

AgeingMatters

in Ireland

Thanks for supporting Age Action in 2019



Thank you!

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This booklet is a publication of Age Action CLG. It is published six times a year.

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■ Cover photo: Image from iStock

Opinion

A year-end thank from Age Action



Paddy Connolly

In this edition of Ageing Matters we look back on the work of Age Action in 2019. In 2019 the Board and staff developed a Values Statement which tells people what is important to us as we go about our work, and a Statement of Strategy which tells people what it is that Age Action wants to achieve in the coming three years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff for the time and effort they put into developing the Values Statement. Our values also express how we want society to value people as they age, and we will strive to ensure these values are established and communicated. We'll also work to ensure the behaviour of people in Age Action will reflect these values.

I especially want to thank the people who give their time and knowledge to support Age Action. Volunteers helped Age Action deliver digital literacy training to 2,591 older people in 2018 and helped us carry out 9,456 jobs in the homes of older people which supports them to age in place.

Acknowledging our volunteers and supporters

We have volunteers informing our policy and extending our capacity to influence change through the Glór network and helping us to raise funds to keep our organisation working. Recognising that volunteers are one of our vital resources, we appointed a Volunteer Manager who will develop a volunteer strategy in the coming months to ensure that volunteering in Age Action is meaningful and sustainable for all.

The support of our donors is also critical to the work of Age Action, and we acknowledge their support and say thank you to all of them at this time of year. From people who run marathons to raise funds for Age Action to organisations such as Bank of Ireland who supported Positive Ageing Week, each and every effort counts as it allows Age Action to continue delivering for people.

Social Justice is one of our values, so as an organisation that is concerned about equality for all, Age Action was critical of the Government's Budget 2020, which eroded the gains that the previous four budgets gave to older people because there was no increase in the State Pension. Budget 2020 did not allow for any increase in the cost of living and ability to withstand economic shocks. It is against this background that Age action looks to 2020 to mobilise a strong advocacy campaign to ensure that the next Government puts issues of ageing at the heart of policies.

Age Action wishes you all a happy and peaceful holiday period and the best for 2020



What **did** Budget 2020 do to address inequality?

The Government's Budget 2020 choices did not include measures to address the inequalities faced by older people living in Ireland who are family members and contributors to our communities. Budget 2020 did not offer the majority of older people the support they need to meet the rising cost of living that is anticipated by the impacts of Brexit and it did not offer a concrete plan to support us to age in place, writes **Celine Clarke**.

Net Effect of Budget 2020

While the Government has increased some secondary benefits with the view to targeting people in the most vulnerable situations, it has to be acknowledged that if people had adequate income to meet the true cost of ageing, they would be able to have choice over how to

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spend their money to best meet their specific needs.

Some people who are over 80 are people in the most vulnerable situations in our society with no capacity to increase their income while dealing with the increasing cost of ageing.

A person over 80, not living alone, received €1.08 per week to cope with Brexit, the carbon tax increase and the rising cost of living in 2020.

It is on the backs of these people that our economy has been built: These are the same women and men who lived through the Marriage Bar, shouldered several recessions and are now dealing with accumulated disadvantages. In working for equality. It is critical that we focus on equality of outcomes not just equality of opportunity.

Did Budget 2020 create a fairer pension system?

Budget 2020 eroded the gains that the previous four budgets gave to older people because there was no increase in the State pension; it didn't allow for any increase in the cost of living and ability to withstand economic shocks.

The National Pensions Framework committed it to benchmarking the State Pension at 35% of average weekly earnings. In order to move the current pension payment towards the delivery of that target, Age Action called on the Government to increase the weekly pension payment by €9. That increase was eminently achievable – at no extra cost to the State – by reducing the tax

Effects of Budget 2020

The net effect of Budget 2020 on the income of households headed by an older person is:

- Those under 80 and living with another person are €1.08 better off per week following Budget 2020 and have seen a weekly increase of €11.68 since 2009.
- For those under 80 and living alone, they are €6.08 better off per week following Budget 2020, and have seen a weekly increase of €20.48 on 2009 income.
- For those over 80 and living with another person, their weekly income has risen by €1.08 in Budget 2020, and €11.68 since 2009
- For those over 80 and living alone, they are better off by €6.08 per week following Budget 2020, and €20.48 since 2009.

It is critical that we focus on equality of outcomes not just equality of opportunity.

relief on private pensions to 33%, as proposed by the National Pensions Framework. Reducing these tax breaks would not only provide the funds for significant increases for all pensioners, it would also help to reduce the massive income inequality that exists amongst older people

Did Budget 2020 address healthcare costs?

We are pleased to see an increase in the Living Alone Allowance and the increase in the Fuel Allowance. A person receiving both of these is €6.08 better off than they were last year per week.

Age Action encourages the Government to take ambitious

climate action to ensure the people and planet are protected from the impacts of climate change. However, the introduction of the Carbon Tax, in the absence of current research on fuel poverty, risks pushing the burden of climate action onto people who are in the most vulnerable situations, which is contrary to the principle of climate justice and the stated aim of the Government.

Age Action notes that 75% of pensioners will not benefit from the increase in the Fuel Allowance. In terms of the Living Alone Allowance, which is another targeted social welfare measure by the Government, Age Action notes that 75% of pensioners will not benefit from the increase. These people will not see an increase in their income under Budget 2020 despite the expected continued increase in the cost of living; essentially this translates to a reduction in money in people's pockets.



▲ Do you know your tax entitlements and how to claim them?

Photo: blackCAT

Claim **your** tax entitlements



Revenue wants to make sure that everyone knows about the tax credits, reliefs and exemptions they are entitled to.

Age Tax Credit

This is a specific tax credit for people who are 65 years or over.

If you are:

- single, widowed or a surviving civil partner, the amount of Age Tax Credit is €245 per year.
- married or in a civil partnership, the Age Tax Credit is €490 for you as a couple.

If you (or your spouse or civil partner) are 65 years or over, look at your Tax Credit Certificate. The Age Tax Credit should appear on it. If it does not, contact Revenue.

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Age Exemption

You can claim this exemption if you are:

- single, widowed or a surviving civil partner, 65 or over, and your total income is no more than €18,000 a year.
- married, or in a civil partnership, one of you is 65 or over, and your combined income is no more than €36,000 a year.

If you have dependent children, these income limits are increased. The limits are increased by €575 per child for your first two children, and €830 per child for each additional child.

You will not have to pay Income Tax on the income under these limits.

If your total income is more than the exemption limit, you may still be able to claim marginal relief. This relief may apply where your total income is less than twice the exemption limit.

Relief on Nursing Home Fees

You can claim this relief if:

- you paid nursing home fees, in full or in part, either for yourself or another person
- the nursing home provides 24-hour on-site nursing care
- you paid Income Tax during the year you wish to claim.

You can also claim for any qualifying medical expenses.

Nursing home fees are refunded at the highest rate of Income Tax that you paid during the year of the claim.

For example, you paid €10,000 for nursing home expenses in 2015. That year, you paid Income Tax at the rate of 20%. You can claim a tax refund of up to €2,000 on the nursing home fees (20% of €10,000).

You must have paid Income Tax in the year of the claim. You cannot get more of a refund than you paid in tax that year.

How Do You Claim Your Entitlements?

The quickest way to claim is to use Revenue's online services.

There is a four-year time limit for making claims for additional tax credits... If you have not claimed your full entitlements for 2015, you need to submit your claim to Revenue before midnight on 31 December 2019

If you pay tax under the PAYE system:

- sign into myAccount<https://www.ros.ie/myaccount-web/sign_in.html?execution=e1s1>
- click on 'Review your tax' link in PAYE Services
- select the Form 12 for the year you wish to claim for.

If you pay tax under the self-assessment system:

- sign into ROS<https://www.ros.ie/oidc/login/noCertsFound?lang=en&client_id=rosint_rp>
- click on 'File a Return Online'
- select the Income Tax and Form 11 for the year you wish to claim for.

If you are unable to use the online services, you can phone your tax office on:

- 01 738 3636 if you pay Income Tax under the PAYE system
- 01 738 3630 if you pay Income Tax under the self-assessment system

Lines are open Monday to Friday between 9.30 am and 4 pm.

When can you claim your entitlements?

You can claim now for 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

There is a four-year time limit for making claims for additional tax credits, reliefs or exemptions. If you have not claimed your full entitlements for 2015 you need to submit your claim to Revenue before midnight on 31 December 2019.

For more information about these and other tax reliefs or credits you may be entitled to, go to the Revenue website www.revenue.ie.

Equality for all: panel discussion held at our AGM

On the 10th of September Age Action hosted a panel discussion, moderated by Age Action CEO Paddy Connolly, entitled *A Fair Society For All? Listening to the Voice of Older People on the structural factors that lead to the inequalities faced by older people and how these factors can be overcome*, writes **Gerard Scully**.



▲ Age Action member Eileen Sweeney speaking at the AGM 2019.

Approximately 160 people, including members of Age Action, the general public and people working in the ageing sector, listened, and joined the subsequent conversation.

Structural inequality

Michael Taft, economist and political economy columnist, began by challenging the concept of the 'Demographic Time Bomb' as an 'insulting pejorative phrase'.

He went on to argue that our state pensions, when considered against recorded levels of poverty, are not generous. He argued that there was an overemphasis on the cost of public goods or services rather than the benefit that will accrue from them.

Emphasising the importance of social transfers, Collette Bennett, Policy Analyst for Social Justice Ireland, pointed out that 43.8% of older people would be at risk of poverty if they all had social

transfers withdrawn. Bennett also wondered how many older people were coping with the rising cost of renting and paying mortgages.

Change through alliances

Ailbhe Smyth, Co-Director of Together for Yes, looked at how ageist assumptions undermine older people's agency.

Pointing out that older people were not a homogeneous group and had, as individuals, gained advantages and disadvantages throughout their lives. Smyth thought that tackling structural ageism should be done through strategic partnerships and alliances between groups leading to the emergence of a shared vision of equality for older people.

Picking up on the theme of strategic alliances and partnerships, Deirdre Garvey, CEO of The Wheel, argued that we should

take the lesson of the last two referenda that saw effective alliances between groups being forged to achieve a common goal. In relation to what brings about change Garvey spoke of "shuffling along corridors" to lobby politicians directly on specific sectoral issues, and public demonstrations. While both work, it is "at the intersection of these two models that change can be generated".

Declan Cahill, who works for Near FM community radio in Coolock, was one of many audience members who participated in the conversation following the panel discussion. Capturing the spirit of the panel discussion, Declan said that everyone who attended the Age Action AGM was "an activist simply by being here".

Gerard Scully is Senior Information Officer at Age Action.

Fundraising



▲ The amazingly talented RAMS men’s singing group show their support for Age Action’s Heart of Gold Collection on Grafton Street accompanied by long-time supporter Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh

Thank you for supporting Age Action, from our fundraising team

Caroline O’Connell, Head of Fundraising, takes a look back at the fundraising that took place around the country to support of our work in 2019.

Time to reflect on our achievements

2019 was another busy year for Age Action, but your continued support enables us to expand and develop our advocacy work and the programmes we provide to older people across the country.

It is important to take time to reflect on our achievements and look at how we can improve. This year we undertook a Strategic Review to help us develop fundraising to support our plans. We simply cannot continue to grow without your support, so for this we say a very big THANK YOU!

2019 saw many fundraising events take place, including St Patricks Day Shamrock Appeals, East-

er Egg Hampers, Annual Summer Raffle, Church Gate Collections and Parish Appeal and Direct Mailings, which generated significant funds. Also more people decided to set up a monthly direct debit donation. Our Heart of Gold National Flag Day took place during Positive Ageing Week with supporters, companies and schools assisting with local collections. We also held a National Bag Pack, thanks to Tesco Ireland, on October 4th with volunteer support from Men’s Sheds Ireland. On the 18 of December our Christmas Raffle and Annual Carol Singing Event will take place with great support again from the RAMS singing group and talented Choirs

We continued to work with MyLegacy.ie this year to raise awareness of the benefits of leaving a gift, big or small, to Age Action in your will. This year we were again lucky enough to receive a legacy gift and it is always so meaningful for us to be

remembered in this way!

As we prepare for Christmas, we are asking our members and supporters to please remember Age Action and the older people we support when making seasonal charity donations. And, as always, if you know a company or local group who might be able to support us in 2020, or have a

fundraising idea yourself, please give me a call at 01 475 6989 or email me at headoffundraising@ageaction.ie.

Best wishes to you and your family and loved ones for a safe and happy festive season and thank you again for your loyal support. It is greatly appreciated! Beannachtaí na Nollag daoibh uilig.

Who doesn't appreciate good company!

Companies, big and small, supported Age Action in 2019 – here are a few of the highlights from our amazing corporate partners!

innocent Smoothies Big Knit 10th Anniversary

Laura O'Connell, Brand and Communities Specialist for innocent Ireland, says: "The Big Knit is something we are really proud of here at innocent. Our knitters come in for tea regularly to show off their latest hat designs and let us know how the campaign helps them."

Back in 2008, innocent had an idea. They asked some older people, and some younger people, to knit little woolly hats. They put those hats on our smoothies, and for each one sold they made a donation to Age Action. The colder, winter months can be tough for some older people – and they wanted to help.

Each year, little hats knitted by volunteers are put on innocent smoothie bottles in shops and cafés across the country and for each bottle sold, a



▲ Big Knit left to right, Laura O'Connell, Brand and Communities Specialist innocent drinks, Johanne, Lorge Marketing Manager innocent drinks, and Caroline O'Connell, Head of Fundraising Age Action

Photo: Mark Stedman

30c donation is made to Age Action. Over the past 10 years, the Irish public has knitted an astonishing 490,000 little hats for the innocent Big Knit. This has raised €170,000 in total to help older people during the winter.

€30,000 will be donated to Age Action this year again to help fund free DIY jobs for older people around the country over the winter months, through Age Action's Care & Repair Programme.

Bank of Ireland

Seán Crowe, Chief Executive, Markets & Treasury Bank of Ireland, says "Bank of Ireland's partnership with Age Action aimed to support older people to remain active in their communities and to stay connected.

"This formed the foundation for the many initiatives that we delivered together over the two-year relationship. The rich-

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Fundraising



▲ Bank of Ireland's Got Talent Winner, Suzanne McKenzie, celebrating on stage with MC James Patrice.



▲ Dermot Bannon helps Anna McCabe, Age Action, Sean Crowe, Bank of Ireland and Fran and Helen of the Sean O'Casey Community Centre, Eastwall, to get the Bank of Ireland Backyard Blitz started.

Photo: Naoise Culhane

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ness of that relationship has left a lasting legacy in Bank of Ireland and we wish Age Action the very best as it continues its valuable work supporting older people throughout Ireland."

In 2019 we celebrated the end of a successful two-year partnership with Bank of Ireland, which saw Age Action supported throughout the business as their Flagship Charity. The last two years saw a huge

amount of activity, both fundraising and volunteering, but also allowed us to benefit from the skills and experience of the Bank's staff, including our Executive Sponsor, Sean Crowe, CEO, Francesca McDonagh and her General Executive Committee.

From the Backyard Blitz Events, which saw 800 staff volunteer to support older people in Dublin, Cork and Galway, to the Sunset Run, New Ireland Cycle of Ireland, Waterford Greenway Cycle, World Cup

Raffle and 'Give One Hour' fundraising events, there was no member of staff who didn't get involved.

Special thanks to the CSR Team who helped us to maximise support for Age Action and The Seniors Team, who were also a tremendous support and continue to support Positive Ageing Week through sponsorship this year, having sponsored this event now since 2016.

Huge thanks to everyone who played their part to support us – we look forward to continuing to work in partnership with Bank of Ireland in the future!

Gas Networks Ireland

Marie Lyster, Customer Experience Manager, says: "We are delighted to partner with Age Action as our beneficiary charity this year. Taking care of the elderly is very important to us at Gas Networks Ireland, as we are committed to providing the best customer service possible for all our customers, and in particular, we make specific provisions for vulnerable customers.

Gas Networks Ireland's decision to support Age Action in 2019 help older people to remain safe and well in their own homes through the Care & Repair Programme struck a chord with their staff, who meet many older people in their own day-to-day work.

The company makes a €2 donation to Age Action for every



▲ Marie Lyster, of Gas Networks Ireland, presenting the keys of the donated van to John O'Mahony, National Development Manager of Care and Repair. Background (LtoR): William Garbutt, Michael Lynch, Bernard Moonhey, Percival De Ocampo, David Crancher, Caroline O'Connell, Julie O'Donoghue, Jennifer Connolly, John Dunlea and Amy Higgins

Customer Satisfaction Survey completed and Staff have had lots of fun fundraising throughout the year by holding Christmas Jumper days, Easter and Halloween Raffles and special events. Gas Networks also generously donated a van to Care & Repair Cork this summer and provide ongoing maintenance support for the programme's vans.

In a further display of their fantastic support, 50 staff spent a full day tidying the gardens of older people in their local community in July, an initiative which was gratefully received by all those who benefitted and thoroughly enjoyed by the green-fingered volunteers.

Irish Water

Leona Berry, Customer Experience Manager, says "Getting

to partner with a wonderful organisation like Age Action has been such an honour for us here in Irish Water. We are so impressed with the vital services that Age Action provide to the older people in our communities, and we felt that this would be another opportunity for us to further support and make a positive impact on our own vulnerable customers.

"The various activities we have done together this year to raise funds for Age Action have increased our staff's awareness of the needs of the older people in their own communities and have helped them to live by the values of Age Action in their day to day lives."

Irish Water became a Corporate Partner with Age Action in early 2019 by making a donation to us for every Customer Satisfaction Survey completed

and we receive generous quarterly donations as a result.

Their staff have also worked non-stop to support our fundraising by holding raffles and fundraising events internally and coming out in force for our National Heart of Gold Collection when they gave up their time to cover collections in Grafton Street for the day.

This Christmas the staff are holding a number of fundraising events, including an Intergenerational Quiz Night on December 12th and the company has also chosen Age Action to benefit from their annual Christmas Donation.

Staff are also assisting us in the run up to Christmas by helping us to contact supporters and donors to thank them for their generosity and ask them about their GDPR preferences.



▲ CEO Paddy Connolly with the staff of our new store in Edward Street, Newbridge

We need donations shout out!

At this time of year, we would also like to remind people we would love to receive donations of any unwanted Christmas gifts, clothing or festive items. Also, this year, any old or unwanted Christmas decorations you decide not to pack away. Drop them into us. And your unwanted gift sets, bottles, tins, that make-up you've bought and not used, the men's toiletries lurking in a cupboard unloved, unused and unwanted. We also need all types of packaging, used paper bags, newspapers, magazines, bubble wrap and brown paper or gift wrap.

Please call us for stock collection on 01 9121850 Monday - Friday 9-5pm, or email showroom@ageaction.ie. Donors can also drop off at any store in our retail group and we will gladly receive your donations. For further queries please call our Head of Retail Gail Kennedy on 0864177607 or email gail@ageaction.ie



Newbridge store opened in September

On Thursday 26th September Newbridge became the home of Age Action's newest retail store reflecting the growing presence of the organisation in communities around Ireland. Age Action's first pop-up information clinic also started on Wednesday 6th of November in the Newbridge store located on Edward Street and will continue on the 1st Wednesday of each month from 9.30 to 1.30, writes **Gail Kennedy**.

Age Action's eight stores carry a wide variety of contemporary and vintage clothing as well as household items and furniture all donated by our supporters. In addition to selling those items, our staff and volunteers build relationships with customers, refer people to Age Action's support services if they are needed as well as providing a space for older people to meet and talk

For more information on our network of stores, visit www.ageaction.ie/how-you-can-help/our-charity-stores-showroom-and-stock-collection-service

PAW 2019 — ageing in place

At Age Action one of our flagship events is Positive Ageing Week (PAW) which celebrates ageing and the contribution and agency of older people. It took place this year from Sun 30th Sept - Sat 6th October 2019. Ageing in Place was the theme for PAW 2019 which is about ensuring that people have choice and control over where and how they age. The 2019 theme is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg10>> and will focus on pathways of coping with existing and preventing future old age inequality. Throughout the week our Camden Street Store was transformed into an Information Hub that saw a series of talks and events exploring the theme of Ageing in Place.

Here are some of the images from the week.

— Billy O’Keeffe



▲ Hub on International Day of Older People: Paula Fagan, CEO LGBT+ Ireland; Elaine Howard, Global Brain Health Institute; David Gough, GAA Referee; and Collette O’Regan, Training Officer LGBT+ Ireland; highlighting the LGBT Champions Programme on 1st October. Photo: Marc O’Sullivan

▼ Thomas McCabe of Siel Bleu leading an exercise class at our Hub on Wellbeing, Wednesday, 2nd October. Photo: SON Photographic Ltd



▲ Ageing in Place — Age Action CEO Paddy Connolly, Karl Duff of the Dept. of Health, Eileen O’Callaghan of Sage Advocacy and David Silke of the Housing Agency.

Inspiring positive change through digital literacy

Exclusion, isolation and discrimination: these are words that can conjure up issues that minority groups might face, such as inequality and unfairness. While these issues unfortunately do very often affect minority groups, they are also affecting a large portion of our older citizens who have not had the opportunity to engage in meaningful digital literacy education, writes Jennifer Glansford.

Digital literacy

The definition of 'digital literacy' today includes being able to use simple, every day, technology to communicate and handle information. A generation of older people is being left behind as an increasingly online Ireland fails to support and empower older people to properly participate in our society as digital citizens. Half of Irish people aged between 65 and 74 have never use the internet. The National Digital Strategy describes internet use among those aged over 75 as negligible.



▲ Jennifer Glansford, Getting Started Manager.



A move to online services creates barriers for many older people who are unable to carry out their day-to-day business online or are wary of doing so. Government services are also actively encouraging people to make their tax returns and apply to renew their driving licences and passports online.

Advantages of going online

For older people who do get online, it has the potential to change their lives. They can discover new hobbies, meet new people, access services more quickly and keep in touch with family. Use of the internet has proven potential to deliver positive social and health related outcomes for older people, not least decreased feelings of loneliness and isolation

Role of the Getting Started Programme

Age Action's Getting Started Programme aims to provide this opportunity to as many people as possible throughout the country.

The uniqueness of the Getting Started Programme is that, in the main, we provide 10 hours of basic digital literacy skills in local venues on a one-to-one student/tutor basis. This method has proven to be very effective as it enables people with fear and anxiety about learning a new skill (which can seem very daunting), to go at their own pace with their tutor, learning about subjects and skills that are relevant and useful to them and, most of all, that are beneficial to them in

combatting exclusion, isolation and discrimination.

The Getting Started Programme will have trained 2,950 people in 2019, and we could not do this without the continuing support of all our volunteer tutors – wonderful people who are willing to give up their time and share their digital knowledge with older people who are keen to get to grips with the nuances of the digital world.

Tutors from local communities, transition year students and corporate volunteers support the programme and create a fun, enjoyable and relaxing learning environment where people can bring along their own devices, or use devices at the library, school, community centre or corporate offices where classes occur. Volunteers are the backbone of the Getting Started Programme and we are indebted to them all for their support and enthusiasm.

Our classes

We run classes in every county, and in 2019 the programme has been run in:

- 42 schools,
- 39 libraries,
- 3 Age Action premises,
- 15 corporates,
- 8 sheltered housing,
- 20 community venues.

This year we have run a few groups classes with through Polish for Polish Community groups in Dublin and Cork. We have also partnered with Men's Shed in Adare, Co Limerick and with Limerick County Council for classes in Newcastlewest. In addition, we have run a class as *Gaeilge* in

Ballyvourney, Co Cork.

The Getting Started Programme equips people to successfully combat the difficulties that modern life can throw at people if they do not have the skills to be online.

Overcoming the fear by having a tutor has proved really helpful for people who want to dip their toe in the digital pond.

Please contact us if you would like more information on our one-to-one classes in your county either for yourself or a relative or friend. Alternatively, if you think you have the skills to teach someone the basics of being online, get in touch with us too and become a part of our Getting Started volunteer army in 2020! Contact the Getting Started Team on 01 475-6989

Jennifer Glansford

Jennifer Glansford began volunteering with Age Action in 2011 as an administrator and later that year, was appointed as a Project Officer for the Getting Started Programme. In late 2016, she was appointed to the role of National Development Manager and has continued to promote and grow the programme nationwide, working with a team of six Regional Project Officers.

Valuing volunteering in Age Action



▲ Pina Attanasio

The Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that the essence of life is “to serve others and do good”. So why should volunteering interest us all? Because it provides everyone, whether giver or beneficiary, with a sense of purpose and improved happiness. It brings communities together and does so in a supportive and cooperative way, writes **Pina Attanasio**.

The most important aspect of working with volunteers is to nourish the relationship and help them become more involved with the work of the organisation. It is vital to keep volunteers motivated, appreciated and ensure they feel needed in their engagement with the organisation.

In Ireland over 28.4% of adults are involved in volunteering, meaning over 1 million people are working side by side with others in their local community. And of these, 65% are over 45.¹

Importance of volunteers to Age Action

Volunteers are at the heart of everything we do at Age Action. Without their support, we wouldn't be able to deliver our services and programmes of work from Care and Repair, Getting Started Computer Training, Lifelong learning, charity stores and offices around Ireland. Such services are only made possible because of the extreme generosity of everyone who commits their time to empower, support and help older people around the country.

For instance, volunteers involved in the Care and Repair programme, supporting older people with small DIY jobs, have described their volunteering experience as being very positive. They

¹ These stats come from Volunteering Ireland <https://www.volunteer.ie/resources/volunteering-statistics/> and the Charities Regulator <https://www.volunteer.ie/resources/volunteering-statistics/>

enjoy meeting older people who are full of life and character, and Age Action clients are very grateful to receive such help. Many passionate volunteers are also supporting our charity stores, from talking to customers and operating the till to sorting and pricing stock.

Saying thank you

In 2019, 1,582 volunteers supported Age Action with their skills, knowledge, dedication, compassion and care. We are organising our annual volunteer appreciation nights in Dublin and in our regional offices to acknowledge all the wonderful work our volunteers do and to thank them personally.

The events will provide all volunteers with an opportunity to meet with the Age Action staff to learn more about our work, and the volunteering opportunities available in the organisation. During the events volunteers will also have a chance to meet each other, sit and chat about their experience of volunteering and networking with everyone.

Future volunteering plan

The process of developing a new volunteering strategy for Age Action will begin in the new year, and we will focus on new ways to motivate and engage volunteers with our programmes, policy and campaigns. We will explore other opportunities to empower volunteers to play a leadership role in the organisation.

Over the new few years we will be developing and delivering a new strategic plan for volunteering that will involve engaging with other non-profit organisations that also use volunteers. This will include inviting volunteers to join these conversations.

This process is critical to ensuring continued successful growth of volunteering. By engaging in this process, Age Action will be able to further improve its delivery of services and programmes of work nationwide.

We would like to focus on the “volunteer journey,” helping them to strengthen their relationship with the organisation by providing them with support from the moment they start their experience to the time they reach a position of confidence and stability in their role.

We feel it is important that volunteering be acces-

sible, beneficial and enjoyable for everyone. We are fully committed to bringing core values of dignity, participation, diversity, social justice and professionalism to all aspects of our work with volunteers.



Commitment to volunteering

Pina Attanasio is our first Manager of Age Action’s Volunteer Programme. Previously, Pina was the Activism and Event Coordinator in Amnesty International. She is Italian, from a little town in the south of Italy located on the coast of the Apulia region.

Pina has dedicated the last 15 years to defending human rights around the world. Through her dedicated work with Amnesty International, Pina managed and co-ordinated volunteers, led largescale demonstrations and generated significant change.

She also worked overseas in a refugee camp on Lesbos, Greece, supporting vulnerable refugees, and with street children in Malawi. The experience at the Lesbos Solidary Refugee Camp had a profound impact on her career. Inspired by the tireless efforts of the volunteers in the camp, Pina’s own dedication was reinforced.

In Mzuzu, Malawi, Pina collaborated with the Umoza Street Children Programme in the Saint John of God centre. There, she volunteered at the drop-in centre which is the first point of call for children identified as being from the streets.

Pina has coordinated a global campaign for prisoners of conscience around the world for over 10 years. She involved thousands of volunteers around Ireland to act on behalf of human rights defenders and raised significant awareness of the issue.

Care and Repair service 2019 — helping older people age in place

As we lose mobility, basic household maintenance can become very difficult to manage. People who have been house-proud all their lives can suddenly find themselves unable to maintain their homes, writes John O'Mahony.

Even something as simple as changing a light bulb can become a major problem for an older person. Other household tasks such as trimming hedges, installing smoke alarms, changing locks and moving furniture cause similar difficulties.

Care & Repair is a service designed to help people to remain living in their own homes in increased safety and comfort. It provides a free small DIY service and a list of local tradesmen who can provide quotations for larger jobs.

Care & Repair network

The Care & Repair service is delivered by Age Action from our bases in Dublin, Cork and Galway. In order to make the service available to as many people as possible throughout the country, Age Action partners with local community organisations in cities, towns and rural areas. Age Action provides a series of supports including policies, procedures and on-site training so that local groups can launch the service in their area.

This network of community partners is an integral part of how the service is delivered. One of the most positive stories of the year was the re-launch of Care & Repair Waterford in

April. Waterford Area Partnership had run a very successful Care & Repair service in the city and surrounding areas for several years but unfortunately they had to close it in 2017. They never gave up on the idea however and they found a way to bring it back this year, much to the delight of residents. The launch in St. Patrick's Gateway Centre was very well received by an enthusiastic audience.

Brightening up gardens

This year, the service has been as busy as ever. During the spring and summer months we receive lots of requests for gardening work as well as the usual household repair jobs. Trimming hedges, weeding and general tidy ups are the most common requests. The garden is often the first thing that people struggle with as they lose mobility and it's great to be able to brighten them up for people when the sun is shining!

Carbon monoxide alarms

Throughout the year we have continued to install carbon monoxide alarms in people's homes free of charge. We hope to receive another batch alarms from Gas Networks Ireland in 2020. If any readers do not have carbon

monoxide alarms in their homes, please call us. They really do save lives.

Pilot hospital discharge service

The pilot Hospital Discharge Service, launched in Cork in 2018, is an extension of the usual Care & Repair service to focus on the particular needs of people who are ready to be discharged from hospital but require work in their homes in order to return. Requests included clearing clutter,

Care & Repair Stats for 2018

- 9456 Jobs were carried out in older people's homes
- 26 Community Partner Organisations trained to deliver the service
- 18,291 Labour hours spent delivering the Care and Repair Service in 26 locations
- 90% There was a Satisfaction Rate
- 2,664 Referrals to trade people were completed
- 300 Bank of Ireland Staff volunteered to work on older people's gardens during the Backyard Blitz
- 4,000 carbon monoxide alarms donated by Bord Gais Ireland

Source: 2018 Age Action Annual Report



▲ Billy O'Keefe Life Long Learning Manager Age Action, Ian Lennon Waterford Area Partnership and John O'Mahony Care & Repair Manager Age Action at re-launch of Card & Repair Waterford 2019

moving beds downstairs and collecting equipment from the hospital stores.

This element of Care & Repair requires some adaptations to the usual procedures to allow for the fact that the client may not be at home when work is being done. The systems have now been tested and we hope to roll out the service in other locations in 2020.

Christmas decorations

During the autumn and winter we receive many requests for sweeping leaves, blocking drafts and generally getting homes winter ready. One of the nicer jobs we get to do for people is to put up their Christmas decorations in December and take them down again in January. Christmas is not always an easy time

of year and we're delighted to be able to bring a little festive cheer to people's lives!

Looking forward

As we head towards 2020, plans are in place to improve the service offered by Care & Repair. We plan to expand our network of community partners and build our volunteer teams to increase the number of people who can access the service.

We also plan to improve the extent to which we can support the people we come into contact with beyond the DIY job they request. We will forge closer relationships with other organisations so that together we can offer people a package of supports that can improve their quality of life.

None of this would be possible

without the dedicated support of our staff, volunteers and community partners. Their commitment and compassion continue to inspire. To them, and to all of the people who have come in contact with the Care & Repair service throughout the year. Have a very happy Christmas!

You can contact our regional offices by phoning and asking to be put through to our Care and Repair service:

Dublin: 01-475 6989

Cork: 021-206 7399

Galway 091-527 831

And you can get the contact details of our community partners on our website <https://www.ageaction.ie/how-we-can-help/care-and-repair/locations> John O'Mahony is National Development Manager.

Survey on Ageing and Development Programme

A short survey on Age Action’s Ageing and Development Programme is included with this issue of *Ageing Matters* and we’d be grateful if you could fill it in and returning it in the pre-paid envelope. This would help us to understand how our work in this area is perceived and assess its impact.

Older people make up a growing proportion of populations in developing and developed countries. By 2050, more than 80% of older people will live in developing countries (compared to 60% today). Older people are often

less able to flee in times of crisis or natural disasters. In developing countries they face particular challenges. Social protection and pensions play a key role in addressing these challenges.

Role of Age Action

Age Action, in conjunction with HelpAge International, is working with older people’s groups in Mozambique, Tanzania, Malawi and Ethiopia. This project is supported by Irish Aid – the international development section of the Department of Foreign Affairs. This Irish Aid-funded

programme undertakes targeted activities in support of older people’s access to appropriate social protection in the partner countries.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals designed to be a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”. They are vital in setting an agenda to address the needs of older people. Age Action runs a workshop based on the SDGs and our work in Africa. If you would like more information, please contact us at u3a@ageaction.ie

Annual membership application

I wish to join Age Action and enclose € membership fee, plus €..... voluntary donation payable to Age Action Ireland Ltd.

If you are already an existing Age Action member and wish to renew your membership, please write your membership number here

Full name: (Block capitals please)

Address:.....

Tel:

Email: (Block capitals please)

Date:

STANDING ORDER

To the Manager (Name of Bank/Building Society)

Bank Address:

Please pay annually to Age Action Ireland, Permanent TSB, 70 Grafton Street, Dublin 2, BIC: IPBSIE2D

IBAN: IE82 IPBS 9906 2587 7790 21

the following amount € until further notice. Starting on: 1st day of January 20

Name: (Block capitals please)

BIC:

IBAN:.....

Signature:.....

FEES

- €20 Individual – retired/unwaged
- €40 Individual – employed
- €60 Voluntary Body
- €200 Statutory Agency
- €500 Commercial

Please return to:

Membership Development, Age Action Ireland CLG, 10 Grattan Crescent, Inchicore, Dublin 8. Email: membership@ageaction.ie Tel: (01) 475 6989