

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2026



ACTION TODAY,  
FOR YOUR TOMORROW

**AgeAction**  
Age Equality

**ACTION  
TODAY,**

**FOR YOUR  
TOMORROW.**



# ACTION TODAY, YOUR TOMORROW.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Age Action is Ireland's leading advocacy organisation promoting equality for us all as we age.**

We are on a journey to create change in Ireland by building an inclusive and age-positive society. We make our vision a reality through advocacy, DIY services in people's homes and education. Everything we do ensures older people's rights are respected, their voices heard, and their contributions celebrated. We lead the fight in challenging ageism, promoting everyone's agency in older age and finding solutions to the disadvantages we face as we grow older in Ireland.

Age Action has worked steadfastly towards this mission by providing vital information, advocacy and services for older people in Ireland since 1992.

Over the next ten years, as we continue to live longer, healthier lives, it is expected that demand for Age Action will increase sharply both in the short term and throughout the next decade.

**The challenges we face as a society are clear and unavoidable.**

**But the solution is within our grasp.**

## A ROADMAP FOR CHANGE

In this strategic plan Age Action clearly defines its vision for Ireland and outlines a detailed roadmap for the next three years that will help to create a fairer, more inclusive society for all of us as we age.

The plan outlines in detail Age Action's priorities, and identifies the objectives required to achieve them.

The plan will assist with management of Age Action's current and future resources. It also clarifies the way in which Age Action will ensure and enhance the sustainability and impact of its work.

The aim of this strategy is to specifically address the gap in services for older people and to identify and achieve Age Action's advocacy goals in the best possible way, while doing so in a process that is sustainable, that cares for staff by ensuring they are adequately resourced and that maintains the highest standards of professionalism and service delivery.

This strategic plan will be a powerful tool, enabling Age Action to create the meaningful and lasting change that is needed to protect all of our rights as we age.



## OUR UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Developing this plan required our staff and Board of Directors to carefully consider the merits of different approaches to achieving our mission and to explore new ways to expand our services nationally.

This comprehensive process has created even greater consensus among Age Action's staff and inspired a renewed commitment to overcome the emerging challenges as a team.

The challenges we face together are significant. But they also provide us with a unique opportunity to create a better society and a better life for each and every one of us as we age.



# OUR STRATEGIC GOALS FOR 2024-2026

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN CONSISTS OF SIX STRATEGIC GOALS THAT, ONCE ACHIEVED, WILL TRANSFORM THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF OLDER PEOPLE IN IRELAND.

## THESE GOALS ARE:

### Goal One

#### Tackle Ageism

Identifying, challenging and dismantling ageism and its impact through key areas of Irish society.

### Goal Two

#### Secure Government Commitments

Securing government commitments to older people through new strategies, key resources and legislative change.

### Goal Three

#### Expand Key Services

Expanding our national services programme and supports for older people to meet the growing demand.

### Goal Four

#### Grow Support

Strengthen, grow and diversify supporter and stakeholder involvement.

### Goal Five

#### Increase Funding and Awareness

Develop a strong fundraising and communications function to diversify our funding.

### Goal Six

#### Prioritise Good Governance

Continue to prioritise good governance, strong management systems and positive staff engagement.





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# A MESSAGE FROM OUR AGE ACTION CHAIR

MICHAEL  
AHERN

## Acting now for all our futures.

As chair of Age Action Ireland, a significant motivation for me is to be part of an organisation striving to change the landscape of ageing in Ireland – one that impacts both younger and older people today.

Age Action is the best-placed organisation to advocate for fundamental change in how people grow older in Ireland. Since 1992, we have consistently advocated for the delivery of high-quality outputs for older people, with our input often resulting in positive outcomes and influencing popular and political debate over the years and decades. But more remains to be done. There are critical challenges ahead.

Age Action advocacy is not only impactful for older people. **It also impacts younger people, some of whom we know will face clearly identifiable challenges as they grow older, for example, the unaffordability of home ownership.**

In recent decades, security of tenure in older age has been provided primarily through home ownership or social housing. While 3.5% of people aged 65+ rented privately in Census 2022, nearly 10% of those aged 50–64 were renting, and the trend is likely to be even more significant for those in their 30s and 40s who cannot afford to purchase their own home today due to the cost of housing.

Seven in ten older people today rely on the state pension and other social welfare benefits for most of their income.

Given that the cost of renting a modest property today costs more than the state pension, and given the lack of strategic planning for pension provision into the future, some of today's younger generation will undoubtedly be affected by a housing crisis when they retire – namely they will be unable to afford rented accommodation.


**Age Action is advocating today, for all of us, so we can have a secure tomorrow.**

We must acknowledge too that older people are active every day on behalf of us all. **Through volunteering, childminding, financially supporting their children and the work of 95,000 carers aged over 65, the critical importance of older people today cannot be overstated.**

Through this ambitious strategy, Age Action aims to highlight the ongoing concerns of many people, such as the cost-of-living crisis and the impact of ageism, while setting out a vision of a better Ireland. One in which we can all age with dignity and respect.

I take this opportunity to thank my Board colleagues, the CEO, staff and volunteers for your outstanding commitment and energy towards making Ireland a better country for us all – both today and tomorrow.

Yours sincerely,



**Michael Ahern, Chairperson**

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR AGE ACTION CEO

PATRICK  
CONNOLLY

**This strategic plan is another important initiative in Age Action's long and successful history.**

Over the last 30 years, Age Action has been Ireland's leading advocacy organisation for older people.

Our dedicated staff and volunteers have worked tirelessly as a voice for the marginalised and put our advocacy and core values into action by providing vital, practical supports and services to older people across Ireland.

Through our advocacy work, we have paved the way for significant change in the lived experience of older people and influenced many key legislative and budget initiatives to improve the lives of older people. Some highlights over the years include:

- In 2007 we started Care and Repair, which has supported thousands of older people to remain safe in their own homes by carrying out small repairs
- In 2008 we launched our digital skills training programme – Getting Started – which has trained over 35,000 older people
- Also in 2008, we led a national protest, supported by thousands of people, against means testing for the medical card
- In 2013 we collaborated with the then Minister for Older People in the drafting and publication of the first National Positive Ageing Strategy
- In 2022 we successfully campaigned against an increase in the pension age
- For over 20 years Age Action has convened Positive Ageing Week, which aims to reframe how we think, feel and act towards ageing and older people.

But our mission continues undimmed.

**Ireland is now on the cusp of a major social change.**

We now have the fastest ageing population in Europe. In fact, there are over 1 million Irish people above the age of 60 – a success story that we celebrate.

We continue to expose the depth and scale of the ageism and inequality that remains deeply rooted in many aspects of our society. Age Action's State of Ageing Report 2022, the first of its kind in 30 years, provides a detailed analysis of the economic and social status of older people in Ireland today.

**As our population continues to age, eliminating ageism from every aspect of Irish life must become a priority.**

As a nation, we urgently need to adjust our approach to growing older and come together to fight ageism.

**The actions we take in next three years will be critical.**

We now have a 'once in our lifetime' opportunity to dismantle the prejudices and biases of ageism and build a society where every person can grow older with dignity and independence.

This ambitious and innovative strategy outlines how, over the next three years, Age Action will build the foundation for that change by increasing our capacity to serve older people, continuing to tirelessly advocate on their behalf and ensuring that all those connected with Age Action feel supported, informed and valued.

**The six strategic goals outlined here are the crucial first steps in creating a fairer and more equal Ireland for each one of us as we age.**

I want to take this opportunity to thank our staff, our Board, our wonderful volunteers and everyone who participated in our focus groups for engaging so openly and constructively in the development of this strategic plan.

Your insights, your passion and your dedication are visible on every page.

Yours sincerely,

*Patrick Connolly*

**Paddy Connolly, CEO**

# ABOUT ACTION AGE



## WHO WE ARE

**Age Action is Ireland's leading advocacy organisation promoting equality for us all as we age.**

We are on a journey to create change in Ireland by building an inclusive and age-positive society.

We are a national not for profit organisation, serving the needs of older people in every county in Ireland, with offices in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

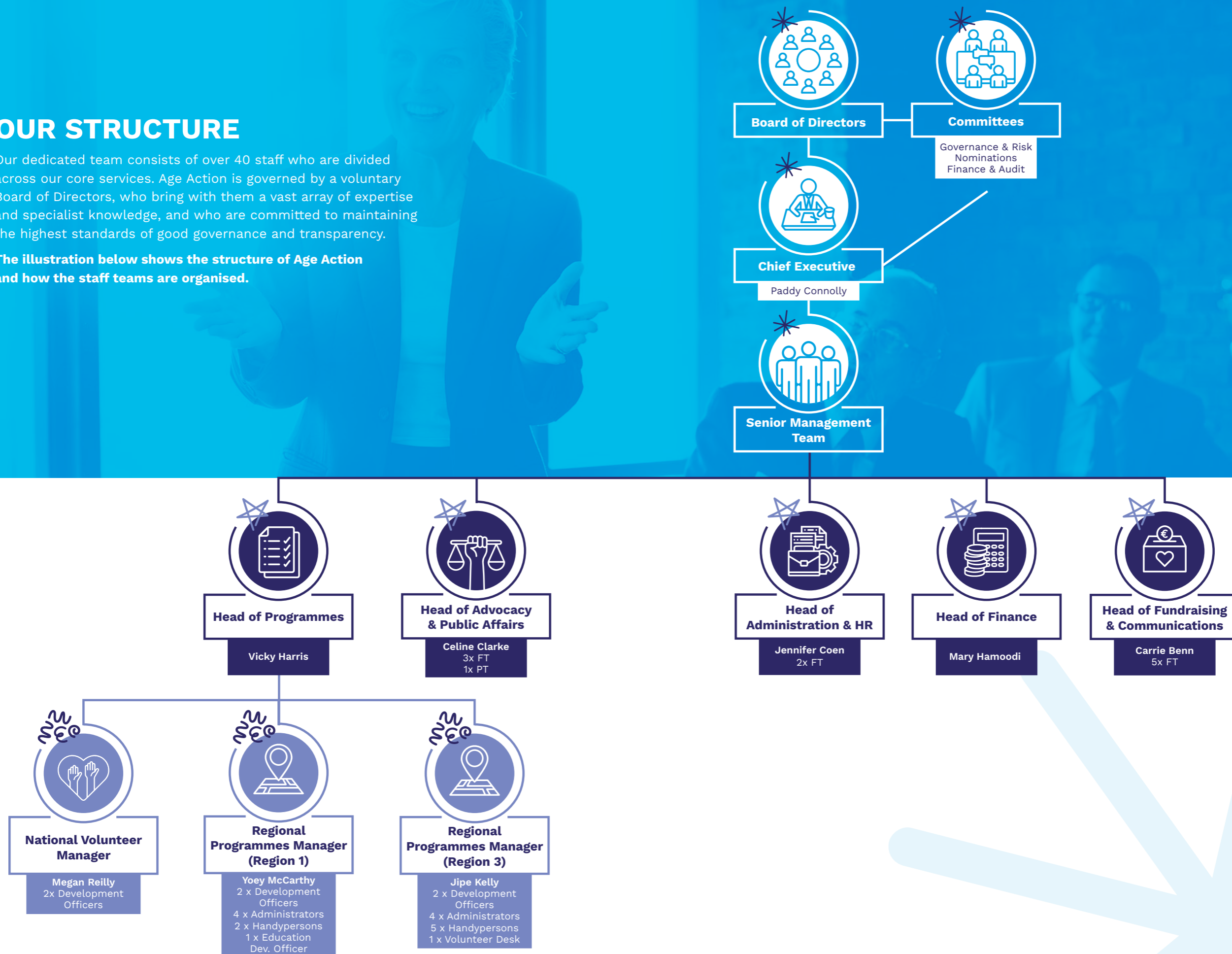
Our work is driven by an organisation that is professional in its operations and lives out its values of dignity, participation, diversity, social justice, and professionalism.

Everything we do is based on recognising diversity and lived experience. Our work is varied, encompassing advocacy, education, volunteering for all ages and services for older people. We actively campaign on issues that directly impact us all as we age, such as income security, healthcare and housing. Additionally, we provide practical supports through our Information Service, Getting Started and Care and Repair services, as part of our mission to achieve fundamental change in the lives of all older people and to facilitate a better quality of life.

## OUR STRUCTURE

Our dedicated team consists of over 40 staff who are divided across our core services. Age Action is governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, who bring with them a vast array of expertise and specialist knowledge, and who are committed to maintaining the highest standards of good governance and transparency.

The illustration below shows the structure of Age Action and how the staff teams are organised.



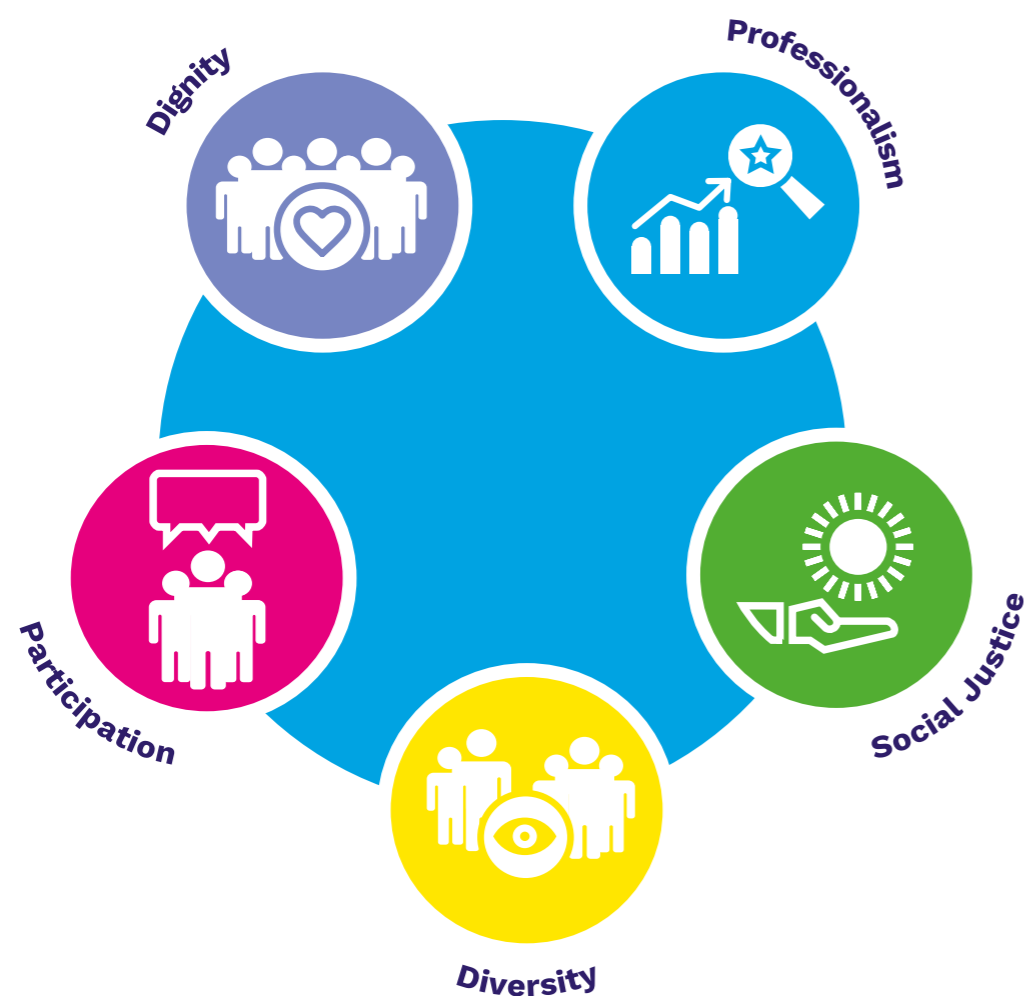
## OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

### OUR VISION

A society that enables all older people to participate and to live full, independent lives.

### OUR MISSION

To achieve fundamental change in the lives of all older people by empowering them to live full lives as actively engaged citizens and to secure their rights to comprehensive high-quality services according to their changing needs.



## OUR VALUES



### \* **Dignity**

Respect, compassion, kindness and valuing of each individual. It involves independence and wellbeing as we age.



### \* **Participation**

Inclusion and meaningful collaboration. It involves being heard, and having voice and influence as we age.



### \* **Diversity**

Recognizing and valuing difference. It involves challenging discrimination, and acknowledging, and responding appropriately to different groups in society.



### \* **Social Justice**

Equality of access, participation, and outcome, and a fair and equitable distribution of resources. It involves having real choices, control over our lives, and access to the economic, cultural and social life of the community.



### \* **Professionalism**

Working to the highest standards with integrity and transparency. It involves being committed, responsive, accountable and innovative.

## A VALUES-BASED PLAN

Age Action is a values-based organisation. Through the development of this strategic plan, we have made it a priority to ensure that our values shape and inspire each of the goals and objectives outlined.

Global research over a number of decades has shown that people share common values and that these values influence our actions and behaviour, the jobs we choose, and the causes we support. Some values, when activated, motivate us to think beyond our own needs and to be concerned with the welfare of others.

**Our core values of Dignity, Participation, Diversity, Social Justice, and Professionalism** are central to driving our work to promote equality and the human rights of older people.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY

Age Action works to advance the human rights of older people now and into future. The Public Sector Duty<sup>1</sup> which is ten years old in 2024, places a duty on public bodies to have regard, in implementing all their functions, for the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights for staff, service-users, and policy beneficiaries.

It is focused on the grounds covered in the equality legislation as well as socio-economic status, making it relevant to older people not only in relation to age but in all their diversity.

This duty should have a greater impact than it currently does. It can be harnessed more effectively to achieve greater participation of older people and a sharper focus on their needs across all policy making and service delivery arenas.

Ireland's equality legislation sets a minimum standard by outlawing most discrimination on nine grounds: gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community. The Public Sector Duty incorporates socio-economic status.

**Age Action's ambition in achieving equality goes beyond minimum standards and recognises cumulative disadvantage.**

Social and structural barriers to full participation and equality exist for many people, and that intersectionality means that when people experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination, for example sexism and ageism, these forms interact, compound, and create new, unique, disadvantages.

In advocating for justice and equality for all, Age Action endeavours to work in participatory and collaborative ways, listening, learning, and sharing information and resources so that power imbalances are illuminated and tackled.

We aim to ensure that all of our activities and processes reflect the diversity of Irish society and we prioritise those who are most disadvantaged or most at risk of experiencing disadvantage, socially, culturally or economically.

<sup>1</sup> Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014

# BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC PLAN

## Understanding the challenges. Identifying our goals.

In identifying the goals and objectives for our work, Age Action is drawing on three decades of knowledge and expertise, as well as the lived experience of thousands of older people.

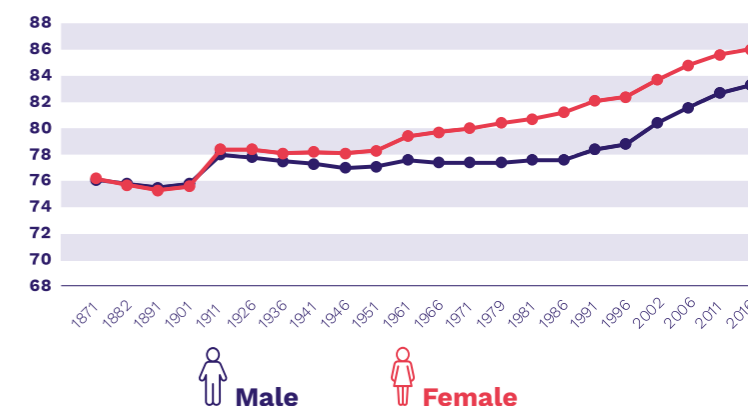
That vast wealth of experience offers Age Action a unique understanding of the true state of ageing in Ireland and enables our team to accurately assess the positive developments that have been achieved and to clearly identify the persistent problems that remain<sup>2</sup> in a number of key areas.

<sup>2</sup> For an holistic view of ageing in Ireland read  
‘Reframing Ageing, the State of Ageing in Ireland, Age Action, 2022  
<https://www.ageaction.ie/reframing-ageing-state-ageing-ireland-2022-1>

## THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF OLDER PEOPLE

Older people now enjoy a greater standard of living compared to 50 or 100 years ago. Most of us are living longer, healthier lives with many years of active older age ahead of us.

Figure 1. Average Life Expectancy at Age 65 (CSO)<sup>3</sup>



**However, significant ageism and profound inequalities still exist in every aspect of Irish society.**

The more than 1 million people over the age of 60 in Ireland have diverse situations and experiences. Not everyone has the same opportunity to age with dignity and respect. Not every older person can meet the hidden costs of ageing. Not every older person is empowered to participate and fully engage in society.

Many older people live with poverty, occupy poor quality housing, are unable to access timely healthcare and describe themselves as feeling invisible.

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.cso.ie/table/VSA30>

## THE CHALLENGES WE FACE

In this document, we identify and detail the **7 of the most pressing issues affecting age and older people** and the most critical drivers in achieving equality for us all as we age.



## INEQUALITY IN THE COMMUNITY

Structural inequality results in the accumulation of disadvantage over the life course. Low income, poor health, and social and environmental inequalities over time compound inequalities experienced by many older people later in life. Older people can internalise ageism with a diminished sense of having a stake in society and community.

### THE CUMULATIVE NATURE OF AGEISM

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), “The diversity seen in older age is not random. A large part arises from people’s physical and social environments and the impact of these environments on their opportunities and health behaviour.”<sup>4</sup> And “A significant proportion of the vast diversity of capacity and circumstances that we see in older age is likely to be underpinned by the cumulative impact of these health inequities across the life course. This is sometimes referred to as cumulative advantage/disadvantage.”<sup>5</sup>



Mortality differentials for 2016–17 show that men in the bottom 20% of the income distribution (most deprived) have a life expectancy of 79.4 years, which is 5 years less than those in the top 20% (least deprived) who have a life expectancy of 84.4 years. For women, the difference is 4.5 years, with women in the bottom 20% of the income distribution living on average for 83.2 years compared to 87.7 years for women in the top 20% of the income distribution.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>

<sup>5</sup> WHO “World Report on Ageing and Health” (2015) <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/mca-documents/ageing/9789240694811-eng.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/in/mdi/mortalitydifferentialsinireland2016-2017/>

## CULTURAL INEQUALITY

The value placed on older people in Irish Society is limited. Discrimination can infect narratives and values that are dominant in public and political debate. Society places great value on those it deems productive at a point in time in economic terms forgetting about the often unseen contributions many older people make across their lifetime. For example, many older people provide childcare for their grandchildren, home care for other loved ones and financial support to their families. CSO figures imply that nearly 94,000 people aged 65+ were carers in 2020. In general, carers report poorer health than non-carers. Carers also experience lower incomes (some having given up paid employment) and many struggle financially.

According to TILDA (Irish Longitudinal Survey on Ageing), nearly one in five (18%) older adults volunteers weekly. More than half (56%) have volunteered over the last two years. Many older people describe themselves as becoming invisible in national political and policy discourses.

### HOW AGEIST ARE WE?

Age Action commissioned a national opinion poll, Are We Ageist?, which found that when presented with seven ageist opinions, more than a third of adults (37%) agreed with two or more of them, the equivalent of 1.5 million adults holding ageist opinions. **Men and younger adults (aged 18-35) were more likely to hold ageist opinions.**



## INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION

Institutional ageism impacts the way organisations in the public and private sectors organise and go about their business. It shapes the priorities and processes they pursue, and this impacts significantly on older people in a wide range of ways, such as excluding them from products and services and/or increasing the prices they are forced to pay.

### AGE DISCRIMINATION

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) reports that age discrimination is the most commonly reported form of discrimination in Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Many older people are digitally excluded because they are not using the internet or have below basic skills, which makes it harder for them to get public services or to transact with banks or businesses.



**This includes making bookings to use their Free Travel passes, renewing passports or driving licences, booking a National Car Test (NCT) or even booking a ticket to a sporting event.<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/socialconditions/equalityanddiscrimination/>  
<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital\\_inclusion\\_and\\_an\\_ageing\\_population.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital_inclusion_and_an_ageing_population.pdf)

## POLITICAL UNDER-REPRESENTATION

The people that make the policy decisions, structures for making policy decisions, and those who exercise influence on policy decisions, lack the necessary diversity. Issues of ageing and the concerns of older people are under-represented in these processes.

**The rights of older people will never be protected while their voices are silenced in this way.**

### THE NEED FOR A NEW GOVERNMENT STRATEGY ON AGEING

Ireland needs a credible, all-of-government strategy and implementation plan to address the demographic transition in a way that meets older people's needs and leaves no one behind. While the 2013 National Positive Ageing Strategy was a welcome development, it was introduced when there was little investment available, and it was limited to health and social aspects of ageing. A new strategy, with full whole-of-government scope, is needed to plan for the opportunities presented by an ageing population and address the demographic transition.

**In terms of participation by older people in public policy, an increasing number of public consultations are online only, which excludes older persons who are not regular internet users.<sup>9</sup> In Age Action's opinion poll, 93% of respondents agreed "that older people should be encouraged to speak out politically".<sup>10</sup>**



**"that older people should be encouraged to speak out politically"**

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital\\_inclusion\\_and\\_an\\_ageing\\_population.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital_inclusion_and_an_ageing_population.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Age Action commissioned a public opinion poll, conducted by IrelandThinks. The sample size was 1,849, and the margin of error was 2.3%. A national panel was surveyed, and the data was weighted to match with the Census to ensure that it was representative of the wider population. See [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/are\\_we\\_ageist\\_poll\\_findings\\_december\\_2022.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/are_we_ageist_poll_findings_december_2022.pdf)

## ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

One of the most visible and immediate ways that older people are discriminated against in our society is financially.

Economic management, the tax and welfare system, the annual budgetary process and the health of the economy have a significant impact on older people. Many older people are on fixed incomes, with little opportunity to increase their income.

### AGE AND POVERTY

CSO (Civil Society Organisation) survey data shows that in 2022, a third of older persons (aged 66+) were almost entirely reliant on the Department of Social Protection, which provided them with 92-99% of their income. Most of these households are likely to be older persons living alone, and disproportionately women.



**7 in 10 older persons rely on social protection for more than half their income**

**A further four in ten older persons rely on social protection for between half and three-quarters of their income.<sup>11</sup>**

<sup>11</sup> Data from SILC 2022 provided to Age Action by the CSO. See, forthcoming, Age Action (2023) Spotlight on Income in Older Age: The State of Ageing 2023.

## EXCLUSION FROM CIVIL SOCIETY

As a marginalised group, older people need the support of every sector in Irish society.

The fragmentation of civil society groups, lack of coordination, and competition for resources contributes to a perception of weakness. Civil society is not included in national dialogue by Government. Collaboration and coordination among various Civil Society Organisations can strengthen their collective impact.

### THE NEED FOR CONSISTENT FUNDING

Age Action is grateful to receive funding from the Scheme in Support of National Organisations and as a member of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, but this funding has not increased with inflation and processes of national dialogue do not offer the same level of engagement that existed under formal social partnership and the extent of engagement with civil society is not consistent.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Age Action is one of 17 organisations appointed by government to be a member of the Community and Voluntary Pillar, which was part of national social partnership and which still continues to have ongoing engagement with some government departments.

## AGEISM

We are all growing older. But our culture and society have taught us to fear this natural process.

Fear of ageing is deeply embedded in societal consciousness and public discourse. The WHO's Global Report on Ageism reports that anxiety of fear of death is linked to ageism and that stereotypes about old age are internalised from childhood. This fear finds expression in ageism evident in stereotypes of older people as resistant to change, dependent, and frail. It is further evident in stereotypes of young people as irresponsible, aggressive, and given to excess.

Older people can also internalise this ageism with a diminished sense of having a stake in society and community, self-worth, or hope.

### SELF-DIRECTED AGEISM

Self-directed ageism is where people internalise ageist opinions that they have been repeatedly exposed to over their lives. Self-directed ageism can result in people conforming to their society's age stereotypes, which can affect their physical and mental health.

Age Action's 'Are We Ageist?' opinion poll found evidence of high levels of self-directed ageism among older persons.

**The WHO Global Report identifies three strategies against ageism, which are increasing intergenerational contact, education interventions, and making changes to policies and laws to counter ageism.<sup>13</sup>**

### 3 Strategies Against Ageism



Intergenerational  
Contact



Education  
Interventions



Changes  
to policies  
and laws

Ageism, its accompanying stereotypes and their prevalence in public discourse, represent a significant challenge to equality and human rights for older people and highlight the importance of achieving cultural change.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/ageism\\_and\\_age\\_equality\\_position\\_paper\\_1.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/ageism_and_age_equality_position_paper_1.pdf)

# OUR UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY



## THE NEXT TEN YEARS

**Ireland has a short window of time to develop the necessary strategies, infrastructure and services to enable us all to age with dignity in our communities and in as good health as possible.**

If we don't get this right by the 2030s, it will be more expensive—and in some cases impossible—to achieve the kind of positive outcomes that are currently still attainable.

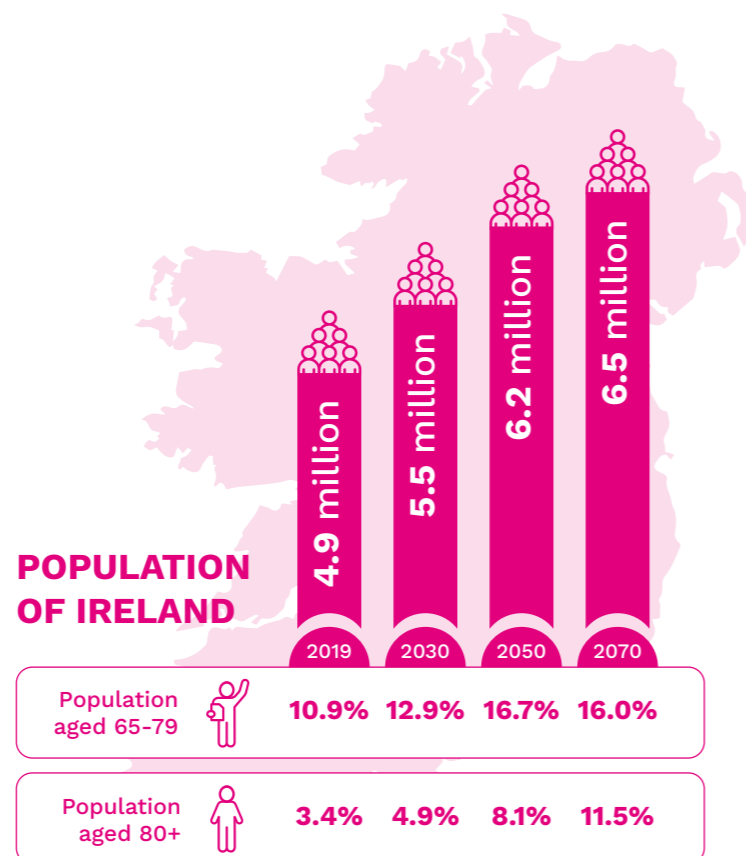
Age Action supports the approach of the Sustainable Development Goals to reach the 'furthest behind first' to ensure that existing disadvantages do not compound and become more deeply entrenched the longer we leave inequalities unaddressed.



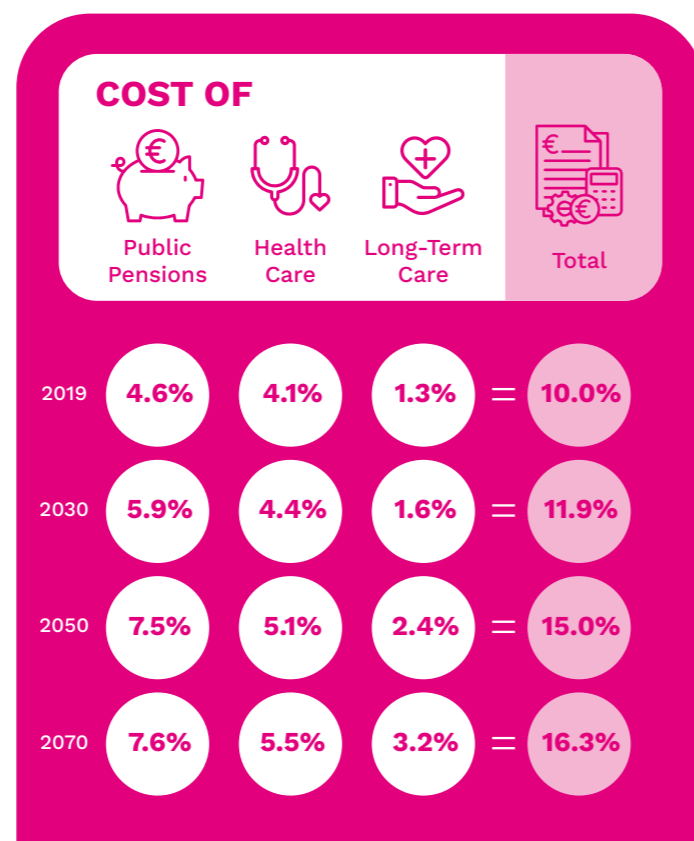


## THE COST OF INACTION

Several recent major government reports focus on Ireland's ageing population and our transition towards the European norm in terms of demographics.<sup>14</sup> The proportion of children will fall and the proportion and absolute number of older adults will rise, including many more adults living into their 80s and 90s. The total cost of public pensions, healthcare and long-term care is projected to increase from 10% of GDP in 2019 to 15% by 2050.



**Infographic 1.** Projections (% GDP) for Ireland's Demographic Transition (European Commission 2021)



<sup>14</sup> For example, Report of the Commission on Pensions (2021), Foundations for the Future: Report of the Commission on Taxation and Welfare (2022), and Future-proofing the Public Finances – the Next Steps (2023).



## MAKING AGEING A POLITICAL PRIORITY

Sometimes government departments and agencies frame the demographic transition in a way that is both alarmist and ageist. All European countries are experiencing an ageing of their populations. However, Ireland will still have one of the younger populations in Europe by 2070 based on current trends. Our ageing population is a positive story about successful public health campaigns and growing prosperity, which have permitted many of us to live longer, healthier lives.

The Summer Economic Statement 2023 names our ageing Demographics as one of the 'four Ds' that must be focused on alongside Digitalisation, Decarbonisation and Deglobalisation.

From now on, all of our economic and social policies must be reframed to have a long-term focus on achieving a successful demographic transition.

**FROM NOW ON, ALL OF OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES MUST BE REFRAMED TO HAVE A LONG-TERM FOCUS ON ACHIEVING A SUCCESSFUL DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION.**



Income Adequacy



Digital Inclusion

Inclusive  
Communities  
and Workplaces

Integrated Care

## CURRENT GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

The Programme for Government, Our Shared Future (June 2020), restated a commitment to an “Age-Friendly Ireland” and the need for planning to meet future housing and healthcare needs, including to “support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence, for as long as possible”.

Further commitments in areas such as housing, statutory home care, pensions and long-term care provide the backdrop for Age Action’s advocacy agenda for the period of this strategy. A general election must be held before March 2025, giving this Government a little over one year (at most) to deliver on its promises.

**In identifying and defining goals and objectives for this strategic plan, we also assessed the current context across policy and government commitments in the following four crucial areas:**

- **Income Adequacy**
- **Digital Inclusion**
- **Inclusive Communities and Workplaces**
- **Integrated Care**

## INCOME ADEQUACY

Poverty and deprivation among older people has increased, which demonstrates that the Irish state does not have adequate safeguards in place to protect older people when adverse circumstances arise. Deprivation among older adults rose from 8.1% 2020 to 12.7% in 2022 (Survey on Income and Living Conditions).<sup>15</sup>

**This indicates that one in eight older persons cannot afford two or more listed items, including replacing worn-out furniture, socialising once a fortnight, or heating their homes adequately.**

The SILC findings reflect the lived experience of many of the older people who responded to Age Action’s Lived Experience Surveys 2020-2023.

A third of people aged 66+ on the lowest incomes are almost entirely reliant on the Department of Social Protection, which provides them with 92-99% of their income. The Department recently announced that everyone will be able to defer access to the state pension up to age 70 in exchange for a higher rate state pension, as an incentive to working longer.

While this may ease the sharp transition from work to retirement, it could also create or exacerbate inequalities. For example, for as long as mandatory retirement, typically at age 65, remains a standard feature of private sector contracts, many people will not have the choice to opt for a deferred state pension, leaving many with inadequate incomes in their older age.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2022/poverty/>



**Deprivation among older adults rose from 8.1% 2020 to 12.7% in 2022.**



**1 in 3 people aged 66+ on the lowest incomes are almost entirely reliant on the Department of Social Protection, which provides them with 92-99% of their income.**



**6 in 10 of older people are digitally excluded, according to National Surveys.**



**Many older people tell Age Action that they feel left behind as an increasing number of services take a digital first approach.**

### DIGITAL INCLUSION

Age Action estimates—based on national surveys—that 6 in 10 older persons are digitally excluded, either because they are not using the internet or because they lack the digital devices and/or necessary skills to navigate the internet with confidence.<sup>16</sup>

Some older people said that they have lost their independence as they've come to rely on others to pay bills, renew driving licences and make travel arrangements online. Digital exclusion limits people's ability to access public services online.

The government has recognised the digital exclusion of older people. For example, the Digital Inclusion Roadmap<sup>17</sup> recognises three barriers to using the internet: Access, Affordability and Ability.

Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework<sup>18</sup> commits to serving those who are not in a position to engage online. But the test will be whether sufficient support is given to older people, so no one is left behind as the Government move to achieve its target of 90% of applicable public service transactions being online by 2030.

**Significant work is required to ensure that older people benefit from digital skills training to ensure they have access to public services.**

We must also see significant investment in resourcing high quality offline options for engaging with public services, and legislation to protect the use of cash in the economy.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital\\_inclusion\\_and\\_an\\_ageing\\_population.pdf](https://www.ageaction.ie/sites/default/files/digital_inclusion_and_an_ageing_population.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b90af-digital-for-good-irelands-digital-inclusion-roadmap/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/3a922-online-launch-of-harnessing-digital-the-digital-ireland-framework/>



**1 in 4 people experienced age discrimination, according to Age Action's poll Are We Ageist?**



**Age Action is advocating for the elimination of mandatory retirement clauses from employment contracts.**

### INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES AND WORKPLACES

1 in 4 people experienced age discrimination according to Age Action's poll Are We Ageist? Age discrimination has been recognised in the Employment Equality Acts since 1998 and in the Equal Status Acts since 2000.

**Yet there is still a significant lack of infrastructure to ensure that the rights of older people with respect to their age are respected, protected and fulfilled.**

For example, the WHO condemns mandatory retirement as a form of institutional ageism, yet it is permitted in Ireland under the Employment Equality Acts in Ireland.

Once outside of employment, many older people find that they do not have access to representative bodies or state resolution mechanisms that are available to employees or business owners. Unlike in Northern Ireland where a Commissioner for Older People was established, in Ireland nobody is tasked with monitoring and seeking remedies for gaps in policy or inaction that disproportionately impacts older people.

While Ireland has benefited from having a Minister of State for Older People, the remit of this office is limited to health and social care services rather than the many other issues of concern to older people.



**Older people are not systematically involved in the planning or review of their care services.**

### INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEMS

Ireland does not have a rights-based integrated system of long-term care, either in legislation or in practice. Older people are not systematically involved in the planning or review of their care services. This ongoing absence of a statutory model that provides a continuum of care between home supports and nursing homes contributes to people being left without adequate care.

Some older persons have told Age Action that the choice of who gets access to quality care and who doesn't, feels like "the luck of the draw".

**Many older people are concerned that their will and preference will not be carried out.**

The lack of integration across the long-term care system has resulted in significant gaps in terms of governance and oversight, with COVID-19 highlighting its inconsistencies and failings.

The Oireachtas Special Committee on COVID-19 Response recommended that private nursing homes should be integrated into the wider framework of public health and social care, that future pandemic planning should cover the whole care system and that the Department of Health should develop an integrated system of long-term support and care spanning all care situations with a single source of funding. The report of the Nursing Home Expert Panel<sup>19</sup> made a similar recommendation.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3af5a-covid-19-nursing-homes-expert-panel-final-report/>



# OUR TEN-YEAR AMBITION FOR IRELAND

**This strategic plan forms the first, and most critical, phase in what will be a ten-year journey to transform the lived experience of older people and make Ireland a more fair and equal country for all of us as we age.**

To be fully effective, this plan must coincide with a renewed commitment to the rights of older people from all sections of our society and, in particular, from government.

**This is our ambition for a better Ireland.**

**An ambition that the Government can help us to deliver over the next decade by taking the following actions:**



## INCOME AND SERVICES

- Ageism being recognised as a significant barrier to equality and actions to address ageism are incorporated into public sector planning and delivery processes.
- Measurable progress made on pension reform and income adequacy, especially for women.
- Government commitments on digital inclusion are secured.
- Public services are designed and delivered to sustainably meet the needs of all of us as we age.



### PARTICIPATION, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- An effective infrastructure is put in place that enables older persons to participate and have their voice heard in policy making and service delivery and planning.
- That processes for participation are inclusive, reflect the diversity of older people and are designed to ensure lesser-heard voices are reached.
- That processes for participation recognise and give account to the intersectional nature of discrimination and prejudice.



### REALISING RIGHTS

- Laws that address discrimination on the grounds of age and safeguard people in vulnerable situations are strengthened.
- A comprehensive public education campaign about people's rights and entitlements empowers people to claim their rights.
- Policies such as equality budgeting that recognise the rights of all citizens, especially marginalised groups, are strengthened to ensure that budget and resource allocation realise equality of outcomes.
- Legal representation and justice, which prevents rights violations and ensures that grievances are appropriately addressed, is accessible to all, regardless of age or economic status.
- Policies that protect older workers' rights, contribute to economic well-being and dignity.

**In order to facilitate this transformational change over the coming decade, we have outlined 6 strategic goals for completion over the next three years.**

**Our goals for 2024-2026 will become the cornerstones upon which our ten-year ambitions will be achieved.**



# AGE ACTIONS STRATEGY 2024-2026

## Our three-year goals and objectives

Age Action has identified six key, achievable and measurable goals which we believe will transform the lived experience of older people in Ireland in the next three years and build the foundation for our ambition for Ireland as set out above.

Each of the six goals below has specific and detailed objectives to ensure effective delivery of that goal.



## GOAL 1

### TACKLE AGEISM

**We will tackle ageism through our work and secure wider public and policy recognition of the impact of ageism.**

- Develop a programme to increase awareness of the impact of ageism at individual and institutional level.
- Secure legislative change that addresses ageism.
- Work with media to adopt editorial guidelines to prevent stereotypical discriminations of older persons.



## GOAL 2

### SECURE GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

**We will secure government commitments to changes that advance our 10-year ambition.**

- Secure commitment to develop a new national ageing strategy.
- Secure the appointment of a Commissioner for Ageing and Older Persons with resources to fulfil the role.
- Secure legislative change to require pension benchmarking.
- Secure policies that support digital inclusion.
- Advance a rights-based approach to the design and delivery of public services to ensure equitable access for older people.
- Secure Ireland's support for the movement on an international convention on Human Rights for older persons.



## GOAL 3

### EXPAND KEY SERVICES

**We will have services and supports for older persons that align with our advocacy ambitions.**

- Demonstrate and regularly review the evidenced need for existing and potential services.
- Responding to evidenced need, expand services, including but not limited to Care and Repair, and pilot at least one new service.
- Align our services with our advocacy goals and facilitate equal opportunity of access to services and supports for all older people.



## GOAL 4

### GROW SUPPORT

**We will demonstrate inclusive, effective and, participatory methods of engagement.**

- Strengthen and grow stakeholder engagement to be diverse in nature and to inform and legitimise our work.
- Provide a range of options for the involvement of supporters through volunteering, advocacy and fundraising.
- Demonstrate an effective model of participation for older persons.



## GOAL 5

### INCREASE FUNDING AND AWARENESS

**We will build a strong fundraising and communications function to pursue our long-term ambition.**

- Through a Case for Support, communicate an attractive and deliverable proposition that will increase donor support.
- Implement an ethical multi-year fundraising strategy.
- Grow recurring financial contributions from our non-statutory donor base.
- Raise awareness of our work through a whole-of-organisation communications plan.



## GOAL 6

### PRIORITISE GOOD GOVERNANCE

**We will continue to prioritise good governance and strong management systems.**

- Maintain a diverse and effective board of directors.
- Continuously improve our culture of good governance, risk management, transparency and accountability.
- Support a values-led organisational culture which maintains a skilled, diverse, and engaged body of staff and volunteers.
- Identify opportunities for greater efficiencies, collaboration and synergies with other civil society organisations.
- Review and develop our organisation and infrastructure capacity in ICT to ensure the delivery of this strategy.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

**Each of these six key goals are linked to specific actions which will allow us to accurately measure and evaluate our progress on a regular basis.**

Central to this strategic plan is a commitment to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of our work and to monitor the implementation of this strategy so that our targets are reached in the most immediate, efficient, and cost-effective way.

We aim, through our advocacy work, to hold the Government and government agencies to account and to ensure that they deliver on their commitments. We will rigorously apply the same standard to ourselves.

This strategic plan requires the commitment, partnership and participation of many people and stakeholder organisations. Their trust is paramount.

Age Action will do everything within its power to ensure that we are, at all times, accountable to our supporters, donors and the people we aim to support.





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair	Michael Ahern
Secretary	Ciara O'Donoghue
Treasurer	Colm Nagle
Board Members	Niall Fitzgerald Tony Kehoe Tonya Myles Dermot O'Riordan Ailbhe Smyth Eithne McCarthy Fiona Weldon Jennifer Okeke Jonah Mudewhe



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Age Equality

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