
AGE ACTION IRELAND

STRATEGIC PLAN

2016-2018



FEBRUARY 2016

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Introduction

Since our establishment in 1992 we have worked tirelessly with, and on behalf of, our members to shape better policies and provide services for older people. We have promoted positive ageing, challenged negative stereotyping of older persons as dependent and in need, and mobilised and empowered older people. We have grown to become the leading advocacy organisation for older people and the “voice” of older people.

This strategic plan builds on our previous 2013-15 plan, sharing the same vision, mission and values.

We are committed to developing a life course approach to ageing, integrating this into our work, engaging with a broad range of partners, and developing public awareness that ageing and ageing issues are part of life and should be planned for as such. Age Action will continue to help build a stronger ageing sector to meet the needs of older people.

Given the demographic changes occurring in Ireland, Age Action has a key role to play in the coming three years and beyond. With the proportion of people in Ireland aged 65 years and over expected to increase to one-in-five of the population between now and 2036 there is an imperative to plan for this. Ireland still has time to plan for the needs of our ageing population, but this needs to start now, if we are to avoid sleep walking into a crisis.

In our daily work we see older people playing an important role in society, even if not fully recognised and valued. They are volunteers, carers (for the young and the old), valued employees, informal teachers and mentors, and active citizens. Older people have so much more to contribute, and we are working to make sure that society is aware of this untapped potential.

Now is the time to:

- Identify new roles for older people which take into account the additional healthy and active years that modern medicine has given many of the older generation;
- Plan for the challenges and needs of ageing and an ageing population;

- Ensure that high quality supports and services are in place to enable older people have a good quality of life as they age.

This will be a challenge, but it is one we will not shy away from. We believe this is something we need to do, for ourselves and for the generations coming behind us.

Over the coming years we aim to expand the national reach of our work and increase the numbers of older people we work with and serve. We will explore new areas of work where there is a need identified and where resources are available, to ensure the organisation remains relevant to older people in the years to come.

We are also acutely aware that as we lead the charge in relation to planning for an ageing population, we will need to continue to represent the needs of the current generation of older people. While our commitment will remain to work on behalf of all older people, priority will continue to be given in all our work to the most disadvantaged of older people.

Our Vision

Our vision which is both optimistic and ambitious is that:

‘Ireland becomes the best country in which to grow older’.

Our Mission

Our mission is to:

‘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 mission statement reflects our commitment to ensuring that our work is aimed at mobilising and supporting older people.

We will mobilise and empower older people to advocate on behalf of themselves, their families and their communities as a key element of our advocacy work. As part of this work we will also challenge attitudes towards ageing and older people. We will continue to promote the adoption of a life course approach which recognises ageing as a lifelong process. We will particularly focus on

highlighting the needs of the most disadvantaged of older people. This work will be informed by best international practice and will raise awareness of the needs of older people in developing countries, promoting global policies to protect and support older people.

Our services and programmes will support older people and their families to live full and independent lives and we will endeavour to ensure these services and supports are models of good practice. We will work with partners in the business and community sectors to support the development and expansion of these services.

Our Core Values

At the heart of our work in Age Action are a series of core values which inform and guide every aspect of our advocacy work, services, policies and practices. They are based on respect for the dignity of every person. Our values are as follows:

Actively Engaged Citizens	All people should have opportunities to be actively engaged in their own welfare and development.
	We will strive to ensure that every older person has the opportunity to live interdependently with family and community.
Justice and Equality	We will challenge all forms of discrimination against older people.
	We will challenge disadvantages experienced by older people.
	We are committed to justice and equality for all people including older people.
	We will strive to ensure that every person has the right to equal access to services according to their needs.
	We value the diversity of people of all ages.
Highest Standards of Service	We promote the maximum participation of older people in all aspects of our work.
	We listen to all people
	We adopt the highest ethical standards in all our work.
	We will deliver the highest standards of service to users of our services.
Professional Organisation	We will be efficient and effective in our work.
	Every member of our staff will feel included as part of the organisation in an open, friendly environment.
	Age will not be a barrier to employment in Age Action.

	We will adopt the highest standards of corporate compliance and accountability.
	We work in collaboration with others to the benefit of our members and the users of our services

II Achievements

Over the last five years we have contributed to significant achievements for older people in a number of areas over this period including:

Through our services we have:

- Directly helped over 144,000 older people and their families through our Care and Repair programme, our Getting Started programme and our information service.

Through our programmes we have:

- Successfully campaigned for an increase in the Living Alone Allowance, the partial restoration of the Christmas bonus, and the protection of the Travel Pass. We also campaigned against attempts by the Troika to have the State Pension, the Household Benefits Package and the Travel Pass means-tested;
- Organised public meetings between our members and politicians to enable them inform our policy makers and legislators about the lived experience of ageing;
- Raised awareness of elder abuse and provided training workshops for community groups;
- Developed a network of life-long learning groups;
- Established an inter-generational programme;
- Set up Ireland's only ageing and development programme.

Working collaboratively, we have:

- Successfully campaigned to have the National Positive Ageing Strategy published through our work with the Older & Bolder alliance;
- Assisted with advice and consultation on the HSE's "Open Your Eyes" elder abuse awareness campaign;
- Worked with corporates such as Irish Life, IBM, Ulster Bank, Google, innocent and Christmas FM to raise funds and provide services to older people.
- Worked alongside the National Youth Council of Ireland (Generations Together

programme) and HelpAge International (our Ageing and Development programme).

- We have developed a network of 34 community groups and organisations working as partners in the deliver of our Care and Repair service.
- We have teamed up with Dublin City Council to run computer training classes for older people in sheltered housing complexes;

III Development of the 2016-2018 Strategic Plan

The development of the 2016-2018 Strategic Plan involved consultations with:-

- The Board
- Members
- Staff
- Volunteers
- Representatives from a small number of key external organisations (including the HSE, community partners, senior policy makers and corporate members) Organisations

Age Action membership consultations included a workshop with members (including several Board members) which took place as part of the AGM. Members who were not able to attend this workshop also had the opportunity to participate in the strategic planning process through the completion of a short survey. The survey was circulated to the membership with the July version of *Ageing Matters*. Almost 200 valid responses were received to this survey.

Age Action staff and volunteer consultations involved an organisational wide workshop held in July 2015. Staff and volunteers unable to attend this workshop (generally because of annual leave arrangements) also had an opportunity to contribute to the strategic planning process through an online survey. The strategic planning process also involved a number of meetings with the Senior Management Team.

Consultations with key organisations were conducted to get the views of a small number of critical organisations. The organisations to be consulted were identified by the senior management team.

Age Action's Articles and Memorandum of Association were reviewed. The strategy reflects the core purpose outlined in these documents.

IV The External Environment

Ireland's Ageing Population

Ireland's population is ageing and this trend will accelerate in the decades to come. The projections from the CSO (Population and Labour Force Projection 2016-2046, April 2013) estimate that the numbers of people aged over 65 will increase from 532,000 (11.6% of the population) in 2011, to 1.1 million in 2036 (22%), reaching almost 1.4 million (27%) in 2046. Significantly for policy makers is the fact that the numbers of people aged over-80 is projected to rise from 128,000 in 2011 (2.8% of the population), to 344,000 (5.7%) in 2036, and 484,000 in 2046 (7.1%). These demographic changes will have major implications for policy makers, service providers and wider society.

Ageing at a global level

Population ageing is one of the most significant trends of the 21st century, with important and far-reaching implications for all aspects of society. By 2013 11.7% (809 million) of the global population was over 60 years old. By 2050 that will increase to 21.1% (more than two billion people). Population ageing is occurring faster in developing countries, which have less time to adjust to the consequences of this demographic transition. Today, about two-thirds of the global number of older people live in developing countries and in 2050, nearly 80 per cent of the world's older population will live in the less developed regions.¹

The wider Irish Policy Context

Failure to implement the National Positive Ageing Strategy

The launch in 2013 of the National Positive Ageing Strategy was widely welcomed across the ageing sector. However, more than two years later, the implementation plan for the plan has not been published.

The National Dementia Strategy

The National Dementia Strategy was launched in 2014 and work on its implementation has commenced. The strategy recognises that dementia is not a normal part of ageing but a disorder that affects mainly older people, but some younger people too. It recognises that as the Irish population ages this is likely to lead to an exponential increase in the number of people with dementia from 47,849 in 2011 to 152,157 in 2047.

¹ UNDESA, World Population Ageing 2013
<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2013.pdf>

The Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme

The continued roll out of the Age Friendly Counties Programme (it is now operational in 25 cities and counties nationally) is promoting the ongoing development and implementation of age-friendly policies and standards at a local level. It has the potential to raise the profile of positive ageing and of older people as assets with much to contribute to their communities and to wider society.

The voice of NGOS representing the needs and views of older people

Cuts in funding for Age Action and other groups representing older people, and the absences of resources to fund the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy has reduced the amount of work possible with older people/to represent older people at local and national levels.

The Impact of Austerity

The recession and subsequent austerity budgets have had a significant impact on people living in Ireland, with some of the poorest and most vulnerable taking the brunt of austerity measures. This is reflected in the numbers of older people living in deprivation rising from 9.5% (2009) to 16.1% (2013). Austerity measures have also resulted in key health and social care supports for older people being cut. The following are some of the negative changes experienced by older people:

Reduction in Income

- Between January 2009 and October 2015 cuts in relation to the state pension and associated household benefits packages saw a weekly fall of €13.18 for a pensioner (dependent on the State Pension and the Household Benefits Package).
- Changes in relation to secondary income supports (e.g. cuts to the means tested fuel allowance and the abolition of the telephone allowance) have been a cause of significant stress for some older people.
- According to the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice² pensioners living alone on a non-contributory pension face a shortfall against the minimum essential standard of living of €16.07 per week. The shortfall is €6.47 for those on a contributory pension.

² VPSJ (2013) Changes in the cost of a MESL in Comparison to CPI Inflation – available at <http://budgeting.ie>

- As incomes have declined, the introduction of the Property Tax and the Carbon Tax, along with a substantial increase in energy prices, have put enormous pressure on older people.

Health and Community Care Services

- The loss of the over-70 medical card has impacted on the ability of older people to access timely health and social care.
- Home help hours have not increased since 2012 despite an 11% increase in the number of people aged 85 and over in the same period.
- Cuts in funding for the Nursing Home Support Scheme has seen for a bed under the scheme rise from seven days in 2013 to four weeks in 2015.
- Prescription charges introduced in 2009 have increased from 50 cent per item to €2.50 per item – a 500% increase in six years.

Freezing of funding for the Free Travel Scheme

- Funding for the Free Travel Scheme has been frozen at 2010 levels raising serious questions regarding the long term viability of the scheme, which provides an important service for older people. The scheme does not operate on a growing number of new, privately operated routes.

V Goals and Policy Priorities

Over the next three years we will work both as a leader, and as a catalyst, for change. We have four overarching goals

Goal 1: Through our advocacy work we will effect positive changes in legislation, policies and services that affect ageing and older people.

Goal 2: Our services will assist older people to live full and independent lives.

Goal 3: We will locate the resources needed to ensure Age Action's growth, sustainability and independence.

Goal 4: We will operate effectively, enabling everyone to contribute and make Age Action a great place to work and volunteer.

VI THE PLAN

GOAL 1: Through our advocacy work we will effect positive changes in legislation, policies and services that affect ageing and older people.

Objective 1.1. Be a positive influence, nationally and internationally, on policy development and implementation that affects ageing and older people

Our three key priorities for the lifetime of this plan are ensuring an adequate income, access to healthcare and access to social and community supports for older people. We will also explore how we can best work on other issues highlighted by our members, specifically older workers and public transport.

We will achieve this through researching and developing rights-based policies that will deliver better outcomes for older people, in Ireland and in the Global South, and advancing them through an integrated advocacy and communications strategy.

Objective 1.2. More Members feed into policy development work

Our vision of advocacy is that we work with our members, not just for them. We will develop the Glór Groups³ and the TOP Project⁴ to enable members to more actively participate in the creation of our policies. We will provide them with the training and supports they need to advocate and campaign on their own behalf.

Objective 1.3. Our messages are communicated to a wide audience

We will develop our communications strategy across traditional and digital platforms, ensuring that our key messages are appropriate for our target audiences. We will also ensure that our communications work supports and enhances our advocacy.

Objective 1.4. Older people (and the organisations who work with them) are better informed in relation to rights and entitlements, issues and services

Our information service will expand and become more proactive. We will identify opportunities to raise awareness of the service, to engage with external organisations and to provide a more effective feed-in to the development of policy.

³ Our Glór groups consist of some of our most active members. Based in Dublin, Cork and Galway, they lobby local politicians, organise their own Age Action activities, represent us in the media and help to develop our policies.

⁴ The Opinion Project (TOP) empowers our members to express their views and highlight the issues of most concern to them, their families and their communities. By consulting like this with our members, we ensure our policies best represent their needs.

Goal 2: Our Services will assist older people live full and independent lives

Objective 2.1. Older people can access new learning and skills

We will provide learning opportunities for older people to enable them to benefit from life-long learning, as well as gaining essential skills to enable them participate fully in society. We will continue to support older people to engage with information technology through our Getting Started Programme. We will continue to support and develop lifelong learning through our University of the Third Age Programme. We promote and support intergenerational solidarity through our Generations Together (intergenerational) Programme.

Objective 2.2. Older people have access to services that enable them continue to live in their own homes

Our Care and Repair programme provides vital supports to older people, enabling them to live independently, and with dignity, in their own homes. We will continue to work with local partners to deliver the programme. We will identify and map potential new local partners with a view to expanding the programme and enhancing the spread of the programme across the country. We will continue to promote, and raise awareness, of positive ageing through all our work.

Goal 3: We will locate the resources needed to ensure Age Action's growth, sustainability and independence.

In order to sustain its current work and expand it over the coming three years, the organisation needs substantial financial sources and human resources.

Objective 3.1. Age Action has access to additional financial resources

We will develop and implement a fundraising plan. It will maximise the opportunities provided by other teams to engage with potential corporate funders and supports the board in fund raising.

Objective 3.2. Maximise the return from our shops

We will continue to operate and develop the existing shops and seek opportunities to expand our retail network

Objective 3.3 Increases our membership

We will continue to support our existing members and increase our membership.

GOAL 4: We will operate effectively, enabling everyone to contribute and make Age Action a great place to work and volunteer.

Objective 4.1. Develop and make maximum use of our facilities

We will establish and develop a National Centre for Excellence in Ageing. This will accommodate all our Dublin-based staff in one office.

Objective 4.2. We are visible and active in the regions

We will sustain and develop the operations of Age Action South and Age Action West. We will work to expand our national reach, by establishing an Age Action presence in other parts of Ireland.

Objective 4.3. We are a great place to work and to volunteer

We will comply with the highest standards of corporate governance and management, and strive to make Age Action an excellent place to work and volunteer. We will work to increase volunteering opportunities across the organisation. We will support and develop existing volunteers and work to recruit more volunteers. We will develop and implement an internal communications strategy.

VII Implementation and Monitoring

Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan rests with our Board. Progress in relation to the implementation of the plan will be assessed using a series of headline indicators. See Table 1 for a summary of some of these indicators.

<i>Goal</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
Goal 1.	– A minimum of 10 position papers, policy submissions and major policy documents per annum for use by policy makers and influencers (e.g., decision makers, the media, other organisations etc.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12% per annum increase in the number of media mentions by Age Action (including social media) - 25% per annum increase in Age Action website traffic
Goal 2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 34% increase in the number of people receiving Care and Repair services - Train 3,200 people through our Getting Started classes and secure funding for the programme for 2017 and 2018.
Goal 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An increase (on 2015 levels) in fundraising surplus of 53% in 2016, 87% in 2017 and 164% in 2018. - A 51% increase in the combined surplus from our shops (2015 versus 2018)
Goal 4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10% per annum increase in the number of active volunteers. - Introduce and implement a formal appraisal system for staff and volunteers (with all staff and volunteers appraised periodically by the end of 2018).

Annual and staff work plans will be developed based on the plan and will link directly to the achievement of the headline indicators. Our Board will review overall plan implementation and progress twice yearly. Depending on progress and the emergence of new issues, the plan may be amended and updated.