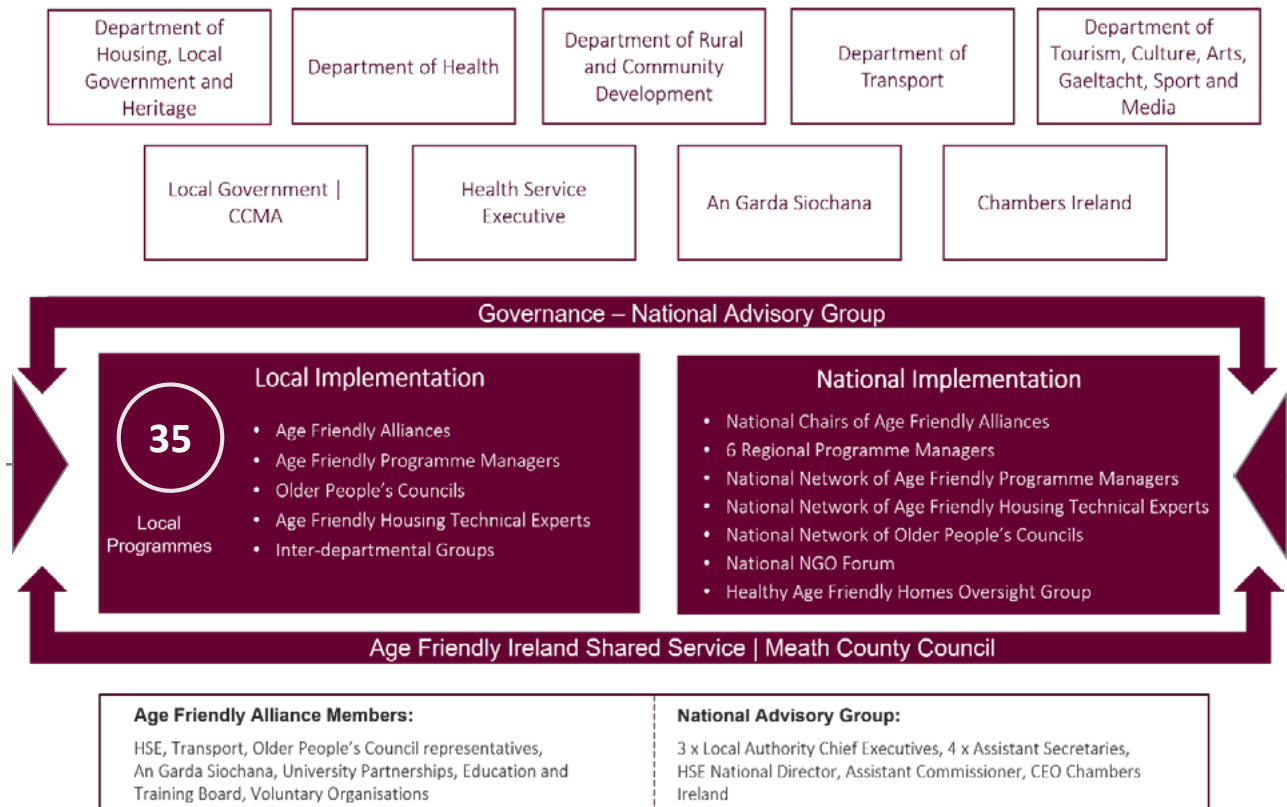
Step 3: Plan

- Review all feedback including suggested/desired actions
- Develop actions for this strategy with action partners
- Prioritise actions and establish realistic timeframes for realisation of same

How we will implement this plan and ensure appropriate governance:

The implementation and governance of the strategy are outlined below. The delivery of the action plan will be a collaboration between agencies, stakeholders and action partners.

Age Friendly Ireland Structures and Governance



Consultation Day – Bloom HQ, Mountrath, Co. Laois

4. Summary of Consultation Findings

The strategy has been informed by a comprehensive consultation process with:

- older community (groups and individuals)
- organisations with an age-friendly remit and/or working with older communities
- representative bodies such as the Irish Wheelchair association
- interagency partners such as the Health Service Executive (H.S.E) and An Gardaí Síochána

4.1 Consultation with Older People

We present a summary of below of what older people thought what we should do in the 2023-2027 new County Age Friendly Strategy.

You can find full details of consultation findings from this group of contributions, along with those of the stakeholders on pages 38 to 52 (Appendix 3).

There were four main findings (issues) from the different consultation methods across the eight World Health Organization themes.

- 1. Access to transport, services, supports and facilities is still a problem.**
- 2. Access to information (more needed across many platforms).**
- 3. Social isolation and the need for participation.**
- 4. Independent living and the skills and supports required to do so.**

Contributors appreciated the importance of remaining active and the positive role that clubs and groups in helping them to keep engaged with other people.

However, two issues identified included:

- social isolation, both rural and urban, and
- the barriers which might prevent them from taking an active part in society.

Contributors noted several reasons for their concerns about isolation. They included geographical reasons as some contributors lived in a remote location, with limited chances to meet others, a lack of transport services, or a lack of awareness of what is available. Another reason stated was the death of a partner, and a resulting “withdrawal” from society, due to perhaps being used to socialising as a couple or perhaps having lost the access to private transport.

A lack of participation can result in not receiving the recognised benefits of mental health and wellbeing, a sense of belonging and the ability to maintain an active mind.

Information issues

While contributors note that there are services and groups in Laois, there remains a lack of awareness among many of what is available to them in terms of supports, services and social groups. Some observed that with a lot of information being disseminated online, that they missed out on events.

Another area where people were affected by a move to online information was in the area of application forms and grant applications. A need for assistance, education and in person talks and information was highlighted.

Independent living

Independent living and remaining at home in older years was the clearly stated desire and there was an expressed desire to have the supporting structures in place to this end. The availability and access to adaptation of housing, personal alarms, assistive technology and day to day supports were seen as key to facilitating this desire.

Transport was a recurring theme as it is seen as a vital factor across multiple themes. The need for connectivity and the continued improvements in timetabling and co-ordination of routes is seen as vital in facilitating the themes of transportation, social/ civic inclusion and participation and community supports and health services.

Throughout the consultations, it was apparent that there is a desire stay connected with society. The importance of removing the barriers to participation were highlighted and the importance of including necessary supports such as adequate seating, toilet facilities and age friendly parking in public and commercial and retail spaces, such as shopping centres, chemists and so on, was highlighted.

Summary

It is evident that remaining independent is important in order to feel to feel valued and respected as we age. Retirement can mean that the worker loses a link to their workplace but not the skills and experience obtained over a lifetime of contribution to their society. We must ensure that age is no barrier to maintaining this important link and that the supports and services to facilitate this are in place.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, many community groups reduced in membership or have not reformed since. A current challenge is to recruit members for these groups. Groups need supports to do this. While there is a willingness among the older community to participate, there needs to be a focus on recruitment to combat the learned behaviour of social isolation.

To get information to older communities, we need to find a way to collate information into one space. This would better serve their needs. We need to focus on education programmes and consider how we convey information so that it is accessible and understandable. Laois Libraries, the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board , Laois Public Participation Network and Laois Partnership were regarded as having an important role to play in this regard.

There are skills and knowledge held by individuals and within groups which could be shared with other groups. Age Friendly Laois have an information guide to services for older people in Laois, which among other things, lists social groups and supports. It is important that this guide is distributed and promoted.

The availability and access to reliable and up-to-date information of a sound transport system supports many of the themes.

Recommendations

Laois has many community groups and in order to support the effective sharing of information, we need to map groups relevant to older people- this will also assist with the dissemination of information to group memberships. Key Contacts and networking relationships with these groups can be established. Networking and the sharing of information and knowledge are critical to strengthen the social support structures within communities.

4.2 Consultation with Stakeholders

In planning this new Age Friendly Strategy and action plan, we were also informed by consultation with stakeholders, service providers and organisations working in the area of Age Friendly. A summary of the findings is presented below and more detailed information on stakeholder consultations are attached as an appendix.

Stakeholders discussed the importance of supporting groups both informally and formally. This was it vital to make connections to and between groups so as to maintain or grow membership. Laois Public Participation Network and Laois Partnership play key roles in doing so and Age Friendly Laois has a role to play in facilitating and building these connections also.

Stakeholders also identified the need to do more promotion and awareness of the support structures that are available, such as Laois Services to the Older Person (LSTEP), Housing Policies of Laois County Council and other supports to older people.

The safe and secure access to outdoor spaces was highlighted and instances of anti-social behaviour in some areas was seen as a barrier to this, as was the lack of rest and toilet facilities.

Laois Libraries were recognized as an important resource in providing county wide venues, in which to meet and host age friendly events and groups. The continuing support of the Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB) in providing adult education was also seen as a key support. This was particularly noted for its training courses in the use of technology to stay connected,

Communication was a recurring theme, and the management of how information is disseminated to the older community, is vital. Access to information should be for all, and where supports and education are required for older people to avail of online information, then this support should be made available.

Transportation, and the need for adequate links for older people to access services and activities, was seen as an integral community service for all. Transport was also recognized as being a contributor to many other strategic themes, including participation and inclusion.

Summary

The successful implementation and monitoring of the strategy and action plan is dependent on the continued collaboration of action partners. While long term policies are in place, our planned actions (see pages 16 to 29) are strategic, achievable and measured in short, medium and long terms timeframes.

There is agreement that we need to help re-build community groups after the Covid-19 pandemic. Age Friendly Laois, in conjunction with action partners has a role to play in assisting age friendly community groups to consolidate, communicate and group. (Action partners are described after each action on pages 16 to 29).

In addition, events and activities will be planned to encourage and maximize the full participation of the older community in society. Intergenerational project opportunities will be important in facilitating this and will benefit all age groups.



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5.0 Action Plans

5.1 Introduction

The Age friendly Action Plans have been developed following consultation with older people and stakeholders across the county. The action themes have been aligned with those identified by the World Health Organization (WHO). There are eight themes:



**Outdoor Spaces,
Buildings and the
Physical Environment**



Transportation



Housing



Social Participation



**Respect and
Social Inclusion**



**Civic participation
and Employment**



**Communication and
Information**



**Community
Support and
Health Services**

In this section, we set our vision, aim, desired outcome and actions under each of the eight themes.

5.2 Our Vision for the new Age Friendly Strategy

Laois will be a county where older people are supported to live independently in safe and secure homes and communities, suitable their physical and social needs. A county where older people are enabled to participate in economic, social, political and community life and continue to grow, develop and contribute to society.

5.3 Our Aim

- To improve the health and quality of life of older people in Laois
- To increase the participation of older people in the social, economic and cultural life of our community
- To build upon existing services and supports for older people.

5.4 Outcome

We want the outcome of this Strategy to mean that Laois will be a county in which older people will:

- Feel they belong and have opportunities for both personal development and supporting the community in which they live
- Remain living in their own homes and communities
- Lead healthy and active lives for longer
- Have access to transport so they can get to where they want to go
- Live in communities where the social and physical environments are conducive to being out and about
- Feel safe in their own homes and communities

5.5 What is the thinking behind the Strategy?

The Laois Age Friendly Strategy is grounded in international research and knowledge and based on a number of important principles agreed by the partners in the Alliance. These include:

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



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Themes



Theme 1: Outdoor Spaces, Buildings and the Physical Environment

Older people are supported to be out and about by the social and built environment.

“Continue to promote activities such as the SVT Hub – around walking groups and cycling, utilising local natural amenities”

Action Area: Promote Outdoor Activity Programmes

Projected time: Short Term and Ongoing

- Promote walking and active groups on our media channels to encourage growth and participation
- Build capacity in communities in walk leadership training and develop a culture of social walking groups
- Promote activities and programmes in outdoor spaces
- Promote outdoor gyms and benefits of same.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Increased use of outdoor spaces for physical activity
- More people trained in becoming walk leaders

Delivery Partners: Laois Sports Partnership, Laois County Council

Action Area: Ensuring Accessibility to Outdoor Spaces, Buildings and The Physical Environment

Projected Delivery: Short Term and Ongoing

- Work in partnership with older people and Gardaí Síochána to combat public order issues such as anti-social behaviour, litter, dog fouling, that present a challenge to older people who wish to use these outdoor spaces
- Continue to create awareness with anti-litter and dog fouling campaigns

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Reduced perception of danger and barriers to participation
- An increased awareness of responsibility for litter and dog fouling and increased compliance in these areas

Delivery Partners: Laois County Council, Joint Policing Committee and An Garda Síochána

Projected Delivery: Medium Term and Ongoing

- Highlight accessibility of walking routes in towns and villages – work with the “Make Way Day” national campaign to audit popular walking routes and discuss results with County Council engineers
- Increase safety for pedestrians through the upgrade of junctions and pedestrian crossings. Identify locations for potential new crossings

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Escalation of the challenges to people of limited mobility in navigating their surrounds to County Council
- Greater safety measures which would mean a safer environment for pedestrians

Delivery Partners: Healthy Laois, Laois County Council and various representative groups

Projected Delivery: Long Term

- Plan on parking for elderly – make access and egress to spaces easier. Increase number of age friendly parking spaces in public spaces and promote the creation of age friendly parking spaces to service providers and retail spaces
- Underpin the planning of outdoor spaces, parks and buildings with Age Friendly principles and guidelines
- Consultation with older people when developing plans – local area, sports, county plans and library development plan, including age friendly objectives in all future plans including parking
- Examine the possibility of public toilets in public areas, such as Train Stations, Bus stops and in general
- Work with local community development groups with a view to installing more outdoor seating or alternative in public areas.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Public Space planning formulated with age friendly principles, resulting in greater accessibility
- Barriers to the enjoyment of public spaces reduced

Delivery Partners: Laois County Council, Laois Libraries, Laois Sports Partnership, Bus Eireann, National Transport Authority, Iarnród Éireann, Laois PPN, Older Persons Council

Theme 2: Transportation

Older people are able to get to where they want to go, when they need to.

“There needs to be an enforcement in the reduction of the speed of traffic through towns and villages”

Action Area: Awareness and Education

Projected Delivery: Short Term and Ongoing

- Awareness campaign of what is available to people, including parking spaces, JAM cards, knowing how to get the most of your travel pass- companion on travel pass
- Explore how best to educate older citizens on the access to, and use of technology required to purchase tickets for transport.

Anticipated Outcome:

- A heightened awareness of what is available to older people and the ability to purchase tickets with technology

Delivery Partners: Laois Offaly Local Link, National Transport Authority (NTA), Age Friendly Ireland, Laois Public Participation Network, Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board

Action Area: Active Travel and Age Friendly Parking

Projected Delivery: Medium Term and Ongoing

- Facilitate active travel through the planning and installation of bus shelters
- Continue to identify and provide cycle routes across Laois
- Ensure that Age Friendly Parking spaces are provided in main towns, near strategic areas e.g. Post office, credit union, doctors' surgery, civic buildings, etc. new – from County Development Plan 2021-2027

Anticipate Outcomes:

- Greater use of active travel
- Enhanced access for older drivers

Delivery Partners: Laois County Council, NTA

Action Area: Timetabling and Information

Projected Delivery: Long Term

- Examine the possibility of co-ordinating timetables/routes to facilitate onward travel and greater accessibility
- Set a programme with the Local Authority, National Transport Authority and TFI Local Link re the installation of actual bus poles to allow the information of public transport to be advertised and identify the actual locations where buses stop at

Anticipate Outcomes:

- Increase interconnectivity between areas
- Better information provided at bus stops, resulting in better awareness of service and increased usage of public transport

Delivery Partners: TFI Laois Offaly Local Link, NTA, Laois County Council

Action Area: Access to medical appointments

Projected Delivery: Unknown, as research into viability has to be completed initially

- Investigate the possibility of establishing a pilot scheme in one location, involving the transportation by volunteers of older people to hospital/medical appointments

Delivery Partners: Older Persons Council, Laois PPN, Health Service Executive (HSE), Laois Volunteer Centre, Healthy Laois



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Theme 3: Housing

Older people are supported to remain in their own homes and communities.

“Anything but institutional care”

Action Area: Home and Personal Security

Projected Delivery: Short Term and Ongoing

- Support engagement of older people with An Garda Síochána through crime prevention and community alert
- Ensure access to information for older people in relation to types, costs and installation of security alarm systems. Also provide info on smart home assistive technology
- Raise awareness of basic home and personal security measures. Reduce perception of fear and provide practical information and safety advice.
- Cybercrime awareness campaign to be commenced

Anticipated Outcome:

- A better awareness of both the potential dangers and risks to home and personal security
- Improved knowledge of practical supports, preventative measures and possible helpful resources available to enhance security

Delivery Partners: Laois Partnership, Older Persons Council, Community Alert/ Neighbourhood Watch Groups, An Garda Síochána

Action Area: Information and Education

Projected Delivery: Short Term and Ongoing

- Provide information events on what housing supports are available to older people

Anticipated Outcome:

- Clarity and understanding on the supports available, such as housing adaptation grants, mobility aid grants and housing aid for older people

Delivery Partners: Laois County Council, Laois PPN, Laois Libraries

Action Area: Practical Supports

Projected Delivery: Short Term and Ongoing

- Engage with Laois Services for Elderly People (LSTEP) and the local authority to ensure that older people living in poor housing conditions have access to necessary repairs or improvements where possible

Anticipated Outcome:

- The referral to LSTEP of assistance sought in the area of access to necessary repairs and improvements for older people

Delivery Partners: Laois Partnership, LSTEP, Laois County Council, Older Persons Council

Action Area: Aging in place

Projected Delivery: Long Term

- Continue to work with HSE program "Integrated Care Program for Older People"

Anticipated Outcome:

- The provision of community supports to facilitate aging in place and minimise hospital admissions

Delivery Partners: HSE



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Theme 4: Respect and Social Inclusion

Older adults are truly valued and respected.

“Older people have skills and life experience – showcase and share these – education is key to encourage appreciation of these skills”

Action Area: Supports

Projected Delivery: Short Term and Ongoing

- Support current active retirement and other older groups.
- Provide Assistance for older people in grant applications
- Make grant application user- friendly
- Provide information and relevant support for older people who wish to participate in local decision-making processes/committees
- Continue to develop education targeted at older people in Laois, through direct provision or support provided to organisations and agencies organising education for older people
- Maintain and develop the Older Person’s Council, strengthen the structure, promote inclusion and diversity

Anticipated Outcome:

- Older people in our community are supported both individually and in groups and are provided with the education and tools required to avail of resources.
- The issue of making applications user friendly will be escalated nationally to research the potential to do so.

Delivery Partners: Laois PPN, Laois Partnership, Age Friendly Ireland, Healthy Laois, Older Persons Council, ALONE



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Action Area: Social Inclusion and Respect

Projected Delivery: Medium Term and Ongoing

Encourage older people to become involved with Volunteer Laois and investigate with local schools and youth services, the establishment of inter-generational projects- possibly in skill sharing areas such as phone use for older people or cooking or craft with older people showing skills

Liaise with Creative Ireland Laois in their initiatives – Creativity in Older Age, Intergenerational projects etc

Anticipated outcome:

- That older people in the community will be made aware, and avail of, volunteerism opportunities, and the resulting benefits to health
- That intergenerational projects provide benefits to both young and old, in the creation of mutual appreciation, breaking down stereotypes and preventing ageism.

Delivery Partners: Laois Volunteer Centre, Youthwork Laois, Healthy Laois, Creative Ireland Laois, Laois Partnership Company



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Theme 5: Social Participation

Older people are participants in social and public life..

“Wellbeing is a positive physical, social and mental state. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose and feel able to achieve goals that are important to them and that they can participate in society and live lives that they value.”

(From National Positive Aging Strategy)

Action Area: Promoting participation and combatting social isolation

Projected Delivery: Short-Medium Term and Ongoing

- Better publishing of upcoming events/grants/applications – not just on social media – develop mix of messaging to include parish newsletters, community notes, while being open to more avenues. Create awareness of how to find information and how to use our consultation portal
- Create Database of contacts for info distribution, subject to GDPR Regulations
- Continue to promote and roll out the “Go For Life” older person’s sports programme with the aims of increasing the number of older people actively engaged in sports and recruiting people shortly before they retire and thereafter as coaches, referees and other volunteers in sports organization
- Plan activities for older people on a year-round basis
- Continue to promote access for older people to local library services and host events/ activities to encourage people to interact in a social setting, while making information available on services for older people
- Trial Social activities to encourage social engagement and if successful, develop a format to roll out county wide with appropriate action partners.
- Promote Befriending programs
- Continue to develop links with the annual Bealtaine Festival for older people
- Continue to support the development of the Men and Women’s Sheds programme in Laois and explore the possibility of creating additional Women’s Sheds
- Host an information event in Laois on the theme of Positive Ageing

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Improved dissemination of information
- Creation of a network of age friendly groups county wide and the potential for interconnections
- Increased participation in social events and a reduction in Social isolation

Delivery Partners: Laois County Council, Laois Sports, Alone, Laois Volunteer Centre, Laois Partnership Company, Healthy Laois, Creative Ireland Laois, LOETB, Laois Libraries, Arts Office

Theme 6: Communications and Information



Consultation Day – Bloom HQ, Mountrath, Co. Laois

Older people have the information they need to live full lives.
“Any official form filling causes stress, it’s only natural. Communication and access to information is one of the most important aspects of ageing and effects everything”

Action Area: Information and Awareness

Projected Delivery: Short-Term and Ongoing

- Create an awareness campaign about the importance of knowing your Eircode – specifically in relation to accessing emergency services
- Continue with the provision of services directory; amend and add services as necessary
- Explore a format for the collating of information in one place. Link this with the promotion of emergency contact numbers and provide information sessions as required
- Provide information sessions on assistive technology – personal alarms, tablets, technology in the home
- Organise an annual information session for older people, inviting appropriate service providers. Possibly as part of positive aging week
- Continued promotion of Library events

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Better access to information
- Introduction to the older community of the potential of assistive technology in the home

Delivery Partners: Laois County Council, Laois PPN, Older Persons Council, LOETB, Laois Library Service, Laois Partnership, Age Friendly Ireland

Action Area: Training

Projected Delivery: Short-Term and Ongoing

- Deliver practical I.T. training course – how to use email, apps
- Organise training on mobile banking for older people

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Increased comfort and confidence in the use of technology
- Access to personal banking

Delivery Partners: LOETB, Libraries



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Theme 7: Civic Participation and Employment



Consultation Day – Bloom HQ, Mountrath, Co. Laois

Older people have opportunities to remain at work and actively participate in society for as long as possible.

“Our current retirement age is from an age when life expectancy was 10/15 years less. There is now no age barrier for continuing to work, provided the person has capacity. HR policies are in place to support this – the experience of older people can mentor others”

Action Area: Information and Awareness

Projected Delivery: Short-Term and Ongoing

- Promote access to LOETB and its services relating to Older People
- Create awareness of evening transport services from, TFI Local Link, including the ongoing additional routes being added under the “Connecting Ireland” programme
- Work with Community Groups in promoting their activities and encouraging participation.
- Work with Laois Volunteer Centre to promote opportunities to volunteer and provide information and supports for doing so.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Greater awareness of, and access to, opportunities in the community, eg. Education and volunteering opportunities.
- Increased participation in activities provided and in community groups themselves.

Delivery Partners: LOETB, TFI Local Link, Laois PPN, Laois Volunteer Centre, Mens Sheds, Local Representatives

Action Area: Collaborations and Connections

Projected Delivery: Short-Term and Ongoing

- Investigate areas where Intergenerational initiatives (such as skill sharing, arts projects) could be established on both occasional and ongoing basis.
- Build link between LEO and older groups in the community – help with entrepreneurial, courses, CVs

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Foster respect, understanding and respect between young and old
- Upskilling and reskilling to open up opportunities for advancement or career change

Delivery Partners: Older Persons Council, Laois PPN, Creative Ireland Laois, Schools, Men's Sheds, Women's Sheds

Action Area: Employment post-retirement

Projected Delivery: Long Term

- Explore the possibility of part-time employment offers – such as 4 hours a day for 2 days a week for older persons

Deliver Partners and Outcomes: Exploratory stage. It is anticipated that larger retailers would need to be approached on a national level through Age Friendly Ireland and that implications for pensions and so on would need to be researched.

Theme 8: Community Support and Health Services



Consultation Day – Bloom HQ, Mountrath, Co. Laois

Older people lead healthy and active lives for longer.
“General sense of feeling unsafe, insecure in their own homes”

Action Area:

Projected Delivery: Short- Medium-Term and Ongoing

- Provide more Age Friendly parking spaces and improve signage at care facilities
- Continue to work with various representative groups to highlight barriers to accessibility in towns and villages, as part of “Make Way Day”
- Engage with local hospitals and health facilities to implement the Age Friendly Hospitals Programme to adhere to age friendly policies and practices
- Engage with local leisure centres and service providers with a view to the introduction of discounts for older people and/or hosting sessions tailored specifically to the needs of older people
- Create an Age Friendly awareness campaign to target general public

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Improved accessibility to services and to general accessibility in towns and villages
- A collaborative approach to the resolution of barriers to accessibility between elected representatives, various groups and individuals, and County Council staff
- Greater understanding of the Age Friendly Programme

Delivery Partners: H.S.E., Various representative Groups, Local representatives, Laois County Council, Laois Sports partnership, service providers.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The National and County Context

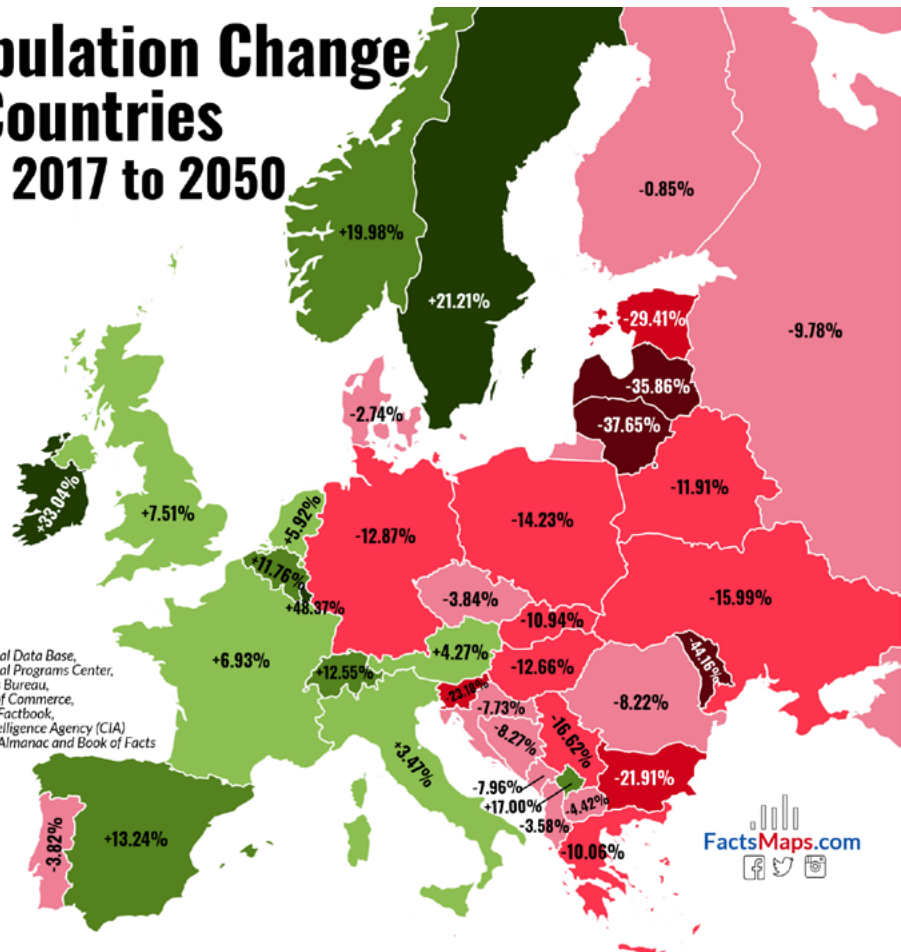
Why a new focus on older people?

The world's older population is increasing, with people living longer and healthier lives, and experiencing older age very differently from their grandparents' generation. Europe is the world's oldest region, with the older population expected to increase fivefold from 40 million to 219 million by 2050.

Projected Population Change in European Countries 2017 to 2050

	Population (thousands)		
	in 2017	in 2050	
• Luxembourg	583	865	+48.37%
• Ireland	4,761	6,334	+33.04%
• Iceland	335	407	+21.49%
• Sweden	9,910	12,012	+21.21%
• Norway	5,305	6,365	+19.98%
• Cyprus	1,179	1,393	+18.15%
• Kosovo	1,900	2,223	+17.00%
• Spain	46,354	52,491	+13.24%
• Switzerland	8,476	9,540	+12.55%
• Belgium	11,429	12,773	+11.76%
• UK	66,181	71,154	+7.51%
• France	64,979	69,485	+6.93%
• Netherlands	17,035	17,907	+5.12%
• Austria	8,735	9,108	+4.27%
• Italy	59,359	61,416	+3.47%
• Finland	5,523	5,476	-0.85%
• Denmark	5,733	5,576	-2.74%
• Albania	2,930	2,825	-3.58%
• Portugal	10,329	9,934	-3.82%
• Czech Rep.	10,618	10,210	-3.84%
• Macedonia	2,083	1,991	-4.42%
• Croatia	4,189	3,865	-7.73%
• Malta	430	396	-7.91%
• Montenegro	628	578	-7.96%
• Romania	19,679	18,061	-8.22%
• Bosnia Herz.	3,507	3,217	-8.27%
• Russia	143,989	129,909	-9.78%
• Greece	11,159	10,036	-10.06%
• Slovakia	5,447	4,851	-10.94%
• Belarus	9,468	8,340	-11.91%
• Hungary	9,721	8,490	-12.66%
• Germany	82,114	71,542	-12.87%
• Poland	38,170	32,739	-14.23%
• Ukraine	44,222	37,149	-15.99%
• Serbia	7,040	5,870	-16.62%
• Bulgaria	7,084	5,532	-21.91%
• Slovenia	2,079	1,597	-23.18%
• Estonia	1,309	924	-29.41%
• Latvia	1,949	1,250	-35.86%
• Lithuania	2,890	1,802	-37.65%
• Moldova	4,051	2,262	-44.16%

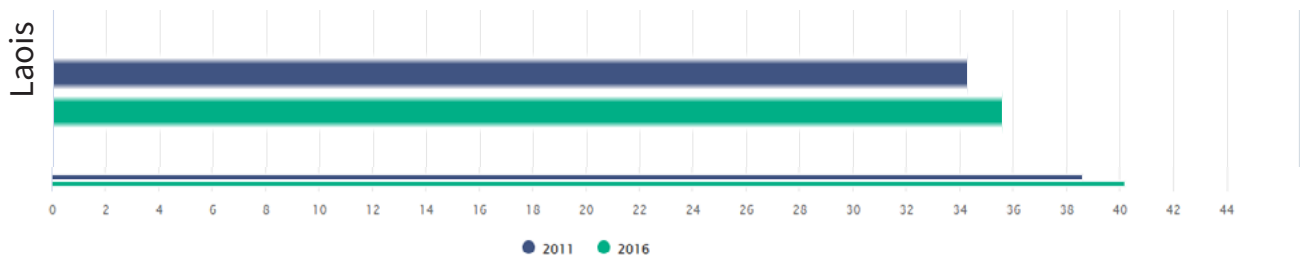
Source: International Data Base, International Programs Center, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Dept. of Commerce, The World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) The World Almanac and Book of Facts



FactsMaps.com

Projected Growth 1. Ireland's Population is expected to grow by a third to over 6.3 million by 2050, the second highest growth among European countries

Ireland has also experienced an increase in overall life expectancy. It is predicted that there will be approximately 1.1 million people aged 65 years and older by 2036, an increase of almost 250% over the 2006 figure. The greatest increase is anticipated in the over 80 age group where the number is expected to quadruple from 110,000 to 440,000 in 2041.



Source: CSO Ireland

Ageing Population 1: showing an increasing average age 2011-2016

County Laois is a relatively young county by comparison to other counties with 7,068 (8.42%) people over the age of 65 – this is according to the 2016 census. Between 2011-2016, however the average age in Laois increased from 34.3 to 35.6 – this was reflected across many counties.

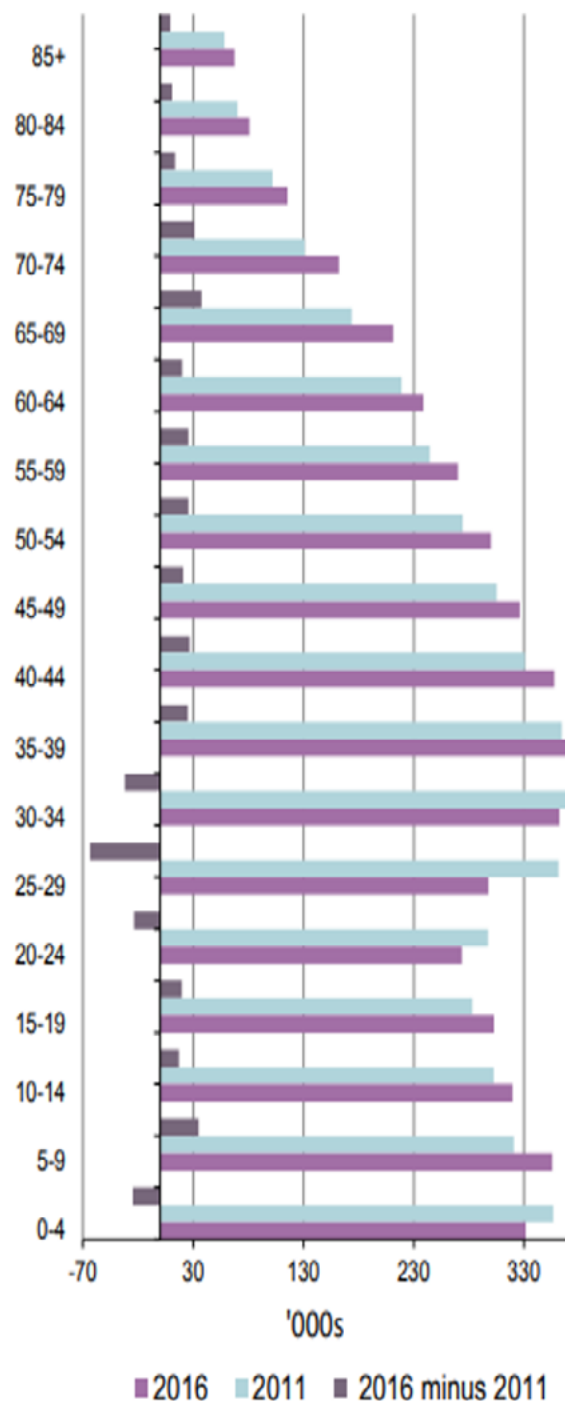
Youngest	County	2011	County	2016
	Laois	34.3	Laois	35.6
	South Dublin	34.1	South Dublin	35.5
	Meath	33.8	Meath	35.2
	Kildare	33.5	Kildare	34.9
	Fingal	32.9	Fingal	34.3

Aging Population: 2011 v 2016 youngest counties

The figure on the right shows the change in population structure nationally 2011-2016. It is worth noting that every sub- category above the age of 35 has increased while every sub- category from 20-34 has decreased. Preliminary Census results show that the population in Laois has risen by 6,960 to 91,567, an increase of 8%. The birth to death ratio is 2.3:1 during this period.

Reflecting the demographic change, the Government has prepared a National Positive Ageing Strategy, to “better recognise the position of older people in Irish Society”. The World Health Organisation (WHO) argues that if nations, societies and communities actively plan and respond now, we will be prepared to meet this challenge successfully. Simply, they articulate the positive ageing process, as a way of thinking and working, to: “optimise opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age”.

The new action-focused strategy and plans for Laois will ow what is possible: bringing about change - not through greatly increased expenditure - but through imaginative use of existing resources, including the resources of older people themselves.



Aging Population 2: Changing Population Structure

Appendix 2: Laois Age Friendly Alliance and Policy Framework

Laois Age Friendly Alliance was formed in July 2014 and a subsequent launch took place at Aras an Chontae, Portlaoise on 8th July, 2014.

The Alliance is committed to work together to develop an Age Friendly County and aims to bring about change by:

- Changing mind-sets about ageing and about older people so that the people and organisations of the county recognise and harness the vital contribution that older people make in terms of their skills, experience and their very presence.
- Ensuring that the voices of older people are heard and that they inform the priorities of the Laois Age Friendly Strategy.
- Building on and, where necessary, forging new inter-agency and agency-community partnerships that involve older people at all levels.
- Building on the existing plans and ambitions of the county’s organisations that currently do immense work improving older people’s quality of life.
- Creating a number of “supporting forums” such as the Older Person’s Council etc.
- Setting ambitious but realistic targets and measuring progress towards them so that continuous improvement is achieved.

The research and work of the Alliance led to the preparation of a county age friendly strategy 2016-2021.

The current Age Friendly Strategy is focused on developing a more “Age Friendly Laois”, there are many existing policies and strategies in place that support the commitment to improving life for older people. These include, but are not limited to:

- Healthy Laois Strategy 2023- 2025 draft
- Laois Local Economic and Community Plan 2023-2028 draft
- Laois County Development Plan
- Laois Sports Partnership Strategy 2022-2026
- County Laois Corporate Plan 2019-2024
- Laois Joint Policing Strategy 2022-2027

Nationally, the Age Friendly Ireland Plan has been anchored in local government. In this context, the National Age Friendly Ireland Programme and the WHO themes are reflected in relevant National Policy.

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings	National Planning Framework: Ireland 2040
Transportation	Rural Transport Strategy – Connecting Ireland
Housing	Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness
Respect and Social Inclusion	National Disability Authority Strategy
Civic Participation and Employment	National Indicators: Healthy and Positive Aging Initiative
Information and Communication	Action Plan for Rural Development
Community and Health Services	National Positive Aging Strategy
	National HSE Service Plan – Integrated Care Program for Older People
	Sláintecare Implementation Strategy
	An Garda Síochána National Strategy for Older People

Laois Age Friendly Alliance Group Members (Current)

The following bodies are represented on the Laois Age Friendly Alliance Group:

Laois County Council

Older Persons Council

Health Service Executive

Laois Offaly Education & Training Board

Laois Libraries

Laois Chamber Alliance

Healthy Laois

Laois Public Participation Network

Laois Volunteer Centre

An Garda Síochána

Transport For Ireland Local Link Laois Offaly

Laois Partnership Company

Creative Laois

Appendix 3: Detailed Consultations Older People

Outdoor Spaces, Buildings and The Physical Environment

Older people are supported to be out and about by the social and built environment.

Outdoor space and buildings need to be planned and designed so as to be safe and accessible for older people. Older people tend to stay closer to home, using local amenities and facilities.

What Older People Like in Laois

- Walking Paths and Cycleways – the fresh air and greenery available – Garryhinch Woods, Emo Court, Barrow walking track, parks in Portlaoise
- Inclusion of Age Friendly exercise stations in community parks and playgrounds – good development of parks around the county
- Tidy Towns, Pride of Place and overall environmental enhancement
- Laois Sports Partnership supports and activities
- Greater emphasis on Rural Development

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- Litter and Dog Fouling an ongoing problem with bins not being used properly
- More age friendly parking required – at least two outside shops and public outdoor spaces
- More seating and shelters around towns and walking areas, e.g. parks
- Poor lighting in walking areas such as town parks leading to a fear of fall or attack
- The continued use of footpaths by e scooters and bicycles
- Lack of places for older people to meet up – similar to youth cafes for younger generation
- General condition of roads and footpaths
- There should be more development of board walks, cycle ways and path ways. Improve road verges and cut hedges on secondary and tertiary roads

Feedback included:

- Exercise machines in playgrounds are a great addition and should be included in future developments of playgrounds
- The safety of walks and the lighting is important for older peoples- some nice walking areas are isolated and poorly lit- there is a fear of falls or attacks.
- Cars are parking on foot paths and using disabled parking spaces.
- Lack of toilet facilities in public spaces is an issue.
- There should be seating and shelter areas in public areas – in parks, towns and walks.

- Car parking in the small towns is a problem for the elderly.
- Dog fouling is an ongoing issue
- More age friendly parking required-shops and public spaces
- E scooters and the policing of them is an issue.
- Drop-in centres should be developed for older people – similar to youth cafés.
- Greater emphasis on rural development is good, along with tidy towns, pride of place.

It was noted at stakeholder consultation that there is a network of blueways (river and lakes walks)being planned. These are in:

- Portlaoise,
- Vicarstown and
- Portarlinton.

In addition, there is a network of bog walks. A masterplan of open spaces in urban areas is also in place and that “2040 And Beyond A Vision For Portlaoise – A Strategy for a Better Town Centre”

Is the guiding document for future planning for Public Realm for the County town, Portlaoise. It was noted also that enforcement of issues such dog fouling, e-scooters, illegal parking and anti-social behaviour would improve the experience of outdoor spaces, buildings and the physical environment.

Transportation

Older people are able to get to where they want to go, when they need to.

Access to appropriate transport is essential if older people are to participate fully in society. For older people, an accessible transport service that they feel confident using is often the vital link to the wider community, and vital for maintaining independence..

What Older People Like in Laois

- Free travel for the over 65s
- Good transport and taxi services – Local Link, Dublin Coach, Air Coach, Kavanagh’s Bus in larger areas
- Rail Services
- Good connectivity between major towns and cities
- Improvement in roads network and train travel

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- Access to the transport services- getting to the train/bus station
- Lack of information on what transport is available – lack of awareness of timetables
- Lack of transport service to local hospital/clinic
- Bus shelters with adequate seating needed

- Older people can have difficulty in connecting with bus routes
- Proper cycle lanes required
- Many different transport providers but timetables are not co-ordinated. Would “live” timetable screens be a possibility?
- Lack of awareness of some older drivers limitations
- Maintenance of secondary and tertiary roads – hedges, verges etc
- Public works at busy /peak periods
- Street/Road/Estate signage
- Parking on footpaths

Feedback included:

- Information about transport is the biggest challenge, while there are services running , there is a need to co-ordinate information and link towns and villages
- Rural Transport is a very big issue, there are very rural and isolated areas around the county, and many older people rely on the kindness of neighbours and family for transport
- There is a need for central transport hubs, ie, train/bus station with adequate parking at these for cars and bicycles. Look at GPS enabled timetables at stops showing times etc of private and public transport.
- Review pedestrian crossings in terms of amount and locations- with elderly and disabled in mind
- Ensure that transport services are accessible- transport to/from these an issue
- Maintain secondary roads to a better condition
- Car parking at railway station in Portlaoise is not adequate
- No evening bus services
- Local Link should go to more areas

Mirroring the sentiment of consultations with the older community, the stakeholders involved highlighted that there was a need to link areas and collate and co-ordinate timetables. It was also raised that toilet facilities are required at bus stations and that the issue of high volumes of traffics and peak times such as school drop -offs needed attention and consideration. It was observed that age friendly parking was not monitored and at times that people didn’t leave these spaces for those entitled to them. Once again, information was deemed to be a key component in this area. The need for more bus stops was raised and subsequently, it has emerged that a number of sites are being looked at, for the installation of bus stops.

It was also noted that a central bus station is proposed for Portlaoise in the “2040 And Beyond A Vision for Portlaoise – A Strategy for a Better Town Centre” document.

Older people are supported to remain in their own homes and communities

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

What Older People Like in Laois

- Housing Adaptation Grants
- Home help services to facilitate aging in place
- LSTEP (Laois Services for Elderly People)
- Housing Schemes specifically for the elderly – such as in Stradbally
- Development of derelict sites

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- Information on how to access grants for adapting the home to meet changing needs should be readily available to everyone- help required with the filling out of forms and the application process
- Security in the Home – rural and urban settings
- Some older people very isolated and don't have visitors
- Improve home care facilities – keep people at home
- Need for accessible small housing – groups of houses for retirement houses (retirement villages)
- Access to tradesmen in Rural areas – also unwanted/unqualified people calling to homes offering services
- Lack of familiarity with local gardai, which inhibits relationships with them
- Shopping / laundry / essentials delivery service

Feedback included:

- There is a desire to remain at home in older years – the availability of smart home technology would help – a lot of advances in this area such as fall detection, monitored, alarmed systems etc
- Information and assistance required re grants. Assistance required in completing applications
- Home security – regular advice required on security to older people groups
- Maintenance requirement of Housing needs to be continually reviewed
- Housing near main services for people who want to downsize – encourage the building of age friendly housing / communities
- More Sue Ryder type apartment complexes required
- German and Swedish style housing structures for older people the ideal
- Cheaper sheltered accommodation for pensioners. Price of nursing homes to be looked at
- Provide more housing specifically for the elderly

At the stakeholder consultation, it was advised that a new Housing disability strategy had been adopted and that an older person had been sought as a representative on the steering group. Since the stakeholder meeting, a member of the OPC has joined this group.

It was also advised that more information relating to housing grants was now available on Laois County Council website-hard copies of same are also available on request. The AHB development in Stradbally was cited as a very good example of housing for the older person and that Planning for supply – Part 5 guided the planning of accommodation for the older person. Security in the home is paramount and the ongoing messaging around this area to the older and the general community is so important.

Respect and Social Inclusion

Older adults are truly valued and respected

Good access to information is necessary for making decisions and is essential if older people are to continue to participate in society. As our population ages and enjoys longer periods of good health, it is essential that they remain active and connected to their communities. Many older people make valuable contributions in their communities through voluntary work.

What Older People Like in Laois

- Availability of courses through LOETB
- Active Community groups – retirement groups, I.C.A., sheds and so on
- New technology and the improved ability of older people to use technology
- Concessionary rates of admission
- Involvement in groups, committees

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- Limited opportunities for older people to interact with younger people and each other
- Loneliness and isolation – especially for those living alone. Many struggle after the death of a partner and become socially withdrawn
- Older people need to be acknowledged for their wisdom and life skills
- Older people are often depicted in the media and elsewhere as being frail and burdens on society
- There is an over-reliance on the internet in the provision of information
- Lack of awareness of activities happening in communities
- A return to community activities following the Covid pandemic as there is still a hesitancy in re-engaging with past routines

Feedback included:

- Run more courses – look into hosting classes focused on the older person
- There really needs to be a place where older people can come together such as drop in or visitor centres
- Include single storey dwellings in all future housing estates
- Opportunities are there for older people to volunteer
- Make community facilities available for age friendly activities- ensure that these facilities are age friendly
- More representation of older people on decision making committees
- There needs to be increased respect for the potential of the elderly- their life long learning; engage with senior classes in national schools
- More activities needed- arrange bingo, dance nights, bowls etc. This approach would allow the most marginalised to engage in confidence on personal matters
- More intergenerational opportunities needed

The importance of relationship building was a strong theme at stakeholder meetings. The need to have close relationships with bodies such as Laois County Council, Gardai and LSTEP were stated as being of enormous value. It was also highlighted that in the areas of respect and social inclusion, Laois Volunteer Centre, Laois Partnership Company and Laois Integration Network were doing excellent work .

The stakeholder group noted that connecting groups should be supported and encouraged, as should individual community groups. Information on supports to Social Inclusion should be widely promoted and potential intergenerational projects should be examined and put in place where possible. The work of LOETB and Laois Libraries in supporting this theme was noted. Barriers to Social Inclusion were discussed and included:

- Transport barriers – availability and awareness
- Physical barriers such as lack of seating/rest stops
- Social spaces to meet
- Lack of public toilets

Older people are participants in social and public life.

Older people want to continue to be involved in social, economic and political life as they age.

What Older People Like in Laois

- Active Retirement Groups
- Activities such as bridge, whist, arts, bowls , bingo
- Laois Sports Partnership
- The growth of Public participation networks
- Clubs and Societies that are inclusive of all ages

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- Public spaces should be made more comfortable to encourage people to use them
- Create and increase opportunities for older people to contribute to their communities as there is a need for increased recognition of what older people have to offer their communities – such as mentoring/skill sharing
- Lack of advertising of activities – as people age their interests need to be addressed and opportunities given to try out new hobbies
- Lack of local information available – notice boards in towns would help – a lot of information available but from many different sources and formats
- Not enough winter activities

Feedback included:

- Intergenerational mentoring programs would be good
- There is a need for warm, comfortable spaces for people to come together- other than pubs, betting shops etc.
- There is a need for greater appreciation of the skills, knowledge and potential of older people to add to communities and society in general, while improving their quality of life and feeling valued
- Establishment of a Bridge Centre – this activity is great for keeping the brain active which is a key factor in avoiding deterioration in this area.
- Continue to engage with the community in a number of areas of policy: housing, transport, disability, social inclusion and so on
- Make public spaces more comfortable
- There needs to be more promotion of social activities and outings, which will assist with more information sharing

The value of Social Participation could not be overestimated, according to stakeholders. The shared opinion of the stakeholders was that having had a prolonged period of restriction, at various levels during the recent pandemic, that a large number of groups had lost connections to their community, not only as individuals but also in community groups they may have been involved with. The impact of this is most pronounced in rural areas, due to lower density of population. A focus of the new strategy should be to encourage and support people to get involved once more. The promotion and design of activities will be crucial in increasing participation.

Communications and Information

Older people have the information they need to live full lives

Successful organisation, communication and information leads to better community engagement. Engagement provides people with opportunities to have a greater say in what happens in their community and their county and to have a greater say in decision-making.

What Older People Like in Laois

- Good Adult Education service
- Social Media – WhatsApp and Facebook
- Live streaming of events
- Citizen Information Centres and Libraries are great
- Information sharing through PPNs , groups, clubs, Parish newsletter, community notes in regional papers
- Smartphones

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- Lack of social media and IT skills training
- Broadband availability, especially in rural areas
- Up to date list needed for emergency and useful contact numbers
- Need for a coordinated approach to the provision of information regarding services – not on-line only options- there is still a need for hard copy information
- Complicated information, assistance required in helping older people with forms- information should not be so heavy on terminology
- Clear information needed on how to access counselling services
- Loss of confidentiality when asking friends to help with apps eg. online banking

Feedback included:

- The use of community notice boards introduced – indoor and outdoor would be good
- Could there be Open days at LCC headquarters? Community visits to familiarise themselves with aspects of policy, participation etc
- Council/Library staff could assign time to assist with form filling
- Relevant news should only go to relevant groups
- Hard copies of information for those who are not on the internet – on paper people can read/take notes
- There is a need for more social media and IT skills training
- Broadband availability is still an issue – especially in rural areas
- Transport timetables need to be coordinated and easier to access

The services guide which has been in circulation and distributed through the libraries, County Council and on request was seen as a good initiative by stakeholders as was the “Who Cares” booklet produced for carers. The Age Friendly show “chatters and matters” which was a tri county alliance and produced by members of those OPC’s was under review at the time of the Strategy Workshop. This show has since come to a close with no obvious vehicle as yet for its return. This could be a potential opportunity for an inter-generational project. With the amount of information available across all platforms, there is a need for a centralisation of information- community noticeboards were mentioned as a way to get information to communities, and the PPN was stated as a vital source of information also to community groups.

Civic Participation and Employment

Older people have opportunities to remain at work and actively participate in society for as long as possible

Successful communication and information leads to better community engagement, which in turn provides people with opportunities to have a greater say in what happens in their county and to be more active in decision making.

What Older People Like in Laois

- Flexibility is starting to emerge – continuing in employment- remote working and hubs
- Better Health enabling longer working life
- Enhanced awareness of ethos and potential of PPNs

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- More part-time employment for older people needed- it would be beneficial to have some part time work with companies at an older age. Some countries encourage this on a 4-5 hr pw basis. It gives a sense of purpose

- Life after retirement – social void and a big adjustment to make
- Finding information on volunteering opportunities is a challenge
- Not enough alternative opportunities for women to get involved in alternative groups other than Active Retirement

Feedback included:

- Active Participation is possible to a much greater age
- People’s health is now better and they can work longer – people who work longer provide benefits of experience to young
- Civic Participation and employment gives a sense of purpose
- Older people have skills and knowledge which need to be recognised and shared
- Corporate, State and Semi-State companies should be encouraged to employ a percentage of workers in retirement age. Employers in Laois could be approached re possibility of employing older people on a 4-5 hr a week basis as in USA. If there is a positive response – arrange a meeting. This has been successful in hospitality and retail in other countries
- People should be enthused to re-invent themselves
- Older people in work should be highlighted to show people the possibilities
- Volunteering opportunities are available and should be promoted and encouraged

Once again, the stakeholder consultation mirrored that of the older community. The ability to transition successfully from an active working life to retirement was discussed and the role of continued active participation in achieving this was stressed.

The contribution of Laois Volunteer Centre in providing and promoting opportunities to remain active was recognised and it is important that they are supported. A sense of purpose features heavily across studies and was a theme at the 2022 Older Persons Convention in Meath.



Consultation Day – Bloom HQ, Mountrath, Co. Laois

Older people lead healthy and active lives for longer

People are living longer, and they are healthier and more active in later life. This has resulted in an increasing need for age-friendly services and physical and social activities to meet their varying needs and abilities. Healthy ageing and social care ranges from nutrition and physical activity interventions for senior to actions dedicated to promote independent living and tackle social exclusion and loneliness..

What Older People Like in Laois

- Healthy living initiatives from HSE
- Laois Sports Partnership events and advice
- Regional Hospital
- Public Health centres
- Some GP practise participate in preventative services

What Older People Have Told Us Are The Challenges

- Home care hours – hard to get
- Downgrading of smaller community hospitals
- There needs to be improved communication of opportunities for people in their communities
- There needs to be improvements and supports for social services
- Lack of dignity – better quality patient care required in A&E departments – “Hospital Champion” required to assist older people through A&E procedures
- Lack of chair lifts

Feedback included:

- Healthy Living Initiatives by the HSE are popular and better health means less dependence on the health system
- There needs to be communication of the opportunities at County and National Level for retired people in their communities and of the need to empower people where necessary – mental health connotations etc – arrange talks on nutrition, health, mental health and exercise
- Continue awareness campaigns on drugs, alcohol and healthy lifestyles
- Laois Sports Partnership events and advice are very good
- Transport to hospitals and health centres is an issue
- There is a need for support services, including laundry cleaning, meals on wheels and so on
- More information available on private and public health services.
- More promotion required for age friendly groups such as Active retirement groups, sheds and so on

The feeling about stakeholders centred around a recurring theme across many themes- that being the communication of opportunities and programmes available.

The importance of the support services and the awareness of them among the older community is vital. One potential area of support was discussed , namely the transportation of people to hospital appointments. The issue of providing transport by volunteers to appointments presents challenges in the areas of vetting, costs, insurance and logistics and remains a long-term goal, with further options not apparent at the moment.

It was noted that the HSE Integrated Care Programme for Older People is in its formative stage in the Laois/Offaly area and that Age Friendly Laois and the Older Person's Council are represented on the *Living Well at Home* workstream.

Appendix 4: Additional Resources & Info

Age Friendly Ireland:	www.agefriendlyireland.ie
Age Friendly Homes:	www.agefriendlyhomes.ie
World Health Organization:	www.who.int
Age Friendly Laois:	https://laois.ie/departments/community/promoting-social-inclusion/#2

Appendix 5: Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme

Works which are delivered under the BEWHS, following a survey and approval of eligible homes, include:

- Attic insulation and ventilation
- Cavity wall insulation and ventilation
- External wall insulation and ventilation
- Internal wall insulation and ventilation
- Heating upgrades
- Window upgrades
- CFL bulbs

The eligibility criteria to avail of the scheme is:

- The person must own their own home
- The house must be built before 2006
- The homeowner must be in receipt of ONE of the following allowances:

1. Fuel Allowance, or
2. Job Seekers Allowance for over six months and have a child under seven*, or
3. Working Family Payment, or
4. One-Parent Family Payment, or
5. Domiciliary Care Allowance
6. Carers Allowance and live with the person you are caring for

Energy Saving Tips

Temperature

Heating

Turn the thermostat for your living areas down to 20°C. The temperature in hallways and bedrooms should be cooler, ideally between 15-18°C. You can reduce your heating bill by 10% by lowering your room temperature by just one degree.

Radiators

Use the radiator valve to turn the temperature down or off in rooms that you do not use a lot.

Hot water

Set your hot water thermostat to between 60-65°C, to make sure that you do not overheat your water.

Appliances

Most of the energy used by a dishwasher and washing machine is for water heating. Run them on a lower temperature setting and save on your energy costs. Wash clothes at 30°C if they aren't particularly dirty.

Fridge freezer

Keep your fridge's temperature at between 2-3°C for the best performance. This keeps your food safe to eat and avoids freezing (and ruining) your fruit and veg. The freezer should be set to -15°C.

Draughts

Listen to your mother

Close doors between rooms that are heated and unheated to keep the heat in.

Plug draughts

Check windows, keyholes and doors for draughts of cold air and plug them. Unused fireplace? A chimney balloon will keep the draughts out and the heat in.

Curtains

Close curtains to keep heat in, but open them in the morning to let the heat of the sun in.

Hot Water

Showers

A shower typically uses 20% of the energy compared to a full bath, so keep the bath as a treat.

Taps

Don't leave the hot tap running – you are pouring energy and money down the drain. See our Temperature tips for reducing your appliance and water heater temperatures.

Cooking

Oven

Keep your oven door shut and use the space well. Batch cooking saves you time and energy, especially if you have a busy lifestyle.

Hob

Don't let the heat escape by covering your pots and pans with a lid. The lid keeps the heat in and reduces condensation in the kitchen. Use the right sized hob for your pan – the closer the match, the less energy you use.

Kettle

Don't boil full kettles for one cup of tea, but do make sure you have enough water to cover the element.

Energy savers

Where possible use a microwave for cooking, and use the toaster rather than the grill.

Appliances

Washing machine and dishwasher

Most of the energy used by a dishwasher and washing machine is for water heating. By running these appliances at a lower temperature setting you will save on your energy costs. Make sure they're filled up before switching them on to avoid wasting water and energy.

Try to use the washing machine and

dishwasher at times when there is lower energy demand and avoid turning it on between 7-9 in the morning and 5-7 at night. This may not save you money but will help avoid excessive CO2 emissions from power stations.

Tumble dryer

Tumble dryers are big energy guzzlers so dry clothes on a clothes horse or washing line on warm and dry days. When you do use a dryer, try to put heavy and light clothes into separate loads.

Fridge / Freezer

Don't leave the fridge door open for too long while getting food. For every 10–20 seconds the door is open it takes 45 minutes for the fridge to cool down to its original temperature.

Don't put warm or hot food straight into the fridge or freezer. The fridge or freezer has to work extra hard and draw more energy to cool it down. Thawing food in the fridge is better for keeping your food safe to eat and keeps the fridge cool.

Defrost the inside of your freezer at least every 6 months to help it run efficiently.

Boilers

Having your boiler serviced once a year will make it more reliable, safer and run more efficiently. When you are having your boiler serviced ask your plumber to explain the settings and how to use them correctly.

Appendix 6: Laois Partnership – supporting the Men’s Sheds

As part of the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) Laois Partnership supports Laois Men’s Sheds. 7 Sheds are supported from all over Laois. The membership is mainly made of retired men. Men’s Sheds have been shown to improve both physical and mental well being of the men who attend the shed on a regular basis. Statistically it has been demonstrated that Men suffering from Mental Health Issues can have positive outcomes from engagement with Men’s Shed Groups “For the majority, the shed provides a place to get out of the house, for some it offers the prospect of future employment, but for the vast majority it is a place of belonging. Men said they felt happier at home and a majority said their wellbeing had improved since coming to the shed.” L. Carragher (DR) ‘Men’s Sheds in Ireland’ 2013.

This has really shown up during COVID where Laois Partnership in collaboration with shed members have supported the older and more vulnerable men during these unprecedented times. Since the country has opened up Laois Partnership has facilitated in collaboration with the LOETB Wood Work and Wood Turning in various sheds to encourage members to come back to their shed to take part in these activities. This has proved to be an unqualified success, which was validated by responses from individual members to 2 Focus Groups undertaken in December 2022. One of the typical responses from the men has been “Going back to meet my pals and doing the courses has been a life saver to me” It is therefore incumbent on service providers to continue and expand the offering to older men in Co. Laois.

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