

AgeingMatters

in Ireland

Big Knit is back

Bigger and better

Get out your knitting needles! 10-11

An Post

Protect our post offices 3

Our shops

Ireland's best shopping
experience 4-5

AgeAction

For all older people



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■ Cover photo: Big Knit champions Anne, Delo and Noirín want your help for Big Knit 2017.

Opinion

Hidden problem of fuel poverty



Eamon Timmins

It's hard to stomach that at the start of the 21st Century, in a relatively prosperous economy with a climate like ours, between 1,500 and 2,000 people die annually from cold-related illness. Or, to put that another way, they die because they cannot afford to heat their homes.

The majority them are aged over 65. They are in communities across Ireland. These deaths are one of the hidden, forgotten and shameful features of today's Ireland.

The cold can and does kill each winter. The majority of its victims do not die of hypothermia, but from cold-related conditions such as respiratory and cardiovascular illness. It is estimated that 7.5 per cent of all pensioner households, more than 16,300 homes, suffer fuel poverty.

Not all older people are at risk. Those who struggle most are pensioners living alone, on low incomes, in poorly insulated homes, and those with a physical disability or condition that restricts their movement.

The other group in society who struggle most with fuel poverty are single parents with young children. While the two groups might seem different, they share common features such as low, fixed incomes and greater heating needs.

Ignored by policy-makers

Fuel poverty in Ireland and the shameful winter death rate have not received the attention they deserve but Age Action has not let the issue drop off our agenda.

In the run-up to last October's Budget we sought the reversal of the cuts to the fuel allowance by extending the payment for four weeks. The payments for the current winter season will end on 31 March.

However, there have been some positive developments, such as the Government's Warmth and Wellbeing scheme which was launched last year. Originally a pilot scheme offering a free energy upgrade to older people in energy poverty in Dublin 12 and 24 it is being extended this year to Dublin 8, 10 and 22.

The project will examine changes in hospitalisation rates, mortality, mental health and stress levels of the participants. In essence, researchers will track the impact warmer, better insulated, homes make on those living there.

But this scheme must be only the start of a serious, concerted, Government campaign to end fuel poverty in Ireland, something Age Action will keep fighting for.

To find out more about the Warmth and Wellbeing scheme and details of other home insulation grant schemes, visit www.seai.ie, phone Age Action's information team at 01-475 6989 or email them at helpline@ageaction.ie.

— Eamon Timmins

Age Action warning on price of stamps

An Oireachtas committee was warned last month that another increase in the price of the stamp would create difficulties for many older people and could lead to a drop in the volume of mail.

New legislation will lift the price cap on the cost of stamps and some media reports have indicated this could mean an increase from 72 cent to between 90 cent and a euro. If approved, it would be the third increase in two years.

"I can tell you with absolute certainty that an increase of that magnitude, 25 per cent at the lower end, will certainly be noticed by someone whose sole income is the State Pension," Age Action's Justin Moran told the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

"It will mean older people making a conscious decision to send fewer letters with a corresponding knock-on effect for postal volumes, which are already in decline."

The committee also discussed recommendations to strengthen the post office network, including new post office payment accounts, which are due to be introduced shortly.

Under pressure

The network currently has 1,135 post offices and serves around 1.7 million customers every week but more than 200 post offices have closed since 2007 and the network is coming under increasing pressure. Around a third of the remaining post



▲ Blanchardstown Postmaster Geoff Doyle

offices may not be sustainable without urgent action.

The popularity of email means fewer letters are being sent and while many pensioners collect their payment in the post office every Friday most new pensioners are choosing to have the money paid into their bank account.

"The report recognises that the post office is an 'essential service for facilitating communication and interaction in local

communities,'" said Mr Moran.

"It is especially important for older people who use the post office to collect pensions, access cash, pay their utility bills, save money, buy stamps and, perhaps most importantly, meet their friends.

"We need to expand the services that post offices provide but we also need to remind people that if they don't use their local post office, they could lose it."

20th anniversary of Camden Street shop



▲ Satisfied customers at a “design and vintage night”.

Six of the best!

This year Age Action celebrates the 20th anniversary of the opening of our first charity shop at Camden Street, Dublin, by taking the number of shops around Ireland to six. **Gail Kennedy**, who has recently taken over as Retail Manager, writes about the expansion plans — and the importance of the shops to Age Action’s work.

I’ve been in retail all my working life and I previously worked for some of the biggest retailers in the country — Dunnes Stores’ flagship location in Cornelscourt, Marks and Spencers, and Woodies DIY.

The charity sector is vital to me personally and I’ve been involved in a voluntary capacity in

various charities for the last eight years, but this is the first time my job is working full-time for a charity.

Fantastic

And it’s been just fantastic. Already (I only started in April) I’ve met so many great people and we’re working to achieve something lasting with our Age Action shops.

The revenue we get from our shops is one of the main sources of the funds required to run some of our biggest programmes.

The charity itself is 25 years old this year and Age Action’s first shop opened in 1997. The second unit in Monaghan town came in 2007, so both of them have anniversaries to celebrate in 2017. The third shop, in Dun Laoghaire, followed in 2009.



Last year, we opened two new shops, Terenure in Dublin and Ballincollig in Cork, and we're planning on opening another in Galway city this year. We're also planning a new warehouse in Dublin dedicated to large furniture items.

Leaders

Age Action's shops are the leading shops in the charity sector. A lot of high-end designer stock is donated to us by our community of supporters, donors, volunteers and shoppers, and it's well known that we have the type of shops in which you can find a real gem.

That doesn't happen by accident – all the shops are boutique in style and all items are cleaned and prepared well to be very attractive.

Our Terenure shop, for instance, stocks high-end designer clothing, some of it unworn and nearly new, as well as a lot of crystal, designer footwear, handbags and costume jewellery.

We run regular "design and vintage" evenings when you can pick up a real bargain and they have been a massive success over the past couple of years.

All our shop managers – Fergal Vaughan in Camden Street, Patrick Mangan in Dun Laoghaire, Mary Beagan in Monaghan, Alan James in Terenure and Elaine Delaney in Ballincollig – are doing an amazing job, both running their individual shops

and building lasting connections with their local communities.

Importance of community

Every day we welcome older people to drop in, take the weight off their feet and sit down for a cup of tea. Our shops have become community hubs and that's something we'll be concentrating on building from 2017 onwards.

People will always drop off stock when they can, but we were one of the first charities in Ireland to organise a collection service, where we call to people's homes.

Currently we collect in all of greater Dublin and in Monaghan but as of the beginning of 2017 we're expanding that service to Cork – which is very exciting!

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any charity and it's no different with us. We have volunteers involved in every aspect of our shops – including Robin, an amazing gentleman who worked in Trinity College library for 25 years and now uses that experience to assess all the books that are donated to Age Action. There are volunteers like him right across the organisation.

It's a great time to be involved in Age Action – I'm proud of the work we're doing in our five shops (soon to be six!) and I'm proud that that work enables us to help older people all over Ireland.



▲ A warm Christmas welcome in our Dun Laoghaire shop.



▲ Public transport like the Bus Éireann Expressway service is vital for many older people.

Photo: Bus Éireann

Older people suffering from rural transport failure

Age Action warned an Oireachtas committee in December that the lack of an effective rural transport system is isolating older people and preventing them from accessing essential services.

The meeting with the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional and Rural Affairs in Dublin was part of a series held by the committee to examine issues affecting rural communities.

“An effective rural public transport system is essential for older people to access work, education, leisure, medical and social services,” explained Justin Moran, Head of Advocacy and Communications.

“Already, in many parts of Ireland, there are no direct public transport links to hospitals serving rural areas. Older people are increasingly concerned by media reports suggesting real threats to Iarnród Éireann routes and the future of the Bus Éireann Expressway service.

“As more than one older person has said to us, the travel pass isn’t worth very much if there are no buses or trains on which to use it.”

Positive Ageing Strategy

Mr Moran urged the committee to investigate whether the commitments made in 2013 in the National Positive Ageing Strategy to provide more

age-friendly transport have been met.

“The lack of public transport in many rural areas means many older people need to keep driving and they’re suffering from punishing, and ageist, increases in car insurance premiums,” he continued.

“Research carried out by the CSO and by the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice confirms that older people in rural Ireland have lower incomes and higher expenses than those living in our towns and cities.

“A lot of this is driven by the need to keep and maintain a car because the public transport system is simply not reliable. The services on which older people in rural communities rely – the post office, the bus, the local GP, the garda station all seem to be under threat.

“We hope the needs of older people will be fully reflected in the committee’s final report.”

A copy of Age Action’s full submission to the committee, which addresses a number other issues important to older people in rural Ireland, is available at www.ageaction.ie.

HSE service plan ignores home care crisis

Age Action was strongly critical of the HSE 2017 Service Plan, which was published just before Christmas. The organisation's spokespersons told RTÉ and a number of other media outlets that the plan was "very disappointing".

Under the new service plan in 2017, despite rapidly growing demand for home help services, the HSE will provide fewer home help hours to fewer people than it did six years ago.

Justin Moran, Head of Advocacy and Communications at Age Action, said: "It's hard to believe the HSE or the department understands the sheer scale of the crisis older people face in getting home care supports.

"Home help hours and home care packages are simply not available in many parts of the country and the failure to address this is very disappointing.

"This means more older people forced unnecessarily into nursing homes, more families struggling to cope without home helps and more pressure on carers."

Same hours as last year

In the service plan the HSE prom-



▲ Campaigners were disappointed by the lack of new money for home care.

ises to provide 10.57 million home help hours to 49,000 people, the same as was delivered in 2016, despite rising demand driven by demographic changes.

Justin Moran continued: "The Government, the HSE, opposition politicians, everyone tells us they want to support older people to stay at home as long as possible.

"But to do that we need substantial investment in home care supports that is simply not being provided.

"For the thousands of older people on waiting lists or stranded in acute hospitals unable to be discharged, 2017 is set to be

a very difficult year."

The budget for the HSE in 2017 will be almost €14 billion, which Stephen McMahon from the Irish Patients' Association pointed out meant that more than €27,000 per minute will be spent running our health service this year.

Despite this additional funding, the problems of long waiting lists, bed shortages and lack of nursing staff seem set to continue while services for older people are starved of the necessary resources.

The HSE has already warned the Government the budget may not be enough to meet all the competing demands.



◀ While many look forward to retirement some older workers would like to choose to stay on.

Government to move on mandatory retirement?

In a possible sign that Age Action's campaign to abolish mandatory retirement is having an impact Minister Leo Varadkar told the *Sunday Independent* over Christmas that he wanted to look at "greater flexibility around retirement". He identified the problem of mandatory retirement as something that needs to be addressed.

The Minister's statement followed the launch of a new briefing paper published by Age Action which set out the arguments for the abolition of ageist retirement clauses in workers' contracts.

The paper explains that EU employment law forbids discrimination on the basis of age but a loophole allows employers to treat workers differently if justified by a 'legitimate aim'.

"Courts have found that examples of a 'legitimate aim' can include forcing older workers onto the dole to make room for younger unemployed workers even though the evidence shows this does not lead to increased employment for younger people," explained Age Action's Justin Moran.

"Those countries with high rates of employment for older workers are also typically those with simi-

lar rates for young people.

Transition Pension abolished

"Government policy is to support longer working lives, to enable those who wish to work a little longer to do so, to value their contribution and their experience. But in practice, employers are permitted to get rid of older workers for no other reason than they turn 65."

The problem is made worse by the recent abolition of the transition pension.

"This means a worker forced into retirement at the age of 65, the most common age chosen by employers, has no choice but to go on the dole for 12 months while waiting to receive their pension," said Mr Moran.

"This is why there are more 65-year-olds on Jobseeker's Benefit than at any other age and it means these newly unemployed workers are getting almost €50 a week less than they would if they were entitled to a State Pension."

It remains to be seen just what Minister Varadkar intends to do in this area. Age Action has written to the Minister urging him to act quickly to support older workers.

Varadkar backs travel pass... 'to the hilt'

Minister for Social Protection, Leo Varadkar TD, has renewed his promise to protect the travel pass after it was revealed the previous government had considered introducing an annual charge.

A report in the *Irish Times* last month confirmed the seriousness of the threat to the travel pass that Age Action members defeated in 2014.

The internal Government report suggested introducing a €50 charge for the travel pass as well as abolishing passes for spouses and introducing a means test.

"The travel pass is absolutely essential for many older people who rely on it to get to medical appointments, to do their shopping and to visit friends and family," said Gerry Scully, Senior Information Officer.

But Minister Varadkar immediately ruled out any changes to the travel pass, telling journalists, "For many it is a lifeline and I will defend it to the hilt."

Travel pass vital

The importance of the travel pass was revealed in an Age Action survey of 500 travel



▲ Age Action members fought successfully to protect the travel pass in 2014.

pass users. More than half said they would be unable to attend medical or health appointments without the pass and 61 per cent said losing it would make it impossible to visit friends and family.

Age Action also pointed out that the debate around the travel pass ignores how it helps the economy. The survey showed 60 per cent of pensioners have used the travel pass to go on a short break in Ireland so it is of enormous value to the domestic tourism sector.

In addition, restricting or elim-

inating the travel pass would make it more difficult for some older people to do their shopping, which would hurt struggling local retailers.

"The Programme for Government makes it absolutely clear that the Government will protect the travel pass," said Mr Scully.

"The statement from Minister Varadkar confirms that the travel pass is safe for the moment but we will always need to be vigilant against any attempt by a future government to undermine a fundamental entitlement for older people."

The biggest Big Knit yet

(we're woolly excited)



Calling all knitters: The innocent Big Knit is back and we need(le) your help. This year, innocent Drinks have set their sights on making it the biggest Big Knit yet. With your help, they're aiming to get **100,000 knitted hats** on to the tops of their little smoothie bottles. And for every one sold 30c will go to Age Action, helping older people stay warm and well in winter through our Care & Repair programme. To help innocent Drinks reach this woolly big goal, we need the help of knitters everywhere (that's you). Whether you're learning to cast on or already clacking up a storm, we and innocent Drinks would love your help in making this a year for the record books. You can knit as many or as few as you like - every hat counts towards making a big difference. To find out more about how to join in, visit www.thebigknit.ie.

knit one, help loads

Please send your hats in by **31 July 2017** and keep your eyes peeled for smoothies wearing little hats in stores from October 2017. Put all your hats in an envelope along with a note clearly stating:

- how many you've knitted
- the date
- your name and address

Then send them all through to:

The Big Knit 2017, innocent Drinks, Fruit Towers,
2 Ballsbridge Park, Dublin 4

If you've got any questions, tips or wool-related gossip, drop innocent Drinks a line at howaya@innocentdrinks.ie or give them a call on 01 6644100.

Meet the Knitters



say hello to Delo

Delo has made so many hats for the Big Knit she doesn't even need a pattern anymore. And she's happy to knit anywhere and everywhere - including on the bus.

"I was in the Age Action shop back when the Big Knit started in 2008. I was asked to help out and I've never stopped. I love it and it's such a great cause."

say hello to Noirín

Noirín is a crochet queen and can crochet almost 10 hats in a couple of hours. She has done loads for the Big Knit campaign. Not only has she knit and crocheted a load of hats herself, she's also convinced people from all over Ireland to get involved too.

"It's a great idea. Every house has spare bits of wool and that's all you need for a little hat. Everyone should get involved."



say hello to Winnie

Winnie knits lots of different things; jumpers for her grandchildren and now little hats for the Big Knit. She has been knitting for the campaign for over 7 years now and has contributed thousands of little hats.

"I love knitting with the Age Action knitting group. I come here every week, I like the company. We're great friends and we have a good natter. We really understand each other and give each other some good tips, not only on knitting. You wouldn't want to hear some of the stuff we talk about. I love it."



Dear Age Action,

My daughter and her husband have just moved out and into a new home together. They're not far away but I still get a little nervous at night on my own. Would I be able to get an alarm for myself?

Catherine, Monaghan.

Help in case of **emergency**

Personal alarms are one of the best ways to seek help in an emergency. They can be worn around the neck or on the wrist or even around one's waist attached to a belt but they don't work if left in a drawer, writes **Gerry Scully**.

These alarms work as an intercom installed onto the landline of the older person so you do need to have a landline phone. The way a monitored personal alarm works is that when you press the button it activates an intercom with a monitoring centre.

The centre will ask the older person why the alarm has been activated and if everything is ok. It may have been activated by accident or the older person may have been testing the system.

Key-holders

If the alarm has been activated and the monitoring centre cannot get a response the staff will have a list of key-holders who can visit the older person to see what is wrong. If they cannot contact a key-holder (or if the older person responds by saying they need help) they will contact the emergency services.

These systems generally cost about €250 plus an annual monitoring fee of about €80 to €100. There is a grant (the Senior Alert Scheme) that covers 95 to 100 per cent of the cost of installation but it does not cover the annual monitoring fee.

The grant is paid by POBAL to local community groups who will help you fill out the application form. However, they tend to process applications in batches so some people choose to get an alarm privately because of possible delays.



▲ Senior Information Officer Gerry Scully at an Age Action information stand.

You can get the details of your local community group on the POBAL website, www.pobal.ie or you can contact the Age Action Information Service at 01 475 6989 or Helpline@ageaction.ie. We also have a list of commercial companies if you choose to go privately.



◀ Recommendations for reform of the car insurance industry have been sent to Minister Michael Noonan.
Photo: Fine Gael

Pressure mounts on insurers

An Oireachtas committee has recommended that insurers should take into account mandatory medical assessments for over-70s drivers when calculating insurance premiums.

The committee said that customers should be entitled to know if this has been done and to an explanation if it has not.

The proposal was one of more than 70 recommendations recently published by the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform,

and Taoiseach after an investigation into the rising cost of car insurance. Age Action was one of the organisations that met the committee.

“The recommendation for older drivers is something we wanted,” said Age Action’s Justin Moran. “There are also other good ideas about investigating the impact of rising car insurance costs on people in rural communities and looking at State insurance models.

“But recommendations are one thing, action is another, and we have to make sure the Government doesn’t ignore this report.”

Welcome for plan to protect vulnerable adults

Age Action warmly welcomed the recent publication of the National Safeguarding Committee’s five year strategic plan.

The committee brings together a number of statutory agencies and groups like Age Action to develop laws and policies to protect vulnerable adults.

“Any vulnerable adult can be subject to abuse,” said the

committee’s chair Patricia Rickard-Clarke. “Recent cases of historical practices and institutional abuse in Ireland have led to significant public concern about safeguarding our most vulnerable citizens.”

Major boost

“The plan will guide the committee’s work up to 2021 and represents a major boost for

the many organisations and statutory agencies which are currently working to protect vulnerable adults in Ireland,” said Age Action Chief Executive Eamon Timmins.

“Hopefully the work that will be done by the committee in the coming years will help protect all who may become vulnerable at any stage of our lives.”

Half of senior hospitalisations can be prevented

As Ireland plunges into the heart of the cold season, the risk of older people being hospitalised is at its highest despite the fact that almost half of these hospitalisations, 48.5 per cent, could be avoided according to a new survey of nurses from Home Instead.

The home care provider is encouraging families to take action to help keep seniors out of the hospital and has published a free guide to help with advice, recommendations and assistance.

The critical factor in reducing this spike in hospitalisations is family involvement. Nearly all nurses surveyed, 96.6 per cent, say that the role families play in keeping older people out of the hospital is just as important as the role of the medical community.

“Keeping older people safe at home and out of the hospital starts with family intervention,” said Ed Murphy, CEO and founder of Home Instead Senior Care in Ireland. “It could be as simple as making sure your parents are using assistive equipment to avoid falls or suggesting they see a doctor for any new aches or symptoms.”

Waiting too long

The most common action by older people that puts them at risk of hospitalisation is waiting too long to seek medical attention, according to the nurses surveyed.

“Not following doctor’s orders also puts older people at risk,”

Mr Murphy said. “Families play a critical role in making sure they fully understand and comply with medical instructions.”

To help families identify and act on potential warning signs, Home Instead Senior Care is offering the *Five Ways to Prevent Senior Hospitalisations* guide. The free guide includes information about common risk factors

and the steps that families can take to help ensure a healthy lifestyle.

The recommendations include making sure the older person is taking preventative health measures – like getting a flu shot or shingles vaccination – monitoring and assisting with medications, attending doctor’s visits and advocating for your older loved one, and checking in on them regularly.

To obtain a copy of the *Five Ways to Prevent Senior Hospitalisations* guide, please call 1890 930 013.



▲ Family caregiver with older relative.

Photo: Home Instead



▲ Mayor Séamus McGrath launching the Cork County Age Friendly Town Programme. Photo: Cork County Council

New **age friendly** towns for Cork

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Séamus McGrath, launched the Cork County Age Friendly Town Programme initiative last month.

A joint initiative between Cork County Council and the Cork County Age Friendly Alliance, the Age Friendly Towns Programme, sets out to significantly improve the quality of life for older adults living in the towns and to engage with older people in shaping their communities.

The current programme will build on the success of Kinsale as an Age Friendly Town. In 2014, Kinsale was one of eight towns selected nationally and the only town in Cork to become Age Friendly.

“Ageing is a matter that will affect us all,” said Mayor McGrath at the launch. “As life expectancy increases, we as a society must adapt in a matter that provides older people with the physical, economic and social opportuni-

ties to ensure they can enjoy the very best quality of life.

“The development of an age friendly society and age friendly town will be a major step in achieving this.”

Working with older people

The Age Friendly Towns Programme involves profiling the town, consulting with older people, key agencies and services leading to the development of an Age Friendly Town Plan. Subsequent engagement with older people ensures the successful delivery of these plans.

The Age Friendly Town Plan will now be expanded across three towns in County Cork, one each in the north, south and west, with the idea being to support a network of Age Friendly

Towns across the county.

“Everyone hopes that as they grow older they will be supported to stay in their own home, be listened to, be able to work or volunteer, be able to enjoy a good social life and have access to information and healthcare,” Mayor McGrath continued.

“Neighbourliness, a sense of belonging, feeling safe, feeling valued, these are things that everybody wants in their lives. The Age Friendly Towns Programme is a proven, cost-effective way of making this a reality for every member of the community.”

Find out more about how we can make our communities age friendly at www.agefriendlyireland.ie.



▲ United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Breakthrough on rights of older people

After years of deadlocked discussion around the need for a new international treaty to protect the rights of older people there was some progress during negotiations at the United Nations in December.

For the first time a number of EU Member States – Austria, Germany, Britain and Spain – agreed that the focus of the debate should move away from discussing whether a convention was needed and onto what a new convention would look like.

Another EU Member State, Slovenia, which has been a longstanding supporter of the need for a new treaty also backed the proposal.

“While we’re delighted to see some positive movement at last,” said Age Action’s Lianne Murphy, “it’s disappointing that Ireland didn’t join our EU colleagues in standing up for the human rights of older people.

“We have written to the relevant Government ministers and to TDs and senators with an interest in this area to try and ensure Ireland is not left behind when discussions resume in July.

“Though there’s no guarantee this breakthrough will lead to a new treaty, it is a sign that the mo-

mentum is in the right direction and the pressure being brought to bear is having an impact.”

New briefing paper

Shortly before the meeting in December Age Action published a new briefing paper setting out the arguments for a convention on the rights of older people.

The paper explains how it would benefit older women and men, including those in poorer or developing countries, and what action we would like the Government to take at the international level to support the drafting of a new convention.

“The briefing paper has been sent to TDs and senators across all sides in Leinster House,” continued Ms Murphy, “and has been getting a positive response.

“We need to increase pressure on the Government to take these negotiations seriously, to go into the next series of negotiations ready, willing and enthusiastic about standing up for older people in Ireland and around the world.”

The briefing paper is available on our website and hard copies can be requested by contacting Lianne at 01 475 6989.

Celebrating our amazing volunteers

Age Action held appreciation nights in Dublin, Cork, Monaghan and Galway just before Christmas to say thank you to our fantastic volunteers.

Without their support we would simply not be able to provide services to tens of thousands older people right across Ireland. Their generosity and their commitment

are inspirational!

If you would like to volunteer with Age Action contact Rachel on 01 475 6989 or email volunteering@ageaction.ie.



▼ Sarah Tracey and her husband Bob talking to Getting Started's Richard Dunne.

Credit Joe Guilfoyle

▼ A big crowd of members and volunteers turned out for the Dublin event.

Credit Joe Guilfoyle



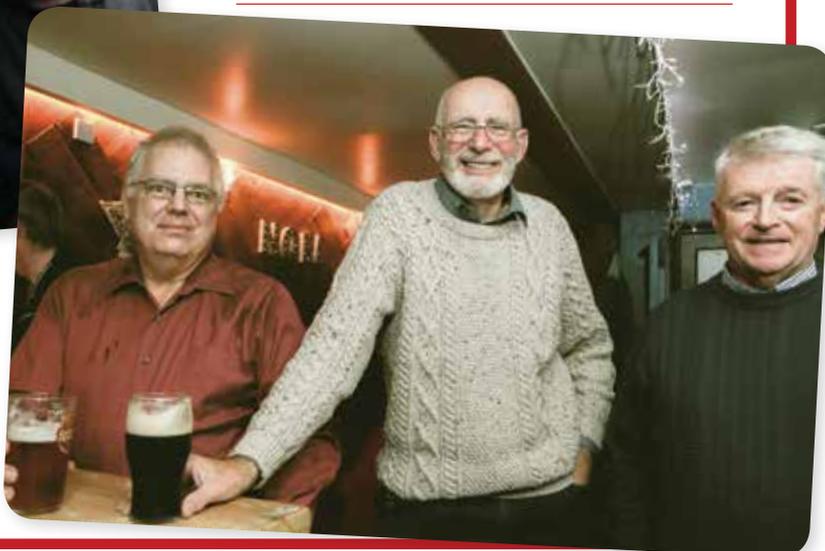
▼ Esther Sandoval, Wendy Yang and Deirdre Keaveney enjoying themselves at our Galway night.

Photo: Arun Asan



▼ Lars Tovander, Louis Carroll and Michael Kearns enjoying the pre Christmas drinks.

Photo: Arun Asan



Minister launches free *Keeping Warm this Winter* guide

OFTEC Ireland, Age Action and Helen McEntee TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Older People, have officially launched a free guide, offering key advice to help older people using oil home heating to stay safe and warm throughout the cold period.

The *Keeping Warm this Winter* guide, which is being distributed throughout Ireland, was created by OFTEC, which represents the domestic oil heating and cooking industry in Ireland, in conjunction with Age Action.

Following the success of the campaign over the past two years, Minister Helen McEntee TD lent her support to highlight the important issue of excess winter deaths and inform those at greatest risk how they can keep safe and warm this winter.

“This guide is a reminder to us all of the importance of ensuring that our older friends and family stay warm during the cold months,” said Minister McEntee. “I urge people to check in on older or vulnerable neighbours who may be living alone, to ensure that they are staying safe and well during the cold weather.”

Free of charge

Age Action will be distributing the guide throughout its network of offices and shops and the guide is available free of charge. Alternatively, a digital copy is available to download from both the OFTEC and Age Action websites.



▲ Age Action's Justin Moran, Minister Helen McEntee and David Blevings of OFTEC with Joy Cassidy from Slane launching the guide.

Photo: Seamus Farrelly

“The important issue of supporting older people in winter across Ireland is always a firm focus for OFTEC and we are delighted to launch the campaign with Age Action again and with Minister McEntee,” said David Blevings, Ireland Manager of OFTEC

“With approximately 600,000 homes in Ireland using heating oil as their primary heating source, we encourage everyone to pick up the guide, consider

your elderly relatives and neighbours, and provide older people with as much information as possible to help them save money and keep warm.

“A service by an OFTEC registered technician will ensure your elderly relatives' boiler will run safely, efficiently and cost-effectively,” he added.

For more information visit www.ageaction.ie, www.oftec.org or www.oilsave.org.

Still time for Silver Surfers 2017

Nominations for the Silver Surfers 2017 close on Friday 17 February so there is still time to nominate someone you know and celebrate the achievements of older people mastering new technology.

There are five categories in this year's awards, which are sponsored by open eir, who are rolling out high-speed broadband in communities across the country.

"The open eir Silver Surfer Awards are all about driving home the benefit of being online to older people with the aim of getting more people to give it a go," said Age Action CEO Eamon Timmins.



▲ Newstalk's George Hook with previous Silver Surfers.

Nominations can be made at www.ageaction.ie or call us on 01 475 6989.

U3A groups

📍 Active Virginians U3A

Patricia at (087) 235-0515

📍 An Cosán U3A Tallaght

Imelda at (01) 462-8488

📍 Ballymun U3A

Peter at (087) 292-4001

📍 Ballyroan U3A

June at (01) 494-7030

📍 Blackrock U3A

Eileen at (087) 418-8607

📍 Blessington U3A

Peter at (087) 815-1018

📍 Bray U3A

Linda at (086) 045-1600

📍 Carrick-on-Shannon U3A

Margaret at (086) 837-2934

📍 Club 50, Donegal U3A

Anne at Annegallagher60@yahoo.ie

📍 Dublin City U3A

John at (01) 201-7490

📍 Dun Laoghaire, Dalkey, Killiney U3A

Email dldk@gmail.com

📍 Galway U3A

Livio Rocca at u3agalway@gmail.com.

📍 Maynooth U3A

Helena at (01) 628-5128.

For more information, email Sam O'Brien-Olinger, U3A Development Officer, at u3a@ageaction.ie or phone (01) 475-6989.

📍 Lucan U3A

Mary at lucanu3a@gmail.com.

📍 Monaghan U3A

Eamonn at (087) 918-6567

📍 Newcastle, Dublin 22 U3A, Retired Active Men's Social

Matt at (01) 458-9007

📍 Roscommon U3A

Sam at (01) 475-6989

📍 Rusheen Woods, Galway, U3A

Angela at rusheenwoodsu3a@gmail.com

📍 Sutton-Baldoyle U3A

Christine at (01) 832-3697

📍 Tramore U3A

Mollie at molliehunt@eircom.net

📍 Waterford U3A

Josephine at (051) 871-037

We're stronger with you

Age Action is only as strong as our members and supporters. Every member helps us to have a more powerful voice to speak out for older people in Ireland.

We would like to give a big thank you to all our members who have already renewed their membership and to remind those that haven't yet to renew as soon as you can.

You can use the form below and your support really is invaluable. We wish all our members a very happy New Year.



▲ Age Action campaigns rely on our members.

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:

FEES

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

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:.....

Please return to:

Membership Development, Age Action Ireland Ltd, 30/31 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2.

Email: membership@ageaction.ie

Tel: (01) 475 6989

Fax: (01) 475 6011