



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



mayo
Age Friendly County
Programme

2022-2026





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FOREWORD

The world's population is ageing. People are living longer and healthier lives; and are experiencing older age very differently from our grandparent's generation.

As people grow older, they want to stay healthy, feel safe, be independent, live in their own homes and be part of their communities. In creating sustainable communities, we need to focus on meeting the needs of our citizens across their entire life cycle, ensuring they are afforded a supportive environment where they can continue to grow and contribute to society. One of the key objectives of Mayo County Council is to help build a County which allows us to live as independently as possible for as long as possible. Central to this vision is the role of our older people.

This document outlines a new strategy to improve the lives of all older people in County Mayo and sets out a strategic plan ensuring that Mayo continues to grow as an Age Friendly County. The Strategy is built on extensive consultations with older people. It was developed with Mayo's Age Friendly County Alliance (group comprising the most senior decision makers from key public, private and not-for-profit agencies) as well as representatives of the Mayo's Older Persons Council.

The strategy sets out a framework which will underpin the work of the Alliance under eight specific areas for action, they are: Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Value and Respect, Social Participation, Communication and Information, Civic Participation and Employment, Community Support and Health Services.

The Age Friendly Alliance have a responsibility to work collaboratively to ensure that an inclusive environment is created across the County whereby older people continue to have a key role to play in making Mayo an Age Friendly County, and a County of choice to live, work and invest.

Mayo as an Age Friendly County will be a better place for all of us and we look forward to your support and collaboration in delivering on the objectives of this strategy and in helping to build that brighter more inclusive future!



Cllr. Michael Smyth
Cathaoirleach
Mayo County Council

A MESSAGE FROM US

CHAIR OF MAYO'S AGE FRIENDLY ALLIANCE

As Chairperson of Mayo's Age Friendly Alliance, it gives me great pleasure to present Mayo's second Age Friendly Strategy 2022 – 2026. Its intention is to improve the lives of all people in County Mayo.

This strategy is the result of a collaborative approach, involving consultation with our senior citizens along with key service providers from the statutory, voluntary, public and private sectors in Mayo. It will enable us to develop and adapt in a sustainable way to both the challenges and opportunities presented by our changing demographics.

I would like to thank the members of the Mayo Age Friendly Alliance and Older Persons Council for their work in drafting and contributing to this strategy. I look forward to working alongside them to see the actions arising from this strategy make a difference to the quality of life of our senior citizens in Mayo.



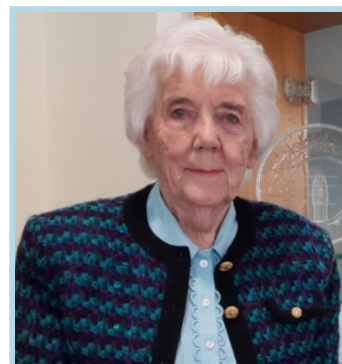
Kevin Kelly
*Chair of Mayo's
Age Friendly Alliance*

CHAIR OF MAYO'S OLDER PERSONS COUNCIL

Mayo's Older Persons Council was set up in 2016 as part of Ireland's Age Friendly Programme. The Age Friendly Programme was originally developed by the World Health Organisation to deal with the increasing ageing population throughout the world.

The purpose of the OPC is to be the voice of older people; members of the Older Persons Council can raise issues of importance and inform the decision-making process of Mayo's County Age Friendly Alliance. The OPC reminds and encourages older people of everything they CAN do rather than allow them regret what they no longer can do.

I feel confident that the 2022 – 2026 programme will be another great success and Mayo will continue to be a safe County in which to grow old.



Marie Flanagan
*Chair of Mayo's
Older Persons Council*

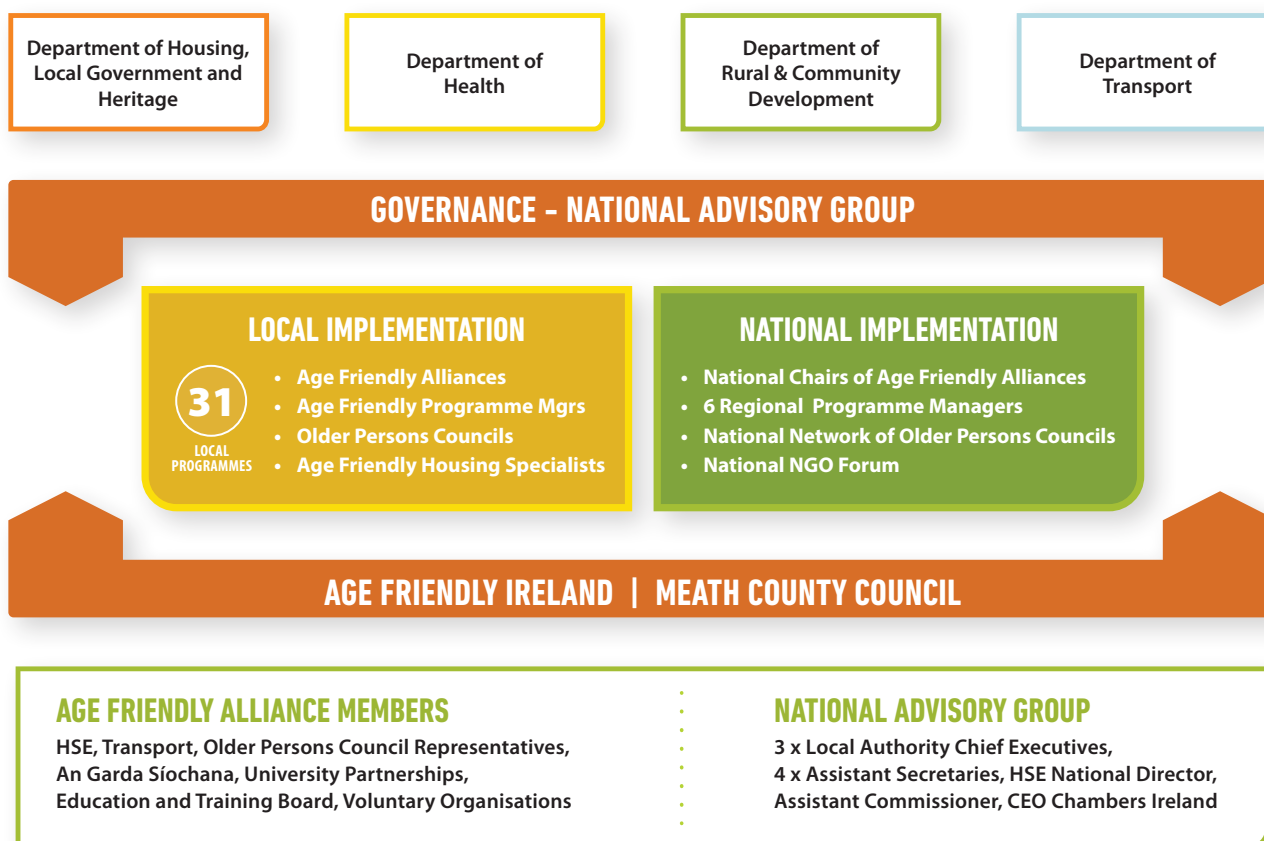


ABOUT MAYO AGE FRIENDLY COUNTY PROGRAMME

AGE FRIENDLY IRELAND

Age Friendly Ireland is a shared service of local government hosted by Meath County Council. The shared services manage the national Age Friendly Programme, affiliated to the World Health Organization's Age Friendly Cities and Communities Network. The national programme is operated through a team-based framework of 31 local Age Friendly Programmes hosted in local government.

The **National Age Friendly Shared Service** supports cities, counties, towns, villages and rural communities across Ireland to prepare for the rapid ageing of our population by paying increased attention to the environmental, economic and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.



Age Friendly Programmes work to provide walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to key services and opportunities for older people to participate in community activities. By doing so, these communities are better equipped to become great places, and even lifelong homes, for people of all ages.

Local Age Friendly Programmes are informed by a positive ageing perspective and seeks to enhance and improve the lives of older people across the country by giving them a voice in the decision-making processes that affect their ability to live full and active lives. Initiatives focus on areas such as housing, transport, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combating isolation among older citizens.

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

***-Glenn Miller, Director of Education and Research,
Canadian Urban Development Institute***

WHAT IS AGE FRIENDLY MAYO?

This **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022 – 2026** builds on our first Age Friendly County Programme successfully delivered between 2016 and 2021. Our first Age Friendly County Programme for Mayo sought to address the challenges faced by our older people and make our county a better place to grow old in.

Our first programme of activities worked to improve the services and facilities that our older people identified as being important to them, and the wider community, to live healthy and active lives in County Mayo. A key outcome of our first Age Friendly Programme was the establishment of structures to design, deliver and deploy actions to embed Age Friendly initiatives in our communities across County Mayo. The key contributors to our first county programme were the Age Friendly Alliance and the Mayo Older Persons Council (OPC).

AGE FRIENDLY ALLIANCE

Age Friendly Alliance brings together older people, community/voluntary, public and private sector service providers seeking to change thinking about ageing and how services to our older people are planned and delivered.

The Alliance oversaw the implementation of our Age Friendly Strategy 2016-2021, a five-year plan which set out actions that provided a vision for a county where our older people were supported, connected and valued for their contribution to community and family life.

Mayo Older Persons Council, represents the voices, needs and lived experiences of our older people, and promotes their inclusion in all areas of community life.

Working in equal partnership with the Age Friendly Alliance, the Older Persons Council generated ideas for Age Friendly initiatives to address issues ranging from isolation and loneliness to fitness and active ageing.

OLDER PERSONS COUNCIL

Mayo Age Friendly County Programme is informed by a set of significant commitments Mayo County has made to the World Health Organisation's (WHO) global '**Age-Friendly Cities and Communities**' (AFCC) Programme, aimed at enhancing the age-friendliness of rural and urban communities. In addition, our national **Age Friendly Ireland Programme** supports cities, towns and counties across Ireland to prepare for the ageing of our population by promoting initiatives, knowledge generation and supports in building our county's capacity to improve the environmental, economic and social factors that influence the health and well-being of our older adults.

Age-friendly programmes throughout Ireland and globally, seek to improve services, opportunity and accessibility options for older people to continue to participate in their communities.

By doing so, these communities are better equipped to become better places for people of all ages.

Each City and County adopting the AFCC Programme develops its own strategy for becoming Age Friendly, responding directly to the particular issues that most affect older people living in that community and in turn making it a better place to live.

Our **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** seeks to continue the established approach set down in our previous Age Friendly County Programme, namely to better plan for and meet the needs of our older population.

It reflects our membership commitment to the World Health Organisation Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities and reinforces the promise to ensure that County Mayo is a great place to grow old.

This **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022-2026** provides for the continuation and expansion of the structure of **multi-agency collaboration** (statutory, voluntary and community sectors) where our partners work together to create the environment and opportunities for older people to live well in our County.

The Age Friendly Ireland (AFI) Programme is part of a World Health Organisation (WHO) 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, good services, and live in a safe environment.

Participate fully in everything that is going on in our communities, cities and counties.”

(Ireland’s National Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme)

In Ireland, the Age Friendly Ireland Programme is coordinated by Age Friendly Ireland who brings together, supports and provides technical guidance to the 31 local authority led, multiagency Age Friendly City and County Programmes¹.

MAYO AGE FRIENDLY VISION, MISSION & GUIDING VALUES

Our county programme has been informed by the Age Friendly Alliance, the Older Persons Council and consultation with older people throughout the county.

In devising this county programme our focus was on those aged 55 years and over. However, we acknowledge older people in County Mayo like elsewhere are not a uniform group and different people are affected by challenges at different ages depending on a number of factors including their gender, health, ethnic or cultural, socio-economic backgrounds.

At the heart of the work of our **Age Friendly County Programme 2022-2026** is our vision, our mission and a set of guiding values that will support and inform every aspect of our work and will continue to do so over the life of our programme.

OUR VISION

A future where all older people in County Mayo are given the opportunities, information and resources they need to live life to the full.

OUR MISSION

To ensure our older people are supported to achieve the best outcomes for themselves, their families and their communities.

Our guiding values will ensure that older people are involved, connected and valued, and provided with accessible information, supports and resources to equip them in participating and living in their communities.

OUR AIM & OBJECTIVES

Through effective collaboration, the overarching aim of our county programme is to **act as an effective co-ordinating voice for and with older people** in furthering supports, actions and the promotion of communication between older people and services.

The **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** objectives are:

To **inform and communicate** to older people the range of supports that are available to them.

To encourage **co-operation** with and between older people, services and communities in County Mayo.

To continue to develop and expand supports to ensure older people are **engaged and empowered** in voicing their own needs, solutions and vision for the future of County Mayo.

To **foster best practice** in supporting our older people and the promotion of quality supports and service provision across County Mayo.

To recognise the **diversity of older people** and commit to promoting County Mayo as an inclusive place in which to grow old.

MAYO AGE FRIENDLY ALLIANCE MEMBERS



AGE FRIENDLY POLICY AT GLOBAL, NATIONAL & EUROPEAN LEVELS

Our citizens are living longer and responding to this demographic shift will have consequences for how we plan for the years ahead. The proportion of the global population aged 60 will double from 11% in 2006 to 22% by 2050.

Census data (CSO, 2016) indicated that the number of those aged 65 and over rose by 102,174 with old age dependency ratios at 20.4 per cent for the State, compared to 17.4 in 2011. Given the increase in our ageing population a significant number of national policies and strategies have been developed and act as an influence on Age Friendly Strategies.

The National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS) (2013) for instance provides a framework for cooperation to address age-related policy and service delivery across Government and society. The Strategy is intended to promote older people's health and well-being so that older people can continue to contribute to social, economic, cultural and family life in their own communities for as long as possible, thereby representing a vision for an age-friendly society. The Strategy highlights that **ageing is not just a health issue, but rather requires a whole of Government approach to address a range of social, economic and environmental factors** that affect the health and well-being of our ageing citizens.

As part of the NPAS implementation process, a **Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI)** was established in collaboration with the Health Services Executive's (HSE) Health and Well-being Programme. HaPAI provides an ongoing system for measuring and reporting on positive ageing and implements the research objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS). The initiative aims to **monitor changes in older people's health and well-being linked to the goals and objectives of the NPAS**. This is done primarily through the development of national positive ageing indicators published every two years. The first Positive Ageing National Indicators Report was published in 2016. A local indicators report, entitled Positive Ageing in Age Friendly Cities and Counties, was published in June 2018.

COUNTY MAYO: A SNAPSHOT

Mayo County is the third largest county in the State and measures 5585 km² in area. The population density for County Mayo is 23.4 people per sq. km. The principal towns are Castlebar (13,496) Ballina (10,623) Westport (5,894) Claremorris (4,487) Ballinrobe (3,987). The peripherality of County Mayo, in national and international terms, is exacerbated by some infrastructural challenges, particularly in relation to transport connections, telecommunications and energy. These challenges can present inhibiting factors in terms of the social, economic and cultural development of the County and quality of life in general.



Total population is 130,425 consisting of 64,879 males and 65,546 females.



Almost 18% of people in Mayo are over the age of 65, and 20% are under the age of 15.

40 yrs

The average age profile of the county is 40.2 years, an increase of 1.6 years since Census 2011.



71% of people in Mayo live in rural areas.

61%

The age dependency rate in County Mayo was 61% and the national average is 52.7%

OUR CONSULTATION

Age Friendly Mayo is committed (in line with the Global Age Friendly Initiative) to implementing a cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation, with each cycle lasting five years. Our consultation provided a comprehensive assessment of the current lived experiences of older people in County Mayo and was informed by the views of more than 194 people over the age 55 years, drawn from a wide age range within the cohort, geographical areas and circumstances. In addition, 26 services providing support and advocating with and on behalf of those over the age of 55 years participated in the consultation. Views were collected through a series of public consultations held from late 2021 to early 2022. In addition, it draws on a range of sources including feedback from a consultation with older people through interviews, focus groups and an on-line and postal survey, the evaluation of Mayo Age Friendly Strategy 2016–2021 (2020) and reference to Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI) 2018.

STRUCTURE OF THE MAYO AGE FRIENDLY COUNTY PROGRAMME 2022– 2026

The following section considers the views of the older people who participated in the consultation. Our **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** is built around the WHO's eight themes of essential features of Age Friendly Cities and Communities:



The following section provides an analysis of our consultation process with older people, services across County Mayo and the good practice established in our first Age Friendly County Programme.

The HaPAI findings (2018) for County Mayo are also detailed under each theme of the Strategy, with the key findings summarised for each theme.

Arising from the consultation process, **key priorities and actions** have been identified that are of significant importance to older people and to the services that provide support to older people in County Mayo.

An Age Friendly Action Plan accompanies this document that will guide and support the lead and partner organisations in implementing and evaluating **the Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026**.



A PROUD, CHANGING COUNTY

County Mayo is a proud, vibrant, inventive and ambitious County, with a reputation for embracing innovation. County Mayo like the rest of Ireland is changing in a fundamental way. Our citizens are living longer and responding to this demographic shift will have consequences for how we plan for the years ahead. An ageing society presents opportunities for our County and the skills and lived experiences of older people need to be viewed as a great asset. However, it will also require changes in how we work, how we care for, communicate and interact with each other, the built environment, the way we live our lives, how we learn and how we use technology.

The following section provides an overview of our **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** priorities and actions to meet our aim **to act as an effective co-ordinating voice for and with older people** in furthering supports, actions and the promotion of communication between older people and services, e.g. HSE, transport, Local Authorities.





AGE FRIENDLY
MAYO 2022-2026:

OUR PRIORITIES & ACTIONS



THEME 1: OUTDOOR SPACES & BUILDINGS

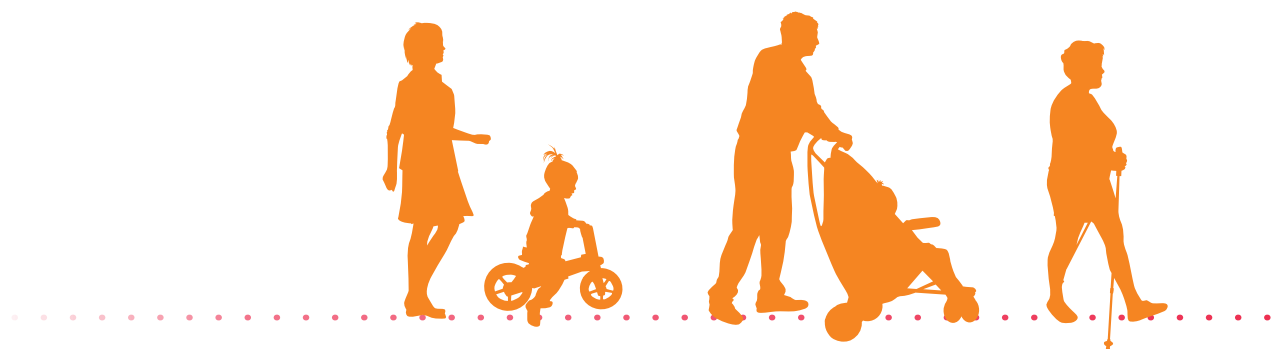
The process of ageing is often accompanied by a greater sensitivity to physical features of the built environment. Buildings and outdoor spaces are a key aspect of an age-friendly county. They can support (or hinder) physical health, wellbeing, independence, quality of life in older age and the opportunity to 'age in place'.

An Age Friendly environment is not just older people friendly. Barrier free buildings, roadways and streets enhance the mobility and independence of people living with a disability, those who care and provide supports to young and older people, parents/guardians and visitors to an area. Secure outdoor spaces allow children, young people, families and older people to venture outside in confidence. The whole community benefits from an Age Friendly living environment. The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) identified a number of key needs in respect of Outdoor Spaces and Buildings including:

Walkability: HaPAI (2018) assessment of personal mobility and accessibility of the built environment indicated that 'people in the countryside or village areas (29%) had more difficulty in their locality compared to those living in towns or inner cities and suburbs (22%). In County Mayo, 33.5% of respondents stated **dissatisfaction with the walkability of their area.**

Paths and Pavements: 40.3% of respondents in County Mayo indicated that they were dissatisfied with the quality and continuity of paths or pavement.

Access to Essential Services (one or more) includes postal, full banking services, public transport, supermarkets or other shops, health services or Garda stations: 41% experienced difficulties accessing essential services, 25% experienced some difficulty and 15% experienced great difficulty.



What the consultation told us

The majority of participants who took part in the consultation process were **satisfied with the community in which they lived**. Many recognised that good progress has been made with increased enhancement of outdoor spaces and buildings across County Mayo in recent years.

Participants identified many unique and exciting facilities that had evolved in their local communities such as the Tidal Pool in Belmullet and enhanced rest seating “*inside the door*” in Castlebar Town Library. However, many issues that require addressing were also identified.

TOILET FACILITIES AND REST STOPS

The physical fabric (and health impact) of the built environment on those less visible social and subjective relationships that people have with their surroundings in older age involves not only small-scale ‘obstructions’ that impede movement in a physical sense but the lack of facilities such as **free and accessible toilets or adequate public seating**.

Consultation participants indicated that the absence of such facilities can more insidiously inhibit and discourage physical and social movement in open spaces. Those interviewed and/or who took part in the focus group sessions identified that the absence of facilities such as **public toilets and rest stops** can, as significant environmental deficits, negatively impact on older people’s use and perception of space by challenging and diminishing the ‘confidence’ needed to get out and about – particularly when there is a (sudden) change in an older person’s health status.

Many of the participants interviewed said they would like more rest stops and ‘warm’ rest seating and hand rails in the towns and villages both in urban and rural areas with a particular emphasis on increasing the development of bus shelters with seating at bus stops and in shops/services where a person are likely to encounter long queues or “*had to wait to be collected*”.

PARKING

The need for increased **designated parking spaces** for older people close to the retail areas, services and outdoor amenities was identified both by drivers themselves but also by carers and supporters of older people (59.9% of participants).

Accessible, safe and unobstructed egress or entry from or to a car was stressed as a crucial area of development to support access to and from outdoor spaces and building.

PAVEMENTS AND WALKING ROUTES

The need for expansion of the **network of pavements and walking routes** (e.g. *“no footpaths ... rendering it extremely dangerous”*) as well as better surfaces and unobstructed walking routes through villages and towns (e.g. *“uneven paving ...outdoor setting encroaching on some streets on pavements”*) in order to safely access services and facilities were consistently identified by our consultation participants (72.3%).

Additionally, the need to **complete works on pavements and walking routes** were highlighted as a particular issue for participants in the consultation process such as *“the pathway between ... incomplete so access by walking impossible”*.

Green spaces and natural amenities such as the Wild Atlantic way, Céide Coast and Greenway were identified as *“needing more seating...older people need more frequent places to sit, (some) can't walk long distances without stopping to rest”*.

Areas that are accessible to wheelchair users and those using walking aids in towns and villages across the county were highlighted as challenging by consultation participants:

**“ It's very difficult to get around...in a wheelchair
The footpaths and routes need to be improved ”**

PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS

Navigating villages and towns with congested or fast moving traffic can present a challenge for older people in County Mayo. The consultation allowed participants to identify examples of specific areas in the county which they deemed to be particularly problematic especially in terms of pedestrian crossings such as:

“ Pedestrian crossings in Westport...drivers need clearer signage that pedestrian have right of way on the crossing ”

“ ...at bus and train stations in Castlebar ”

Traffic calming measures were identified as important by participants who are living in towns and villages to create a safer environment. These include pedestrian crossings, speeds ramps and reduced speed zones and increasing the length of time to cross at traffic lights is important so that older people have more time to cross the road safely.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The safety and security of older people was raised by participants in the consultation process. While the majority of participants felt safe and secure in public space they felt that visibility and presence of Gardaí needed to be increased to ensure that vulnerable older citizens feel safe. Calls by the Gardaí to older people (especially those living alone) was identified as a means of offering a sense of safety and security to older people. These calls also removed any fears older people may have had with Gardaí visiting them in their own homes. This was a significant proposal that was raised across all consultation groups.

OUTDOOR SPACES AND BUILDINGS

Given the potential for the narrowing down of spatial experience in older age there is a need to ensure that the planning and design of the built environment both signals and enables an openness to County Mayo's older citizens to make full and varied use of the rich and diverse resources that the community and built environment have to offer across the County.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Strengthen older people’s link with and “*belonging*” to their communities in older age and recognise the significant mental health and well-being benefits to enabling this connection by developing accessible, safe, enabling and Age Friendly environments.

KEY PRIORITIES:

Highlight the need to increase the number of barrier-free spaces and public facilities including “*warm*” public seating, handrails, seating at places where queuing or waiting occurs (such as banks, supermarkets, restaurants, post offices, libraries, shops, recreational routes such as Wild Atlantic Way/Greenway/Céide Coast), seating at well-lit bus stops with weather protection) in towns and villages (e.g., garages, churches, community centres, retail outlets etc.) and open countryside.

Campaign for sufficient public facilities that will make a valuable contribution in giving older people the confidence to leave their homes, increasing their opportunity to leave their homes more frequently and for longer periods of time.

Seek to work in partnership with public services to address uneven, poorly-maintained paving on pathways.

Raise awareness of the need to increase traffic calming measures in towns and villages in order to create a safer environment for older citizens. These include pedestrian crossings, speeds ramps and reduced speed zones and increasing the length of time available to cross at traffic lights so that older people can cross the road safely.

Seek in partnership with An Garda Síochana an increase in visible Garda presence in local communities.



KEY ACTIONS:

Provide the opportunity for older people to directly influence design and delivery of Age Friendly outdoor spaces and buildings in their communities through direct consultation avenues with public services.

Increase awareness of the facilities and supports available through digital means as well as through local promotional avenues such as local newsletters, church newsletters, local media and promotional materials such as posters, leaflets and flyers.

Seek support for increased access to public toilets that will contribute a vital role in giving older people the confidence to leave their homes, increasing their opportunity to leave their homes more frequently and for longer periods of time.

Seek support for the increase in wheelchair/walking aids areas suitable for wheelchair users or walking aids users. Focus should be on wide and flat tarmac footways, with easy transition at level changes, unobstructed navigation, controlled crossing points and clear, simple, easily visible and understandable signage.

Deliver walkability studies in towns, villages and buildings in each of the four Municipal Districts of the County and ensure the results are highlighted and promoted as a means of increasing awareness of the progress achieved in addressing challenges and issues identified.

Establish an Age Friendly Alliance Safety and Security Working Group to establish with the Gardai specific actions to increase Garda visibility and presence in communities.



THEME 2: TRANSPORTATION

Good transportation, including accessible and affordable public transport is a key factor in influencing active ageing and is vital to an age-friendly community. This theme cuts across many other areas, in particular, being able to move around a community determines social and civic participation and access to community and health services. It supports changing mobility patterns in older age, social connections and access to essential resources and services that support health and wellbeing.

Reliance on a car and the continuing ability to drive is often felt to be of increasing not decreasing importance to many older people especially in a rural county like Mayo, where public and private transport is difficult to access in some parts of the county.

The ability to drive is important for accessing services in County Mayo due to its size, its rural nature and scattered settlement patterns but it also fulfils a number of social benefits including, enabling older people to maintain “*connections with families, friends and neighbours*”.

A further challenge for transportation is the need to integrate climate action activities/goals and environmental concerns in any future consideration of transportation.

The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) identified a number of key needs in respect to Transportation including:

Access to Public Transport: 18.5% of respondents in County Mayo felt that public transport was difficult to access, 49.4% said it was easy to access and 32.1% said that it was not available.

Difficulties caused by lack of transport: 17.4% of respondents said that they experienced difficulties socialising, 13.6% they experienced difficulties doing essential tasks and 10.3% getting to health/social care appointments.

What the consultation told us

From the consultation it is clear that transport is important to the older residents of County Mayo. Participants identified a need for a more widespread public transport service in the county, but there is no one solution as the issues are complex and varied.

The majority of participants who took part in the consultation drove their own car (73.9%). Only 8.7% of participants in the consultation indicated that they used public transport, with 21.7% indicating that there was no bus stop in their area. A frequent theme arising from the consultation was the need for people to drive to “get a bus service”.

***No bus service where I live.
“ I have to drive approximately five kilometres
to access a very limited bus service ”***

The majority of participants indicated that they use their car for shopping, attending health appointments and one quarter stated that they use their car for social reasons such as visiting family or friends or attending social activities.

SUPPORTING CONFIDENT DRIVING INTO THE FUTURE

Participants (whilst currently driving a car) stated their concerns about their level of confidence in driving especially post the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as being concerned about potentially not being able to drive in the future.

At an emotional level giving up a familiar mode of transport such as driving a car for an older person might force dependence on forms of transport that people perceive to be problematic or undesirable - such as having to rely on others to be driven to services and potentially, a loss of sense of autonomy and wellbeing. This was of deep concern for participants in the consultation process.

INFORMATION ON TRANSPORT OPTIONS

In some locations in County Mayo there is good public transport and in other areas there is limited service provision. Poor information on public transport options was consistently raised by the consultation participants. High usage needs to be stimulated to ensure routes are viable. However, poor information can diminish usage such as “confusing” connections to on-ward journeys, unclear timetable information often in small print or on-line. In order to encourage the use of public transport that is available in an area, participants felt that it should be promoted in local service venues such as a post office, shopping centre, library, church and in local newsletters in clear and simple presentation.

LINKAGE BETWEEN SERVICES

Many of the participants involved in the consultation expressed frustration that there are poor connections between services in towns such as between the hospital in Castlebar and other services such as shops:

“When I go to Castlebar, I have to get a taxi from the hospital if I want to go to the shops or the chemist or the optician or anything like that...it’s a bit of a walk...there should be a hop-on-hop-off service maybe established by the retail sector in Castlebar”

TRANSPORT TO HEALTH CARE SUPPORTS

For both those who currently drive and those who do not, there was a clear reflection that transport services facilitating attendance at medical appointments are poor across the county. While acknowledging that cancer patients do receive some supports, the vast majority of participants who took part in the consultation expressed concerns for themselves and their peers in accessing hospital appointments.

Many articulated the need for public transport systems and the Health Services Executive (HSE) to be cognisant of the needs of older people, those with a disability and those who are unwell.

Suggestions outlined to address these deficits included:

- A need to plan and implement adequate provisions.
- Include exploring the possibility of a community car project utilising volunteers.
- Provide information in respect to transport options on appointment letters.

TRANSPORT TO SOCIAL EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Participants in the consultation stated that pre-Covid-19 pandemic some local events and activities considered travel options for older people. There was a general consensus that events and travel need to be coupled together, again stating on event information the transport options available. For off-peak transport needs to events, such as, in the evening or on a Sunday the potential for the establishment of organised 'volunteer cars' was identified by participants and services, which would take cognisance of insurance protection, fuel costs and ensure a central co-ordinating structure.

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi services were identified as a valued service both in Mayo towns and villages and the wider community however cost was identified by our consultation participants as a key barrier to taxi use. Participants suggested subsidised taxi fares for older people as an effective means of increasing access to transport in the county.

TRANSPORTATION

Good transportation encourages more equal access to the resources of the community. Beyond supporting physical access to resources and maintaining good health, transportation and mobility represents the ability to maintain independence and support a feeling of being connected to the wider community and reducing social isolation.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Support collaboration and communication between older people, transport, health and retail services to ensure older people have the best information possible and options to get to where they need to go, when they need to.

KEY PRIORITIES:

The previous Mayo Age Friendly Strategy 2016-2021 developed and delivered two 'Drive Safer for Longer' initiatives.

- These events offered older people in the county a “*practical and supportive way*” of acknowledging older people’s right to retain that independence.
- Each of the events were live streamed on Facebook ensuring a wider audience beyond the 200 people who attended each of the events. Participants in the consultation process highlighted the need for this initiative to be rolled out on an annual basis over the life of our Age Friendly Strategy 2022 – 2026 especially post the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Additional perspectives were requested during the consultation such as providing information on the impact of climate change and exploring the costs associated with having a car should also be explored as part of the Drive Safer for Longer Initiative.

Transportation initiatives undertaken should include older people in addressing the needs of older people and not simply imposing actions “*without considering or including our voices*”. Innovative options for transport such as community cars and ‘buddy’ systems should be explored alongside initiatives to reduce the costs for older people of taxi use.

Increased promotion of transport options should be advertised in local venues and across local communication platforms. This would ensure that older people have accessible, timely and correct information on the transport options available to them including clearer timetables for those who do not wish to drive or have no access to a car.

Co-ordination and supportive initiatives between the HSE and transport organisations to enhance access to health services for older people by providing clear information and transport options as part of the appointment letters/communication.

KEY ACTIONS:

Deliver one 'Drive Safer for Longer' initiative per annum in each Municipal District of County Mayo over the life of the Strategy.

Identify and cost innovative transport solutions to support safe and increased access to transport.

Seek an increase in promotional information of transport options available at a local level that is relevant to the community.

Seek HSE and other health supports review of appointment schedules and how they marry with transport options available to older people through the provision of information on appointment details.



THEME 3: HOUSING

Housing is essential to safety and wellbeing, and with appropriate supports available allows people to stay independent at home. Housing condition, ease of heating, accessibility and design play a vital role in its suitability and appropriateness in later life. Older people are more likely than any other age group to live in homes that are in a poor state of repair, experience loneliness and isolation.

One of the key needs identified in the HaPAI Research findings (2018) in respect to Housing is:

Housing Upkeep Problems: 11.3% of respondents reported housing upkeep (cost or carrying out maintenance) problems.

What the consultation told us:

FUTURE HOUSING OPTIONS

Most participants who took part in the consultation process indicated they would consider moving from their present homes - stating that they would like to move to a smaller house in the future. Factors that would influence this decision included 51% stating that they would consider their proximity to services such as shops, health care and local amenities. Just over 39% of participants in the consultation process stated that they did not intend to move.

INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Accessing social care is increasingly tied to the concept of home equity release (e.g. 'Fair Deal' Scheme). Information on options and availability of these alternatives were key needs under the housing and home domain identified by participants in the consultation process.

The most significant theme arising from the consultation was the need for clear and accessible advice and information in respect to supporting older people around adaptations to their homes to assist them to live independently for longer in well maintained, adapted and climate friendly homes.

Our consultation participants indicated that enabling independent living within a home environment will require “*information, support and commitment*” to adapt that environment to support independent living, maintain health and quality of life in older age. In addition, they felt that rising disability rates including cognitive (e.g. dementia) will require further housing adaptations. This in turn raised concerns as to the “*costs*” of housing adaptations and repairs.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Across all consultation participants there was increased concern about energy and fuel poverty experienced by older people. Information and advice on energy efficiency was cited of key importance in order to offset the impact of increasing energy costs. In addition, over a quarter of our consultation participants told us that they were concerned about the future sources of energy. Many participants felt that increases in fuel costs were preventing their use of more traditional forms of fuel but that there were no environmental friendly alternatives available to them in heating their homes.



HOUSING

In a changing and increasingly complicated climate of housing provision participants in the consultation process identified real concerns around having genuine future housing choice and the role of housing design/adaptation in cultivating liveable home environments that account for their needs and desires to live independently in their home for as long as possible. Given the growing proportion of time spent in the home in older age, housing and the meaning attached to 'home' take on considerable importance. Good quality, affordable, well-designed housing is an important element in an Age-friendly County and it takes on a vital meaning to the older persons' independence.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Ensure that older people are supported to stay living independently in their home through the provision of clear, accessible advice and information.

KEY PRIORITIES

Build awareness across all older age households through increased information and advice on energy efficiency to mitigate the impact of increasing energy costs and fuel poverty experienced by older people.

New and progressing care needs can often involve older people seeking out adaptations to their home or different forms of housing such as moving into more specialist housing, for instance, sheltered housing, care facilities or moving into a lower maintenance property that is easier to manage.

Clear, user-friendly Information on the supports available to facilitate these options was a key priority arising from the consultation process.

Accessing social care is increasingly tied to the concept of home equity release (e.g. Fair Deal Scheme). Information on options and availability of these alternatives were key needs identified by our participants in the consultation process.

KEY ACTIONS:

Provide **clear and accessible information** at local level in a wide range of settings (e.g. community centres) on housing options including adaptations, environmental and climate friendly supports.

Develop and deliver energy efficiency information programme focused on older age households to ensure appropriate information and advice resources are directed to our older citizens in the County.

Develop and deliver a campaign of information on future housing options and accessing social care supports especially in respect to home equity release (e.g. 'Fair Deal Scheme').

Co-ordinate information programme(s) to empower older people to make clear informed decisions about housing options in later life. The model developed under the transport domain - 'Drive Safe for Longer' event - with presentations, question and answer sessions in different parts of the County was seen as *"a perfect way to get information to older people about housing"*.



THEME 4: SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

Social participation and social support are strongly connected to good health and wellbeing throughout life. Participating in recreational, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community, as well as family activities, allow older people to maintain or establish supportive and caring relationships.

The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) identified a number of key needs in respect to Social Participation including:

Walking for Health or Fitness: 73.2% of respondents in County Mayo walked for health and fitness, 21.5% stated that they did not walk and 5.2% indicated that they had mobility issues.

Levels of Physical Activity: 62% of respondents said that they undertook at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week while 37.8% said no.

What the consultation told us

SPORTS AND LEISURE

Sports and leisure activities were very much a part of the discussions amongst the consultation participants.

Our consultation findings suggest that older people are very conscious that social activities “*protect*” physical, mental and emotional health in later life and provide a buffer against the effects of cognitive ageing.

For some participants their engagement in activities were very active and positive (45%) while for others it was very much something they would like to increase in order to improve their physical, social and mental wellbeing.



LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

People can, and do, experience loneliness at some point in their lives. For many older people loneliness can have a potentially devastating impact on their daily lives, health and wellbeing. Feelings of loneliness or poor engagement in social or leisure activities have well documented links with poor health. Loneliness is not an inevitable part of ageing but some of the common experiences of later life such as the loss of a partner, friends, family through death, living alone, retirement or poor physical health or lack of mobility place older people at a greater risk of exclusion from social participation.

Fifty per cent of participants stated that they felt 'extremely supported' in the previous four weeks to taking the on-line survey, with a further 26% saying that they felt 'very supported' and 24% said that they felt 'supported'. However, those who participated in the interview process indicated that at different times over the previous four weeks that they had felt lonely or isolated. The Covid-19 pandemic was presented by over 70% of interviewees as the main reason for this experience.

Strikingly, for 27% of interviewees they anticipated that at some stage in the future they would experience loneliness and/or isolation.

When asked what would ensure that loneliness would be lessened and social participation increased 68% of participants in the consultation process indicated that **local social groups** would help to alleviate loneliness and/or isolation.

PEER SUPPORT

Peer support for emotional wellbeing, maintaining a sense of purpose and combatting loneliness was identified as important to participants in our consultation. Activities identified including attending events with *"a friend"* or *"having an opportunity to meet new people"* or *"just having a phone call from someone"*.

Arts and creative activities/events such as the Bealtaine Festival and development of increased Library activities were identified by 34% of participants in our consultation as providing an opportunity to engage with others as maintaining or creating peer support, and as reducing social isolation.

Participants felt that an increase in arts and creative activities would *"be really beneficial to older people's wellbeing especially coming out of Covid"*.

Additionally, 59% of consultation participants indicated that in order to alleviate social isolation or loneliness they would like to see an increase in evening social activities (e.g. *tea dance, cinema club etc.*), while a further 45% said that they would like home visits for older people especially those living alone, 36% suggested increased day centre facilities and supports would be welcomed, while 31.8% stated that they would like older people to be contacted by phone.

PROMOTION AND ACCESS TO EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Participants in the consultation agreed that good information about activities and events was crucial to accessing and participating in social activities. They suggested that efforts should be increased to make information more available to them in a variety of formats, *“not just online”*. There was consistent agreement amongst the consultation participants that activities should be **conveniently located and accessible by transport** and at times that are convenient. The need to link transport options to events and to examine the costs to attend events and activities was seen as particularly important:

“ *Events are usually about 12 kms away but I don't have a car and I can't afford a taxi...* ”

There was some concern raised by participants about travelling in the evening and at night:

“ *...especially during the winter months* ”



MSLETB Community Education Programme Inisturk Baking Class

INCREASED INVOLVEMENT OF SELDOM HEARD POPULATIONS

A consistent theme amongst service provider participants was the need “to get more men involved” through social participation as well as other populations such as ethnic minority and the LGBTI+ populations. There was a deep sense that for many of the older people in these populations they were:

...not encouraged or provided with the option of participation in social, sports or recreational activities with the wider population

Older adults living with disabilities were:

...often not given the opportunity to participate in social events with the wider population, and this needs to change to ensure a true Age Friendly county (Service Provider)

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION

The consultation raised issues that participants felt needed to be addressed including the lack of opportunities to socialise, technology barriers, few activities involving populations that may be more distant from the wider community including older men, those from ethnic minority, LGBTI+ and people living with a disability. Having and maintaining social connections, feeling part of a community or network and being involved in social activities can impact directly on people’s quality of life in older age. Loneliness and isolation can be experienced in later life and are detrimental to health and wellbeing when it occurs.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Support all older people to engage in social life through increased sporting/leisure opportunities, access to events/activities including arts and creative endeavours, peer support and improved information and promotion of social participation opportunities and options at local community levels.

KEY PRIORITIES

Addressing social isolation, loneliness as well as physical, cognitive and mental ill health and wellbeing is a national challenge amongst many groupings. However, older age potentially can experience deeper and more profound impacts, especially in a County with such a rural population. Age Friendly Mayo will seek to establish preventative strategies to counteract social isolation and loneliness among older people and support older people to take positive steps to improve their health and wellbeing through increased participation in sports, recreational and creative activities.

Increase social interaction to ensure older people in County Mayo can enjoy a vibrant social and active life within their communities. This requires consideration by services and event organisers of older people's ability to access events/activities namely the provision of events and activities in **local communities** that are linked to transport systems/supports as well as enabling participation through discounted costs for attendance.

Signposting and providing information on local events/activities, services and groups in all formats that facilitate access will substantially enhance social participation and interaction at a local level.

Enhancing opportunities to enable our diverse communities to engage, participate and socially interact with the wider population will enhance integration, and reduce stereotyping and discrimination.

This focus requires providing a more diverse range of events and activities in consultation with support groups and diverse populations themselves that will encourage them to participate in social activities/events with the wider population of older people e.g. specific activities attractive to older men living alone, people living with a disability including cognitive disability, our Traveller community, our new communities and the LGBTI+ communities.



KEY ACTIONS:

Continue and expand the sports, arts and creative offer in collaboration with Mayo Sports Partnership, Mayo Arts Office, Mayo County Council's Library Service.

Establish with local media regular programming providing information, discussion and activities to our older population such as the development of book clubs through local radio stations.

Encourage services to increase and adapt promotional materials advertising social events/activities at local community level and deliver promotional materials and advertising in a range of formats including on-line, in print such as local newsletters, posters in strategic locations (e.g. post office, bank, church etc.) and in a range of languages.

Encourage services to consider the transport and financial needs of older people in planning and developing social events and activities.

Identify in collaboration with support/representative groups in County Mayo the integration needs of our diverse populations and collaborate on events/activities with particular focus on encouraging the collective participation of all communities together in social interaction, health and wellbeing initiatives.

Establish an Age Friendly Social Participation Sub Group to exchange information, planned activities and development of events and activities with specific focus on engagement of our diverse populations in social, sports, recreational, arts and creative activities.



OPC members with Comhairle na nÓg – "Butter making project" for Science Week 2021

THEME 5: RESPECT & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Ageist stereotypes inform everyday interactions, behaviours, perceptions and attitudes towards older people and, ultimately, normalise ageist attitudes within policies and practices of society. The manifestation of ageist attitudes, behaviours and beliefs are often obscure, and can vary in intensity both in how they are expressed but also experienced.

The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) identified a number of key needs in regard to Respect and Social Inclusion including:

Negative Attitudes towards Older People: 5.7% of those aged 55 and older in County Mayo reported experiencing negative attitudes and behaviours from others because of their age.

Intergenerational Friendships: 69.6% of respondents stated that they had no friend under the age of 30, 30.4% indicated that they had at least one friend under the age of 30.

What our consultation told us

EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

The vast majority of respondents to our on-line questionnaire responded that they never felt discriminated against on the grounds of age in County Mayo (91.3%). However 8.7% said that they had experience of discrimination.

Those who participated in interviews and focus groups while agreeing that they had not experienced direct discrimination stated that they were aware that there existed subtle negative perceptions in the wider community. Furthermore they said it is not always easy to “*explain*” ageist or negative behaviour towards older people but that they “*feel that it exists, in different ways*” including the media portrayal of older people as “*helpless*”:

“In the media there is often a discussion that anyone over 50 is on the downward slide! The talk when it is about older people is often about what can be done for them which is fine but you hear or read someone else talking rather than the person who is actually older and not always in need” (Interviewee)

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND NETWORKS

The experiences of discrimination on the grounds of belonging to a specific ethnic minority group, faith or culture, disability or sexual orientation was raised by a small number of interviewees and services. Discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice were common experiences amongst the Traveller community who participated in the consultation process though not always coupled with age discrimination. However the effects on the older population “*who have lived with discrimination their whole lives*” was very apparent and included a lack of confidence, isolation and mental health and wellbeing challenges.

New communities in County Mayo often have a younger age profile than the wider population. However service providers indicated that those older members of new communities in County Mayo are often living in households with a number of generations and can often be isolated in their homes, connect only with their own communities and can depend on younger members of their household for communication with services.

While services suggested that the numbers are small there was concern raised that as populations grow older and if supports and avenues to connections with the wider community are poor and their needs are not voiced, it potentially may give raise to further isolation and embedded social exclusion in the future.

Family Support Services who took part in the consultation indicated that the LGBTI+ community have poor representative structures in the west of Ireland, resulting in local policy and practices not always taking account of their needs.

The development of social networks across communities was raised as important actions under **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026**. There was a clear recognition of the link between social exclusion, isolation and poor physical, social and mental health outcomes for individuals and populations experiencing exclusion.

Both interviewees and focus group participants were acutely aware that communities are changing and “*newcomers*”, different cultures, faiths and groups are all part of our communities. There was a clear recognition that there was a need to include these groups in community and social networks.

INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACHES

The majority of participants in the consultation process felt that there were few activities that bring generations together beyond some specific projects that may be initiated by youth organisations or through Transition Year initiatives.

There was a clear belief that intergenerational approaches are not embedded in community programmes. Services who took part in the consultation in particular felt that *“they can be an add-on to a youth project or a nice thing to do with older people”*.

They felt that the value and benefits for both young and older generations was not fully explored or measured. They believed that increased intergenerational activities could contribute significantly to the view that growing older brings and adds many benefits to local communities through joint projects, mentoring programmes and learning exchange.

RESPECT AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Changes to society including technological advances, demographic changes and behavioural norms can affect older people’s social confidence. Distance between generations and specific groupings in society coupled with low appreciation and understanding of ageing and older people and their contributions to society all provide barriers to respect and inclusion of older people.

Older people have the right to respect and be included in the future planning and activities of their communities. Increasing social distance between generations and less value being placed on the wisdom of older people was identified during our consultation process. The need to address stereotyping, ageism and assumptions of need and encouragement of intergenerational respect were identified as key areas of focus for the future.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Increase awareness of the diversity and positive contribution of older people to County Mayo and strengthen community bonds through intergenerational engagement.

KEY PRIORITIES:

Seek to ensure age is not used to define or make assumptions about the role, value and potential of older people in County Mayo.

Increase promotion of bonds across communities and populations to break down barriers to social exclusion through a diverse range of activities that build social networks and diminish stereotyping of our older population.

Increase intergenerational communication and activities.

Enhance opportunities for older people from all communities to influence public policy and practice in a meaningful and lasting manner.

KEY ACTIONS:

Seek representation of older people experiencing or at risk of social exclusion in the Age Friendly Alliance and Older Persons Council including representatives from ethnic minority groups including the Traveller community, those living with disability and the LGBTI+ communities.

Develop in conjunction with youth and community services and networks an Intergenerational toolkit that will support intergenerational communication, activities and ensure clear guidance and integration of intergenerational activities in youth and older people's organisations.

Devise and deliver an Age Friendly awareness training and education programme that supports public services to challenge stereotypes and ageist practices and enhance staff understanding of age and the implications of age for different groups of older people.

Explore the development of an Age Friendly 'mark' for organisations, business and services to increase awareness of the needs of older people.

Develop short video clips as a means to deliver age awareness training to a wide range of services, agencies and organisations.

THEME 6: CIVIC PARTICIPATION & EMPLOYMENT

People do not stop contributing to their community or the economy once they reach a certain age. Some volunteer, continue learning and engage in work and/or enterprise development which enhance their communities.

Given our ageing population the future development of work patterns and the need to ensure that older people are provided with the opportunities to participate in lifelong learning, voluntary activity and employment will increasingly require a shift in local and national policy.

The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) identified a number of key needs in respect of Civic Participation and Employment including:

Employment and Retirement: 93.7% of respondents in County Mayo were not employed post-retirement age, while 6.3% were employed post-retirement age.

Volunteering: 80.3% of respondents in County Mayo volunteered less than monthly (including never) and 19.7% volunteered monthly.

Engagement on Political Activities (*defined as attended a meeting, attended a protest or demonstration, and contacted a politician or public official*): 90.3% of respondents in County Mayo stated that they had no political engagement, while 9.7% indicated that they engaged in political activity.

What the consultation told us

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

A core theme arising from the consultation process was that participants felt that they were not consulted or listened to by services (especially those in the public sphere) about their needs, their experiences and were not recognised for the knowledge they held.

Participants in the consultation process said that they would like more of a voice, be listened to and have an influence *“on things that matter to them”*. The need for services to regularly consult with older people in advance of development of plans or changes to public services was a consistent theme that arose across all participants. Furthermore it was stressed that any listening process should not be tokenistic and should be fully embedded in all public services approach to providing supports on behalf and with older people in County Mayo.

There are mechanisms in place at local and national levels for older people to contribute to the local issues including specific fora such as the Mayo Older Persons Council and Age Friendly Ireland. Each play an important role in acting as a local voice for older people in County Mayo and ensuring services are well informed on older people’s perceptions, experiences and opinions before decisions affecting older people and their communities are made. These fora provide opportunities to influence local policy and service development.

The Mayo Older Persons Council under the previous Age Friendly Strategy saw representation of needs at various meetings with public organisations such as the National Transport Authority, lobbying in respect to mammograms for the older age group with local TD and consultation meeting with TILDA representative. These were examples of *“needs led approach by people who actually experienced those issues”* thereby achieving a direct voicing of these issues by the people who have experienced them directly. However, when our consultation participants were asked what they knew about these specific fora the majority were unsure as to what the purpose of each was, how they worked and who participated in the structures.

VOLUNTEERING

The majority of those who participated in the consultation process did not volunteer (60%). When asked if they would consider volunteering in the future 47% indicated that they would be interested in doing so. Interviewees indicated that they did not know who needed volunteers, and many raised concerns about how much time commitment would be involved in a volunteering role. A significant and recurring question centred on would they be provided with training, information and on-going support. A common theme which also arose particularly amongst interviewees was concern about volunteering:

“ On my own... it would be great to do if I was with a friend or someone regularly there to work alongside me ”

In respect to those who currently volunteer in the County, when asked what kind of volunteering they participated in the responses were exceptionally varied. They included providing support to older people, new communities and people with disabilities in their communities (e.g. meals-on-wheels, community alert) to artistic and environmental support such as Tidy Towns and participation in dramatic, historical and musical societies. Roles ranged from providing direct assistance to the public in charity retail shops to information provision in local tourist venues. Two key trends arose among this cohort of participants in the consultation. Firstly, they were very much linked in and active in their communities, and secondly, the vast majority had a history of volunteering throughout their lives.

LIFELONG LEARNING

The role of learning and accessing new opportunities was highlighted in our consultation process in engaging older people in activities, reducing isolation and enhancing opportunities for work and enterprise development. The majority of participants (61%) had over the previous five years engaged in learning. A key provider cited was Mayo Sligo Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) especially in respect to digital learning.

The consultation evidence suggests that these programmes were successful for their role in increasing and encouraging socialisation opportunities as well as placing an emphasis on the role of information technology in the lives of our older population. For the 39% who had not participated in any form of learning programmes in the previous five years a myriad of reasons were provided. These reasons included caring and work duties, lack of time, poor transport supports, a lack of availability of programmes in local communities. Additionally, interviewees and focus group participants in particular added a significant barrier to their engagement in learning specifically stating that *“school wasn’t for them”* and many displayed a deep perception that because of their age they would not *“fit in”* and would not *“have the ability”* to participate in learning opportunities.

Adequate information on the range of learning opportunities available across the county was identified as a key challenge to learning by both those who had participated in learning opportunities and those who had not. Participants in our consultation wished to see the range of learning opportunities expanded beyond the current offer such as First Aid, Healthy Eating, Horticulture, Stress Relief, Languages, Art and Crafts Programmes.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Seventy-four per cent of respondents to the in-line survey indicated that it was neither easy nor difficult to access job opportunities, while 26% indicated that they found it difficult to access work opportunities. Many of the consultation participants during the interviews and focus group sessions felt that there was limited encouragement and a poor range of flexible and appropriately paid employment opportunities for older people in County Mayo.

Furthermore, interviewees agreed that workplaces were not open or adapted to meet the needs of older people. Many older people expressed concerns over the increasing cost of living for older people, which made it difficult for older people to be able to attend social activities or meet unexpected costs. Concerns were raised by participants in respect to their pensions and its inability to provide for a liveable income.

Participants felt that they are not aware of the economic implications of retirement and/or living on a state pension:

“ we don't talk about working beyond the age of 65 (years)... it not something that is on our horizon unless there is a media discussion about the pension age ”

This suggests that working in older life is not embedded in the everyday discussion of those over the age of 55 years. However, there was some acknowledgment that there may be negative economic implications to the reduction in incomes and the potential increase in cost of living in the future, and that work into older age potentially may address these issues.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Older People as individuals have unique and meaningful life experiences to share and enhance the communities in which they live. Enabling representation of older people's needs, knowledge and experience directly to policy makers is of key importance in ensuring that our older population are provided with the opportunity to influence policy and practices that affect them and their communities. Additionally the benefits of volunteering and lifelong learning in terms of wellbeing, health outcomes and social interaction are well established.

As our population grows older many older people may like to or need to remain economically independent and to continue to contribute to the economic viability of their County, especially in light of increasing longevity and activity in older age, than previous generations.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Support all older people to engage in voicing their needs and solutions to policy and practice issues affecting them.

Promote and support volunteering, lifelong learning and employment opportunities at local community level through increased promotion and effective communication about how to access and engage in such opportunities.

KEY PRIORITIES:

Further the development of the Older Persons Council, a key priority is to ensure continued civic engagement of older people in the County. Secure county-wide commitment to the active promotion older people's rights and ability to participate in the consultation processes carried out by services and agencies on their plans, policies and practices that effects them and their communities.

Increase older people's participation in volunteering and learning through increased promotion of access to supports that will facilitate their engagement.

Increase awareness of the impacts of extending working life into later life and support the planning for an active ageing population with employers.

KEY ACTIONS:

Enhance the structure and governance procedures of the Older Persons Council (OPC) through the inclusion of a wider representation of voices such as older men, people with disabilities (including older parents with adult children with disabilities), new communities and ethnic minority groups to ensure true inclusion and representation of all voices.

Develop in conjunction with Age Friendly Alliance and Mayo County Council a clear governing strategy setting out the election of members and officers, representation and linkage with other civic participation groups such as Mayo PPN.

Enhance Age Friendly information avenues within Alliance member organisations to ensure increased awareness and understanding of the work of Age Friendly Alliance and the OPC among member organisations.

Increase awareness and training opportunities for older people to volunteer and use their skills and experiences in their community through engagement with community, voluntary and health care sectors and Mayo Volunteer Centre.

In conjunction with the Age Friendly Alliance and Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB) expand and promote Social Media and Information Technology Programmes to communities throughout the county. In tandem promote the range of lifelong learning programmes on offer in local communities to our older population regardless of previous educational experiences.

Mayo Age Friendly Alliance and Older Persons Council establish in partnership with employer representative groups, trade union organisations and local development companies. Set up a working group to develop targeted employment supports for those over 55 years including identifying, competing for and securing employment and increase employers of the benefits that older workers can bring.



Active retired computer class funded through the MSLETB Community Education Programme

THEME 7: COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Communication and information is one of the principal vehicles upon which the other Age Friendly themes depends, as each, in their own way, rely on effective and timely communication and information, whether that communication is delivered through formal, structured channels or gained informally through personal social networks and interactions.

The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) identified a key headline in respect to Communication and Information:

Level of difficulty in accessing information on local activities and events: 2.0% of respondents in County Mayo indicated they experienced difficulty in assessing information and local activities and events, 3.5% indicated that they experienced difficulties in access information on health and social services.

What the consultation told us

AGE FRIENDLY INITIATIVE

A consistent theme arising from the consultation process was the low level of awareness of the Age Friendly Initiative. The majority of respondents to our on-line survey (93%) indicated that they were aware of Age Friendly Ireland, however only 58% were aware of Age Friendly Mayo. It was clear from the interviews and focus group participants that even when people may be aware of the Age Friendly Strategy they were unclear as to exactly what actions it carried out and how they could become involved.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS

The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) suggests that the majority of older people said they could find information they needed. Participants in the consultation process indicated that they would go to the Citizens Information Service (60%) for information on rights and entitlements, while 50% said they would go to family and friends, followed by 41.9% to healthcare services, 27% to Family Resource Centres, 23% to Mayo County Council and 4.5% to Age Friendly Mayo.

SOURCES AND PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION

Consultation participants identified a vast range of mediums in which organisations, services and communities communicate information including social media, websites, leaflets, posters, community events and meetings. However, participants felt that organisations and services were seeking to encourage older people to access services through digital avenues only.

Participants recognised that by putting more information on-line it can provide better choice, quicker access to information and allow people to access the information that is relevant to them.

Most participants in our consultation said that they had access to the internet and used it at home or had support using it at home, with 86% stating that they had access to a smartphone. WhatsApp was identified by 78% of on-survey respondents as a key information and communication method, followed by Facebook (56%) and Twitter (13%).

However, participants in the interview and focus groups were keen to highlight that not all their peers have the capacity to access digital information and communication sources. Even when people had access to digital information participants stated that the presentation of information can be complex, often out-of-date or not relevant to their information requirements. They considered word of mouth and social connections at a community level to be very effective means of communication with our older population.

However, consultation participants felt that not all communities have good social networks, thereby further compounding social isolation whereby older people cannot get the information they require when they require it.

The participants agreed that digital information and communication needs to be coupled with more traditional sources of information. The traditional sources of information highlighted as particularly important to the consultation participants included local newspapers (57%), local radio (48%), family and friends (47%), faith based/community newsletters (30%), Mayo County Council (17%) and the local library service (13%).

The need to promote plain language, simplicity, clarity and large font in all documents, websites, signage, posters, leaflets etc. was a consistent theme throughout the consultation process.

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Information and communication are seen as essential to ensuring that older people are aware of services, supports and resources available to them, and enable them to make their voices heard in influencing decisions affecting them.

The fast paced change of information and communication technologies are positive advances for all communities but also potentially mechanisms of social exclusion that organisations, supports and services need to be encouraged to consider.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Provide and encourage the delivery of good quality information to and effective communication with older people in County Mayo to enable them to make informed decisions, secure rights, and act in their own best interests.

KEY PRIORITIES

Increase awareness of the Age Friendly Initiative to ensure it meets the information and communication needs of older people in a meaningful way and that the contribution of older people is valued.

Establish of a single source of information to ensure that older people's opportunity/ability to access information and services is maximised.

Reinforce the responsibility of organisations and service providers to ensure all information is current and accessible, and ensure that all information and communication is readily accessible to older people with varying capacities and resources.

Improve information and communication avenues to older people that combine digital and more traditional forms of communication, especially for the publicity of amenities, services and facilities available within local communities.

Address cultural and linguistic barriers to effective communication. This involves providing information and communicating in ways that are linguistically and culturally appropriate that accommodate languages other than English.

KEY ACTIONS:

Establish an Age Friendly Information and Communication Sub Group and develop an Age Friendly Mayo Communication plan to advance awareness of the purpose of the Age Friendly Initiative.

Develop a single source of information and advice platform to provide quality and “timely” communication to older people.

Encourage and raise awareness among organisations and services to consider the choice of communication methods they utilise in seeking to reach all older people.

Promote locally available services in a wide range of setting such as libraries, shops/ supermarkets, post offices, GP surgeries, pharmacies through the development of a poster campaign.

Utilise existing facilities for communication and information circulation to local communities such as visitation services in isolated communities, seek the establishment of a specific section in the local newspapers/community newsletter which advertises activities for older people, co-operate with schools to provide information to older people in the community.

Seek to improve awareness of culturally sensitive forms of communication among services and organisations to avoid stereotyped patterns of communicating with older people from diverse cultures and faiths.



OPC Members on walkability audit of Ballina Library

THEME 8: COMMUNITY SUPPORT & HEALTH SERVICES

Community supports and health services are vital to maintaining the health, wellbeing and independence of older people.

The HaPAI Research Findings (2018) identified a key headline in respect to Community Support and Health Services including:

Difficulty accessing health services: 11.5% of respondents in County Mayo indicated they experienced difficulty in accessing health services, 20.2% indicated that health services were unavailable.

What the consultation told us

CLEAR AND ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

There was consistent agreement amongst our consultation participants that information on hospital services, home care, nursing home care, and how to stay fit and well in later life was not adequate. They specifically spoke about confusion around the 'Fair Deal Scheme' and nursing homes and they felt that the information needed to be clearer. Additionally participants spoke about their own futures and the care choices they may have to make and again cited that information and communication available to them in respect to these supports was poor.

HOME CARE SUPPORTS

Availability of home care supports was also a key concern among participants who highlighted the challenges in accessing adequate supports and the limitation on hours provided. Many older people highlighted the stress of caring for a partner or parent in their own homes and the stress these inadequate formal care supports can create for families.

AWARENESS OF HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Participants and services who took part in the consultation process indicated the need to increase awareness of the range of health and well-being support services offered for maintaining health and independence in later life. Participants stated that there was a need for more local community based services that focused on preventative supports particularly for reaching older people living in rural communities.

Many participants recognised that telecare had a role in supporting older people in their communities especially based on their experiences of engaging with health services during the covid-19 pandemic. They felt that it could be expanded to well-being programmes in the community.

DEMENTIA AWARENESS

The majority of participants in the consultation process understood that dementia is a disease of the brain. However, few were aware of the modifiable factors that can increase or decrease the risk of dementia. While not all forms of dementia are preventable, there are many things that people can do to reduce their risk of developing dementia. Participants were particularly focused on seeking increased information and awareness of dementia and supports available.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS AND HEALTH SERVICES

As our population is living longer formal health, social and community care/services are seen as vital supports for older people who are seeking services and supports that allow them to live healthier in their own homes and communities.

To achieve this, the **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** will aim to:

Enable older people to live well and as independently as possible in their communities.

KEY PRIORITIES

Support the promotion of information and communication on health and wellbeing supports and resources available to older people in County Mayo.

Increase co-ordination between different agencies to improve awareness and promotion to older people, of the resources available for self-management.

Engage community and voluntary sector organisations in accessing funding initiatives to expand, embed and explore local community health initiatives for older people in their local communities.

Increase awareness of dementia and the promotion of “Brain At All Stages Of Life” of the life course.

KEY ACTIONS

Promote the continued roll out the Living Well programme in Mayo, placing a particular focus on improving promotion of communications about Living Well to older people living with long-term health conditions in Mayo.

Promote and support increased movement and appropriate physical activity for older people in Mayo.

Promote resources that support self-management to older people in Mayo, including resources developed by the national Self-management Support Co-ordinator Team, those approved by the relevant National Clinical Programmes and key patient supports offered by COPD Support Ireland, Asthma Society of Ireland, Diabetes Ireland, Irish Heart Foundation and Croí.

Design a suitable communications strategy to engage and recruit older people into the health programmes delivered through the Sláintecare Healthy Communities Initiative in Mayo i.e. Social Prescribing, Healthy Food Made Easy and Smoking Cessation.

Support local community organisations to engage with the HSE National Lottery Grant Scheme to increase the provision of innovative health and wellbeing initiatives for older people in Mayo.

Deliver in conjunction with local and national Dementia Support Groups a Dementia Awareness Campaign on the modifying factors that can contribute to improving brain health and wellbeing e.g. Dementia Understand Together Campaign.

Establish a working group led by the OPC and engaged external experts to ascertain the information deficits in respect to Home Care and Nursing Home financial supports to address the information concerns of older people.



Mayo's Older Persons Council – from left to right: Eileen Piggott, Mary B. Prendergast, Sr. Maureen Lally, Cllr. Blackie Gavin, Judith Holme, Marion Dunne and Marie Flanagan (Chair of OPC)



FUTURE PLANNING

APPENDICES



IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING & EVALUATION

This **Mayo Age Friendly County Programme 2022– 2026** has been developed in a vibrant and rapidly changing context. New data will become available which will influence the future direction of this Strategy, namely data from the 2022 census.

It is expected that this county programme will continue to change as more population data becomes available and as the membership of the Mayo Age Friendly Alliance and Older Persons Council evolves over time.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR AGE FRIENDLY MAYO

To ensure that Age Friendly Mayo adheres to its commitment to a cycle of planning, implementing, evaluation and continual improvement, the Age Friendly Alliance and the Older Persons Council will jointly plan and oversee the implementation of this Strategy.

The Alliance will also agree on the proposed implementation process for the Action Plan to ensure it is delivered in a timely manner having due regard to the availability of resources and other variables.

As a result of the many cross-cutting issues which have been identified, there will be significant opportunities for collaborative initiatives, to collectively address some of the concerns which have been identified.



MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

In discussion with members, the Alliance will establish the necessary arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and review as follows:

To allow for deeper examination of specific areas of work, targeted solutions and distribution of work the Alliance will establish sub structures e.g. working groups, sub groups, centred on particular actions.

Each Alliance member will provide a statement of intent as to resources they can provide to the Age Friendly Strategy in terms of personnel, expertise, information and budget to ensure tailored planning and commitment to its actions.

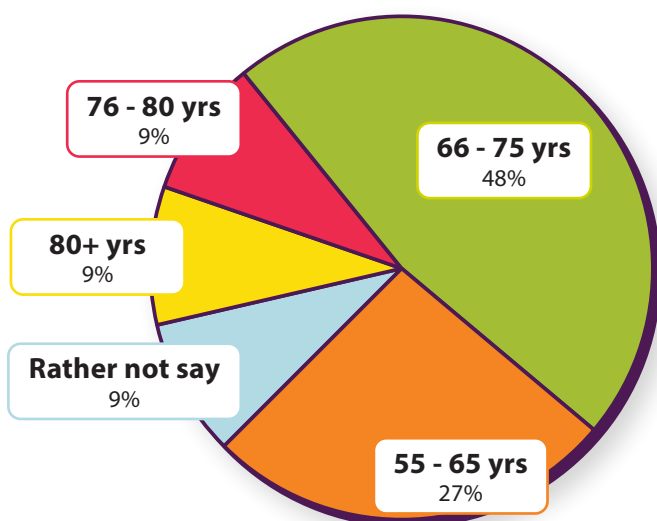
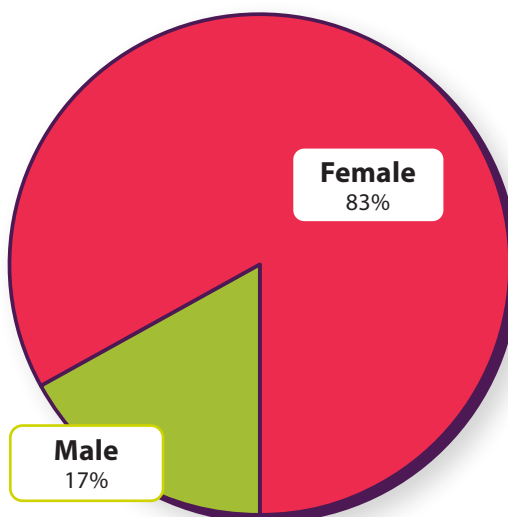
Older Persons Council governance policies and procedures will be reviewed and documented and acted upon as required.

A formal review will take place on an annual basis of the strategy's progress against its stated aims, priorities and actions resulting in an annual report to reflect the status and progress of the Strategy and the work of the Alliance and the Older Persons Council. These annual reviews will provide the foundation for evaluation of the Strategy at mid-term and end of term.

Further consultation events may be carried out to assess the views of older people over the timeframe of this Strategy.

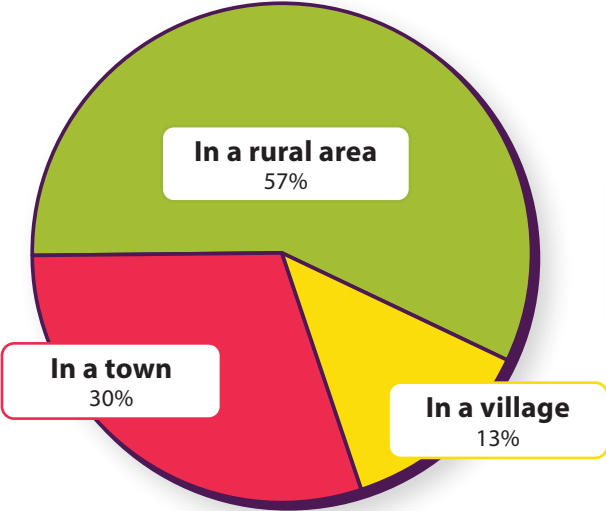
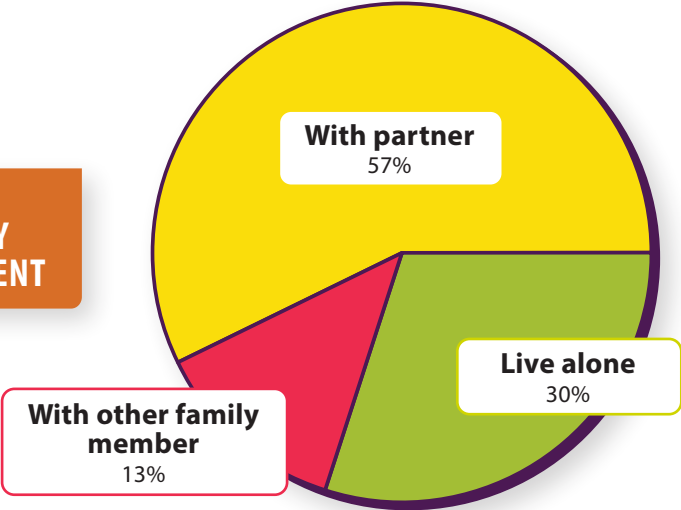
APPENDIX 1: PROFILE OF CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS BY GENDER



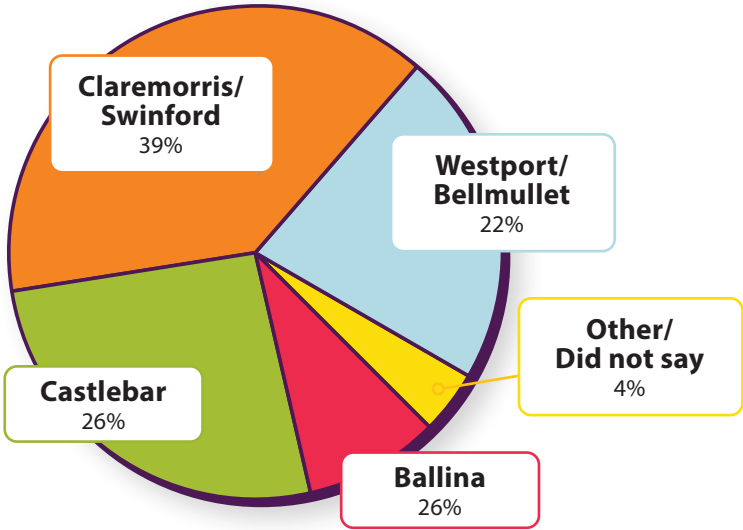
CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS BY AGE

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS BY LIVING ARRANGEMENT



CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS BY LIVING SITUATION

CONSULTATION PARTICIPANTS BY MUNICIPAL DISTRICT



APPENDIX 2: LIST OF REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

World Health Organisation's Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)

National Positive Ageing Strategy

HaPAI Study Mayo Report

Local Economic Community Plan

The Census, collected by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) 2016

European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)

National Disability Survey (NDS)

Quarterly National Household Survey(s) (QNHS) including special modules on Sports, Retirement Planning, Voter Participation, Caring, and Crime and Victimization

European Union Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC)

Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE)

The European Health Literacy Survey (HLS-EU)

All Ireland Traveller Health Study (All Ireland Traveller Health Study Team, 2010)

Irish National Dementia Strategy (Department of Health, 2014 Housing with support for older people: An evidence review)

Sustainable Living Integrating Older Adults with Technological Advancements in Regeneration (SLIOTAR)

Universal Design Guidelines



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council



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