

ageing matters *in Ireland*

Getting Started going strong



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Dementia stigma campaign
launched **Page 7**



For all older people

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PUBLISHER	Age Action Ireland Ltd
ADDRESS	30-31 Lower Camden St, Dublin 2
TELEPHONE	+353 1 475-6989
FAX	+353 1 475-6011
EMAIL	info@ageaction.ie
WEBSITE	www.ageaction.ie
AGE ACTION IRELAND LTD	Company Limited by Guarantee Registered in Ireland No. 198571 Charity No. CHY 10583
CHIEF EXECUTIVE	Eamon Timmins
PUBLISHING & INFORMATION	Justin Moran & Gerard Scully
SUB-EDITING AND DESIGN	Catherine Osborn

■ Cover photo: Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Alex White congratulates Matt Costello at a Getting Started graduation in Dundrum.

Elder abuse: the good and bad news

It is both encouraging and deeply depressing that for the last five years the United Nations has organised an annual World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD).

On the one hand, it's encouraging that the UN would take on this task in recognition of an awful problem experienced by older people around the world. On the other hand, the scale of the problem is deeply depressing.

WEAAD took place on 15 June. It was an important event for communities across the country because we have plenty of reasons to be concerned about elder abuse in Ireland.

The problem is widespread, but mostly hidden. It is silently destroying the quality of life of thousands of older people in Ireland. In the seven years up to the end of 2013, over 13,000 cases of alleged abuse were referred to the HSE's dedicated elder abuse service.

Those figures are just the tip of the iceberg. It is estimated that for every case of elder abuse reported to the authorities, a further five go unreported. This is hardly surprising when the HSE's figures show that 80% of alleged abusers investigated by their service are immediate family members of the people being abused.

Suffering in silence

Thousands of older people are forced to suffer in silence because they are dependent on their abuser.

WEAAD helped at least some of them if they learned they are not alone and that the HSE has a dedicated service to help them. Greater public discussion (if only for one day) may assure other abuse victims that they do not have to put up with cruel treatment and that professionals are available to help them end the abuse.

A first step to addressing this shameful problem is to raise awareness of the issue and of the possible signs that an older person may be suffering abuse. The HSE has produced strong, clear materials, which can be viewed on their website at <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/olderpeople/elderabuse/>.

Just as the factors contributing to different forms of abuse are complex and varied, so are the solutions. For this reason, Ulster Bank is currently funding Age Action to work on ways to increase awareness of financial elder abuse.

If you are being abused, or you suspect an older person you know is being abused, phone the HSE helpline at 1850 24 1850. Age Action's own information officers are also available to discuss issues in confidence and can be contacted at (01) 475-6989.

— Eamon Timmins



■ Minister Kathleen Lynch congratulating Jeremiah Donovan and his tutor Tommy Sjaellaender.

Getting Started challenge for VMware staff

This spring Brian Burke, Sales Coach at VMware, challenged members of the sales team to find time in their busy calendars to volunteer as trainers in the Getting Started programme.

It was a big break from their day job working for one of the world's top software companies specialising in cloud computing.

Instead, they were spending their Friday afternoons tutoring older citizens in the art of using laptops, tablets and smartphones.

Over the next four weeks, Brian and the enthusiastic VMware team in Cork, under the guidance of Age Action's Julie Oates, tutored students aged from 55 to 83.

Special thanks go to a terrific group of 24 students,

including the ladies of ICA Coachford, who were only too happy to get involved with the encouragement of their secretary, Vonnie Steffens.

Cork brogue

The 28 participating tutors all came from the international sales team and covered eight languages between them. They initially approached the feared 'Cork brogue' with a little trepidation, but firm friendships were soon made

between learners and tutors.

Graduation day was 22 May, with a number of surprise guests. First, Minister Kathleen Lynch made time in her busy schedule to visit and recognise learners and tutors alike. The day was rounded off with a few words from Karen Egan, from VMware, and the indefatigable Brian Burke. Certificates were presented by special guests, George Barter, Honorary Consul to Portugal, and Laura Barry, the lovely 2014 Belle of Ballincollig.

Great feedback on course

- I felt this course and the tuition were terrific. My tutor was very patient and helpful.
- I learned very useful skills and would be keen to recommend it.
- I only just got broadband at home. There will be no stopping me once set up.
- I found the course very useful. I was able to ask for help with difficulties that I had with my computer skills.

Eircode: let's leave no one behind

Ireland is introducing new postcodes this summer and an out-reach programme is in place to ensure that no one is left behind. **Dónall Geoghegan**, Programme Manager for the Eircode Community Outreach Programme, explains.



A65 F4E2

Eircode

A 6 5 F 4 E 2

Each Eircode is comprised of seven characters that are unique to each mailing address. The seven characters are divided into two parts – a Routing Key and a Unique Identifier.

Routing Key

A 6 5

The first three characters of Eircode, called the "Routing Key" are designed to benefit the parcel/postal industry. It is not directly linked to counties, towns or geographic features.

Unique Identifier

F 4 E 2

The second part of the Eircode, called the "Unique Identifier," is comprised of four characters drawn from a carefully selected set of letters and numbers that identify each individual address.

An Eircode is a smart location code for all Irish addresses. Unlike other countries, for example Britain, where postcodes define groups of addresses, an Eircode will identify an individual address – rural or urban – and show exactly where it is located.

This means every residential address and business will receive a unique Eircode.

There are many benefits to introducing Eircode into Ireland. Not only will it make the delivery of services and goods to households easier, but in the case of a medical emergency, being able to accurately and quickly identify an address can save valuable time.

In July, all residents and businesses will receive a letter notifying them of the Eircode for their address. Addresses will not be

changing; an Eircode will simply be added to current addresses.

The Wheel, working closely with Irish Rural Link, are leading a nationwide effort to reach out to people who may get left behind when Eircodes are introduced.

Outreach Champions

There are 23 Outreach Champions working throughout the country to reach these people and offer them basic information and reassurance on the change. They are getting in touch with volunteers in community and voluntary organisations, asking them to reach out within their own communities to ensure that nobody

gets left behind.

We want people to reach out to others — friends, family and neighbours — who are older, isolated or vulnerable and may be confused by what this change means.

Could you hold an event this summer to reach people in your area? Could you get the word out through your local organisation? We'd love to hear from you.

See www.wheel.ie/eircode to contact the Outreach Champion for your area, email me at donallg@wheel.ie or ring me at (087) 222-5691. Further information on Eircode is available at www.eircode.ie.



■ Working together on international development issues affecting older people.

Climate justice unites older people worldwide

More than 20 people attended a new Age Action course on older people and international development over April and May, writes **Lianne Murphy**.

Although we have previously organised many one-off workshops on the topic, there was a clear demand for deeper and more meaningful participation.

The course covered a general introduction to international development and global ageing before focusing on income security, climate change and health, particularly how these issues affect older people. We also focused on the role of human rights in older people's lives.

As well as looking at developing countries, we identified the many common experiences

shared by older people in Ireland and in the developing world.

The course used various small group exercises, debates, video and photographs to start discussions. The emphasis was on encouraging people to learn from each other and to uncover new ideas together. There were lively debates throughout the four weeks.

Climate justice

In the third week, Stephen Farley from Trócaire spoke about climate change and climate justice, which is an increasingly important focus of their work.

His presentation really energised the group and stimulated some of the most interesting and passionate discussions.

In fact, at the end of the course, participants identified climate change as the issue that had the biggest

impact on them, something they share with many of their counterparts in the developing world.

Positive feedback

Feedback on the course was overwhelmingly positive. Many were delighted at the sheer breadth of information, debate and topics.

There was particular interest in the discovery that, like Ireland, many developing countries are now facing challenges in supporting an ageing population.

Participants were also left with a keen sense that all of us — governments, policy makers, NGOs, aid agencies — need to uphold the rights of older people, as they increase in number, and plan now for the reality of ageing populations.

The course was funded with support from HelpAge International and Irish Aid.



■ Visits to Leinster House can help us to better understand the political system. Photo: Houses of the Oireachtas.

Working with your local councillor

For the past few years, along with my colleague Aodhán Ó Ríordáin TD, I have been running local senior citizens' forums in my area, writes Clontarf councillor Jane Horgan-Jones.

We have established successful forums in Marino and Clontarf. They give older people some direct, regular access to their public representatives and ensure that older people's issues are always to the fore in my dealings with Dublin City Council.

We have a great attendance at these meetings and get good feedback from our older constituents on the work of the City Council.

We usually get a long list of homework and

queries — then go away and work on them for the next few weeks. Once I have updates from Dublin City Council on the issues raised, I send out an information pack to all of the forum members to update them on progress.

We have also arranged trips to Dáil Éireann for our forum members, which they greatly enjoyed.

Active citizens

In a sense, this is something that everyone in the community should be doing. TDs and senators are there to work for all of us and it is really useful for people to understand how Leinster House works, helping them to be more active citizens.

There is no reason why forum members should not also be able to attend Council meetings in City Hall, and this is something

I hope to work on in the future if there is interest from forum members.

Our society needs to appreciate the benefits of ensuring older people can play full and active roles in their community and help that wider community appreciate the energy, insights and experience that older people bring.

Our forums are not just talking shops. They are a vital link between older people and the community.

In time, we are confident they will develop into a two-way communications system in which age is no barrier to full participation in community life, and in which the strength and sense of purpose that older people can give to a mature, interdependent community will be properly respected.

Forget the Stigma campaign launched

It is possible to live well following a diagnosis of dementia, as our powerful advocates are proving every day. They bring dementia out of the shadows by speaking, writing and opening up about the condition, writes **Edel O'Connell** of the Alzheimer Society of Ireland.

However, stigma is still a significant obstacle to the wellbeing and quality of life of those with dementia and their families. Discrimination, devaluation and stereotyping sadly remain an everyday reality for people of all ages with dementia.

Wholly inappropriate negative public images, stereotypes and terms associated with dementia still prevail, while fear and shame means there is a reluctance to engage with those of us who have been diagnosed with the condition.

As a result advocates and family carers experience anger and hurt due to contracting social networks and negative social encounters.

At the start of June, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland launched the Forget the Stigma campaign.

It seeks to sign people up to a simple, three-step challenge which asks them



■ Kathy Ryan and Helen Rochford Brennan of the Irish Dementia Working Group with Seán Donal O'Shea of the Dementia Carers Campaign Network at the launch of Forget the Stigma. Photo: Photocall

to learn the facts of dementia, thereby debunking the myths. It also challenges them to listen to, and link up with, people with dementia.

Real people

There are 48,000 people in Ireland living with the condition, a figure set to treble in a generation. Our hope is that the Forget the Stigma campaign, which features real people — mums, dads, sisters and brothers — will encourage a re-examination of the value placed on people with dementia and their carers by policymakers and the general public.

We hope that by placing people with dementia at the centre of this campaign

and telling their stories, the public will understand that dementia is not a condition exclusively of older age, and it affects each person in different ways.

We hope the campaign will also demonstrate just how valuable a contribution people with dementia can make to society.

If you want to help to end the stigma surrounding dementia, please sign up to our campaign and ask your friends and family to do the same. It's time to forget the stigma of dementia.

To sign up to the campaign, visit <http://bit.ly/1FqQJXe> or follow the campaign #forgetthestigma. The Alzheimer Society helpline is 1800 341-341.



■ Groups from across Europe were represented at the conference.

Tackling elder abuse across Europe

For the past two years Age Action's policy team has been working with partners in Finland, Italy and Romania to develop new and innovative methods to raise awareness about elder abuse, writes **Naomi Feely**.

At the end of May our partnership met for the final time in Carpi, in the Emilia Romagna region of Italy, to finalise our work.

Together, we have developed a comprehensive training programme for informal carers, which explores the issue of elder abuse using role-play

and case studies. Role-play gives participants the opportunity to walk a mile in the other person's shoes, to see the issue of elder abuse from the perspective of an older person.

The case studies are also important as they enable participants to work together to find solutions to elder abuse, presenting them with the challenges faced in dealing with a complicated issue that can often involve close family members.

On the first day of our meeting in Carpi we began to finalise the training handbook and spoke about ways of distributing the material so that other organisations could use it.

We also hope that those

representing our target groups, such as formal carers and homecare workers, will adapt the training programme to meet the needs of those groups.

Club for seniors

An important part of our partnership approach has included site visits to introduce each other to services for older people in our home countries. In Carpi, we visited a social club for seniors.

There are six such clubs in Carpi with each serving a population of approximately 10,000 people. The clubs were set up in the 1970s to provide an outlet for older people to interact with each other.

The club we visited also

provided space to other groups in their area. While we were there, we were treated to a short ballet performance by young children, highlighting the importance of inter-generational solidarity.

The social clubs are all run entirely by volunteers and keep their services going on the proceeds from a small bar and by providing meals. There are 800 members at the club we visited, with around a hundred of these serving as active volunteers.

Our Italian partner arranged for us to have an evening meal at the club, and we were treated to

food that surely deserved a Michelin Star.

On the second day of our meeting we attended a seminar which highlighted a range of work being undertaken in the Emilia Romagna region on tackling elder abuse.

Crackdown on fraud

There was a particularly interesting presentation from the local police, who have been doing a great deal of work cracking down on fraudsters targeting older people. This was especially relevant given our current work with Ulster Bank on the same issue.

Many of the approaches

and issues discussed were similar to Ireland, and we intend to examine a number of their ideas to see if they could work here.

On our final day we discussed the evaluation of our project. Each partner organisation has piloted the training in their native country. Across the board, the results of the pilot have been very positive, with many of the training participants praising the programme and the approach to dealing with elder abuse.

We have been able to incorporate this feedback into the manual to assist those using the training in future.

Overall, the conclusion was that we had not only met the original objectives for the project, but in many ways had exceeded our expectations.

After saying our good-byes, we all departed with a sense of satisfaction at what we had achieved, but we were conscious too that we now needed to get to work to ensure this project makes a real difference in tackling elder abuse.

The training manual and materials we developed will be available later in the year.

For more information on the project, please contact Naomi Feely at socialinclusion@ageaction.ie or by phone on (01) 475-6989.



■ Age Action's Marita O'Brien presenting on elder abuse in Ireland.



■ Turn2us recently held a reception at the Mansion House in a bid to build partnerships with more charities whose work supports people living in financial hardship in Ireland.

Photo: Turn2us

A helping hand for those who need a little support

Turn2us is a charity that has been providing support for people living in poverty in the UK and Ireland since 1897, writes **Finbarr Fitzpatrick**.

One of the ways that it has done this locally is through the Elizabeth Finn Fund, which awards direct grants to people living in financial hardship.

Last year in Ireland, the Elizabeth Finn Fund awarded over €30,000 in

direct grants to people from more than 120 professions, but the organisation's ambition is to dramatically increase this support.

Deprivation doubled

Over 750,000 people in Ireland are living in poverty, an increase of more than 120,000 since the recession began. Since 2007, the deprivation rate has more than doubled from 12% to 27%, and there are pockets of very significant hardship across Ireland.

With the "at risk of poverty" rate varying from 8% in Dublin to 26% in the

midlands, the need to provide support for people has never been greater.

Turn2us can award direct grants to those who have, or whose partner has, worked in one of more than 120 qualifying occupations, including farmers, farm managers, teachers, nurses, the clergy, gardaí, firefighters, librarians, accountants and senior sales staff.

Grants can also be awarded to people who have run their own business with employed staff, or who have earned a living from the arts.

Central to the work of

Turn2us is its Volunteer Visitor Network, which ensures that the charity's resources are targeted where they are needed most. Often an applicant may have made a small request for support, but it is only after a visit from a Volunteer Visitor that the full extent of the need becomes clear.

Too often people are found trying to cope with a broken boiler or a cracked window that they haven't even thought to mention. Where Turn2us can provide help, they always try to make a difference in a meaningful way.

One example is John, a married father of three who came to the charity last year.

Work dried up

John had run a plumbing business since 1994. He was earning enough to support his family and generally keep on top of his bills, until work started to dry up during the recession and the family acquired large amounts of debt.

On top of this, regulations changed, meaning he couldn't carry on working without an additional qualification that would cost €1,500. Without

this training, the family's already decreasing income was set to stop entirely.

As the couple were in work they were ineligible for support from the State, but Turn2us was able to award a one-off educational grant to cover the full cost of training and an additional award of €500 for transport and other costs.

It is support like that, targeted when and where it can be most effective, that can make such a difference.

Turn2us is actively looking to work with more organisations across Ireland so that they can get more support to individuals and families living in financial hardship.

TURN2US
FIGHTING POVERTY IN IRELAND

For further information, contact Finbarr at (01) 873-5702 or email finbarr.fitzpatrick@turn2us.org.uk.

Free cinema tickets for carers

Omniplex, Ireland's largest cinema chain, has partnered with The Carers Association to provide complimentary cinema tickets to its members.

The new initiative, which is the first of its kind, is aimed at helping those who are being cared for to be able to attend the cinema by ensuring that their carer can also attend. Previously both the person cared for and the carer would have to buy a cinema ticket.

With the presentation of The Carers Association membership card, the carer is

entitled to a free cinema ticket when accompanying the person they care for.

"People who require full-time care have as much right to enjoy a day out to the cinema as everyone else," said Omniplex's Operations Director, Mark Anderson.

The offer applies to any film screening from Monday to Thursday, excluding bank holidays, at any of the nine cinemas Omniplex operates in the Republic of Ireland.

For a full list of cinemas, please go to www.omniplex.ie.



■ Donated items help raise money for Age Action's services for older people.

Spring clean (this summer) for Age Action

It might be June, but with the weather we've been having it feels like spring, so Age Action is encouraging everyone to carry out a spring clean and donate their unwanted goods to our charity shops.

We currently have three charity shops, which take donations of furniture, clothes, books, shoes, bric-a-brac, vintage and many other items.

"We are always looking for new stock, volunteers and, of course, customers," said Camden Street shop manager Edwina Brady.

"If you'd like to donate some unwanted items, you can either drop them off at your nearest shop or take

advantage of our collection service, which operates within the M50 in Dublin."

There are great benefits to clearing out and de-cluttering spaces.

"Why keep items just in case? If somebody else can use them now, the money raised will help fund Age Action's work with older people in Ireland," said Edwina.

To arrange a collection,

call Connor on (01) 475-6989 or email stockcollection@ageaction.ie.

If you want to deliver items yourself and visit our shops, they are located at:

- 30/31 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2;
- 5 St Helen's Court, Lower George's Street, Dun Laoghaire; and
- 31 Glaslough Street, The Diamond, Monaghan Town.

Our top five tips for de-cluttering

- **Don't try to do too much at one time! Do a little at a time.**
Try setting aside 15 minutes every few days.
- **Take a small box, carrier bag or bin bag, set yourself a time limit and tackle one area that's troubling you.**
- **Seasonal clothing — will it be good for next year or will it look dated? Have you outgrown the style or colours?**
- **Remember, try to be as ruthless as you can; when was the last time you wore that dress, listened to that music or used those chairs?**
- **Most important step of all! Gather all the unwanted items together and put them aside to donate to Age Action.**



■ EMC volunteer tutors and Getting Started learners celebrate the end of the course.

EMC employees tutoring their own relatives

Under the guidance of **Tori Hawthorne and Declan Alton, EMC in Ovens, Co. Cork**, have just run their second Getting Started class. It's part of their Give Back Time project.

This time, the majority of the learners were relatives of EMC employees. The final class took place on 15 May, with certificates being presented by Paul Murphy (Director of International Customer Operations), along with *another* cake from Jacqueline Cullinane of ICA Ballincollig to thank the volunteer mentors.

Age Action's Julie Oates thanked everyone for their incredible hard work. She then read some of the final

editorial of our outgoing CEO Robin Webster to the group.

In his remarks, Robin stressed that it should be the right of every senior citizen to access Getting Started for computing, Care & Repair for managing their homes and Universities of the Third Age (see pages 14-15) to go on learning.

EMC staff are keen to continue signing up for this

programme, and it's thanks to the enthusiasm of **Tori Hawthorne** that another class is planned for July. **If you are over 55 and wish to register to attend any of our Getting Started classes in the south of Ireland, please contact Julie on (087) 195-6026 by text or Jason on (021) 453-6556 by phone.**



■ Age Action's Pauline Power and Anne-Marie Walsh celebrate National Volunteer Week with Deirdre Kennedy, IBM's CSR Manager. IBM volunteers have trained more than 200 older people..



■ (From left) Brigid Murphy, Nuala Deignan, Sheila Cullen, Eileen Sweeny and Mona Nolan celebrate 10 years of Sutton-Baldoyle U3A.

Sutton-Baldoyle marks 10th anniversary

It was May 2005 when the late Joe Fitzpatrick, with the support of Baldoyle Library and Age Action, brought together a group of like-minded people to discuss how to best support lifelong learning in the area.

From those small beginnings 10 years ago, the Sutton-Baldoyle U3A group has made steady gains. Starting small, reaching out to the local community through parish bulletins and library notice boards, the group now has members across Dublin city, north county Dublin and Meath.

Once a month, from September to May, the group meets in Baldoyle library. During the summer months a range of events and cultural outings are organised throughout the

city and country.

“We are all about creating self-help learning opportunities and being forever learning,” said Eileen Sweeny. “We enjoy sharing our experiences and interests and learning from others.

“Our group has a very wide and diverse range of interests, a high level of curiosity, an appetite for learning and a commitment to lifelong learning.”

Growing

The growth of the group has been nothing short of phenomenal. At the beginning, there was an average attendance of 10 to 12 people at each meeting. By 2011, this had doubled and now, in their tenth anniversary year, the attendance has doubled again.

The group developed its own website in 2010. All their activities going back to 2010 are on the website.

The group is also heavily involved in the local

community. It is part of the Fingal Community Network and the Fingal Senior Citizens Forum, which holds monthly meetings for representatives from local community groups.

In 2008, Fingal County Council invited the group to represent the county in the annual National Pride of Place Competition, where its entry was very highly commended.

The group was also heavily involved in the development of a Fingal Age Friendly Strategy and members have participated in a number of Age Friendly Alliance Walkability surveys to Beaumont Hospital, DCU and Dublin Airport.

You can find out more about the U3A Sutton-Baldoyle Group on their website, <https://sites.google.com/site/u3asuttonbaldoyledublin/>, or email them at U3asutbal@gmail.com.

Voices from Sutton-Baldoyle

- After working for close on 50 years, I needed to know what was going on in the community, especially during the last seven year period of austerity. Coming to U3A and Age Action meetings has helped me to survive.
- U3A helped me to explore new ideas and horizons, make new friends and experience the energy and enthusiasm for life of older people.
- I schedule this once a month



meeting; summer visits and theatre visits into my diary — I refer to this as ME TIME.

- U3A has enormously enhanced my third age years – it has kept the brain working, gets me

out and about to meet lots of people and join in the fun.

U3A GROUPS



© Active Virginians U3A
Contact Patricia Rice at (087) 235-0515 or email m spatrice@gmail.com.

© An Cosán U3A Tallaght
Contact Imelda Hanratty at (01) 462-8488.

© Ballymun U3A
Contact Brenda Hickey at (01) 857-1673.

© Ballyroan U3A
Contact June Murphy at (01) 494-7030.

© Blackrock U3A
Contact Eileen Larkin at (087) 4128607 or (01) 455-7653.

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Contact Peter Polden at (087) 815-1018, (045) 867-248 or email pjpolden@gmail.com.

© Bray U3A

Contact Linda Uhleman at (086) 045-1600 or email linda_uhlemann@yahoo.co.uk.

© Dublin City U3A
Contact John Roche at (01) 201-7490.

© Galway U3A
Contact Livio Rocca at u3agalway@gmail.com.

© Lucan U3A
Contact Maureen Newell at lucanu3a@gmail.com.

© Maynooth U3A
Contact Helena Kirkpatrick at (01) 628-5128.

© Monaghan U3A
Contact Mary Beagan at (047) 75942 or (086) 331-4439.

© Rathcoole, Co. Dublin U3A, 'the RAMS'

Contact Matt Dowling at (01) 458-9007 or (086) 844-3820.

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Contact Mac McComish at (071) 963-4813, (087) 285-8072 or email macmccomish@eircom.net.

© Sutton-Baldoyle U3A
Contact Eileen Sweeney at (01) 832-3697 or email u3asutbal@gmail.com.

© Tramore U3A
Contact Mollie Hunt at molliehunt@eircom.net.

© Waterford U3A
Contact Josephine Murphy at (051) 871-037 or email jo1murphy7@gmail.com.
For more information, email Sam O'Brien-Olinger, U3A Development Officer, at u3a@ageaction.ie or phone (01) 475-6989.

Free hot drinks in Ranelagh Village

Nick and Alexandra Seymour own Nick's Coffee in Ranelagh Village in Dublin.

As a tribute to Nick's grandmother, they are offering free hot drinks to everyone over the age of 65.

"My Nan was my true inspiration," said Nick. "She was always sickened by how the older generation were first to be forgotten. It's easy to see why so many drop out of daily contact. It's so unfair when this generation has already been through so much and given everything to society."

Nick asked us to remind people to bring



■ Nick's Coffee at 20 Ranelagh Road

ID and to let them know in advance if you're part of a large group.

If you know of other businesses offering special deals to older people, tell us and we'll try to feature them in *Ageing Matters*.

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