

AgeingMatters

in Ireland

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AgeAction

For all older people

1992 Celebrating 25 years 2017



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■ Cover photo: Bernie McHale and Miriam Byrne give a lift to fellow Backyard Blitz volunteer Tom Fitzgerald.
Photo: Naoise Culhane Photography

Opinion

Flourishing together



Lorraine Fitzsimons

“Is ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine”
“It is in each other’s shadow that we flourish.”

This was the old Irish proverb that Mary Robinson used in her inspiring and encouraging address at our AGM in urging us to realise our vision of Ireland becoming the best country in the world in which to grow older.

She commended us for our approach to ageing as a lifelong process as well as our commitment to promoting solidarity among all generations. Her challenge to us resonated well with members’ demands for many more members to persuade the Government to adopt policies for our ageing population.

Although our membership reached a record 4,513 last year, members expressed dissatisfaction that this did not match the increasing number of people aged over 65 years which was 637,567 in 2016 and is estimated to increase to 887,273 by 2027 and to one million by 2037. But the challenge becomes even greater if we want to attract people of all ages to the idea that we can flourish more together than apart.

Transform attitudes

First we have to transform our attitudes to old age and regard it as a gift to be treasured rather than a burden to be feared. As someone that has had to bury one of my children, I would give all the tea in China to give my daughter a chance to live to old age.

My heart goes out to parents who have lost children and young people through illness, disability, road accidents and suicide, which should remind us that death can come at any time and is not confined to old age.

On the other hand we must encourage young people to improve the quality of life of their parents and grandparents by challenging discrimination, neglect or even abuse that some older people experience.

Mary Robinson, after hearing the members’ discussion, said that we needed to be cheered up so let me do the same. She reminded us that TILDA (The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing) provided evidence of the enormous contribution that people over 50 make to Irish society.

Half of the people aged 54 years or over who have children give financial assistance to their children (48 per cent) and half of those 54 to 74 years provided regular childcare for their grandchildren.

Of adults with living parents 25 per cent provided personal care, 43 per cent provided other support services and 50 per cent provided financial help.

So, the message is clear: older people make an enormous contribution Irish life, intergenerational solidarity is alive and well and Age Action has to become bigger and stronger to enable us to play our full part in making Ireland a great place for people of all ages to flourish together.

– Lorraine Fitzsimons



Citizens deliver, now it's over to the politicians



▲ The Citizens' Assembly considering new ideas to support older people.

Photo: Maxwells

Ireland's leading advocacy organisation for older people has warmly welcomed last month's recommendations from the Citizens' Assembly.

But Age Action also warned that it is critical that the Assembly's recommendations are implemented after years of failed strategies and plans.

Justin Moran, Head of Advocacy and Communications at Age Action, said: "The citizens have done their job; now it's over to the Oireachtas.

When presented with the evidence and given the time to deliberate, the citizens showed the overwhelming consensus for a fair State Pension system, abolition of mandatory retirement and investment in homecare."

Frustration with strategies

Over the two weekends of debate many speakers and citizens expressed their frustration with the failure of

successive governments to implement existing strategies on positive ageing, carers and dementia.

Justin Moran continued: "The first vote at the Assembly was to unanimously urge the Government to prioritise implementing existing strategies.

"The simple truth is that if the strategies we already have were being implemented we would not have needed the Assembly.

"These recommendations should be seen as a second chance for our politicians to commit to making Ireland the best country in the world in which to grow old."

The Assembly, which is chaired by former Supreme Court Justice Mary Laffoy, will now move on to its next topic, which is climate change.

Welcome for Government homecare consultation

Last month the Government launched its long awaited consultation on a new statutory scheme for homecare in Ireland.

While those in need of nursing home care have the Fair Deal scheme available, which is not without its own problems, nothing like that exists to support families to provide care at home.

Age Action welcomed the consultation and is urging its members and supporters to get involved.

“It is critical that this consultation focuses on the type and quality of care provided,” said Justin Moran. “We need proper regulation of homecare and a transparent, consistent, system of assessing care needs for older people.

“Our homecare services are in crisis. Across Ireland thousands of older people are on waiting lists for home care packages.

The real experts

“They’re the real experts, not the people in the Department of Health, the HSE or even in organisations like ours, it’s the people out in the community struggling to get by with too little support or none at all.

“This crisis is driven by a lack of adequate funding and the failure to put in place a scheme like this so it’s good to see the Government moving ahead.”

The consultation was launched by the new Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People Jim Daly TD.

“I am committed to enabling more care in the community for older people and others with identified care needs,” said Minister Daly. “I would like to find out what people think about current homecare services – what is working well and what needs to be improved.

“I also want to hear the public’s views on what



▲ The new Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People Jim Daly TD with the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

the future scheme should look like. This will help us to design a homecare system that better meets the needs of service users.”

The consultation paper is aimed at people who use homecare services, their families and the general public.

Find the survey at <http://health.gov.ie/consultations> or you can request a paper copy by calling 01 635 4402. The closing date for submissions is 31 August 2017.



◀ Age Action's Justin Moran with representatives of taxi drivers and students supporting politicians calling for fairer car insurance.

Car insurance **rip-off** continues

Almost a year since Oireachtas committee hearings into the cost of car insurance began there has been little respite for older drivers who continue to be hit with steep increases in their car insurance.

Despite reports from the Oireachtas Finance Committee and from Minister Eoghan Murphy TD earlier this year not a week goes by without older drivers contacting Age Action to report shocking increases in the cost of insurance.

"Some of the premiums quoted to our members come to twice the weekly pension and many older drivers are struggling to keep their cars on the road," said Age Action's Gerry Scully.

"In large parts of Ireland, particularly outside the big cities, public transport is poor. Older people who are unable to drive face increased social isolation and must rely on friends or family for transport.

"For many older drivers a car is an absolute necessity and may mean the difference between living in the community or being forced into residential care."

Campaigning

In recent months Age Action has supported others who are suffering at the hands of the insurance industry like taxi drivers and students in a campaign being led by People Before Profit TD Richard Boyd Barrett.

"Motor insurance is a mandatory legal requirement," said Deputy Boyd Barrett.

"It is not acceptable that insurance companies are hiking premiums to completely unaffordable levels, refusing to insure some drivers or discrimi-

nating against particular categories of drivers.

"The Government appears to be dancing to the tune of the profiteering insurance companies, rather than ensuring fair and affordable motor insurance for all."

The plight of older drivers is especially frustrating when international evidence shows that they are safer drivers, less likely to drink and drive or to be out in poor driving conditions.

After a public meeting in Dublin in June further protests against car insurance costs are being planned for Cork, Galway, Sligo, Limerick and Waterford in September.

If you would like to be kept informed about this campaign or would like to know more about Age Action's work on car insurance email advocacy@ageaction.ie.

Age Action exposes Unfair Deal

A new briefing paper published by Age Action has put a spotlight on the huge fees charged by some nursing homes for additional services provided to residents under the Fair Deal Scheme.

The report revealed that some families are unable to choose a nursing home they would prefer because of the scale of the additional charges

“One of the key principles of the Fair Deal scheme is that older people have choice,” said Dr Marita O’Brien, Health Policy Officer.

“But steadily increasing charges imposed by nursing homes are pricing older people and their families out.

“When someone on the State Pension is left with only €50 a week after making their contribution under Fair Deal they are simply not going to be able to afford a nursing home charging €200 a month for social activities.”

Age Action’s research was supported by social workers working with older people.

“A family I have been working



▲ Age Action members highlighting injustices in the Fair Deal scheme.

with has just spent days visiting nursing homes in the south Dublin and Wicklow area,” said one social worker.

Extra charges

“They’re being quoted extra charges of €85 a week and they simply can’t afford that.”

“I have one patient whose family just can’t pay anything extra and because of this she is now on the waiting list for a public nursing home bed,” said another.

Nursing homes insist that they have to pass on these charges because the National Treatment Purchase Fund does not cover the costs of the services they provide or that HIQA has instructed them to put in place.

While there is some truth to this argument it means that, while nursing homes and the State fight over who funds these services, it’s the residents of nursing homes and their families who pay the price.

Huge response to report

The report received a massive response with front-page stories in some of the daily newspapers and a lot of broadcast media coverage.

Age Action met with the Minister for Older People Jim Daly TD, who also met with the representatives of nursing homes, to try and identify solutions to the problems revealed by the research.

Fianna Fáil's Spokesperson for Older People, Mary Butler TD, raised the issue in the Dáil at the start of July.

Disturbing cases

"Age Action Ireland, which does fantastic work to protect elderly people, has uncovered disturbing cases that some nursing homes are ripping off the elderly," she told the Dáil.

"Openness, transparency and accountability are key for every service provider and we all have a reasonable expectation to be made aware of the cost of any service we buy or employ."

Minister Daly responded by recommitting to work to ensure fair, consistent and transparent treatment for older people in nursing homes.

Age Action's proposals

Transparency: Fees should be publicly available online, easy to understand and it should be clear what service a resident is getting.

Accountability: Charges must be properly regulated so there is no overpricing and residents told they can complain to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Income: Residents with an assessed income of €300 or less should be allowed retain a minimum of €60 to enable them to cover day-to-day living costs.



▲ Complaints about nursing home fees are a frequent topic for our information officers.

Conor's story

Conor's mother is in a nursing home under the Fair Deal Scheme and must, therefore, pay 80 per cent of her income as her contribution. Out of the money remaining to her she must pay the following:

- €50 per month for incontinence wear;
- €222 per month for social activities;
- €10 surcharge on the three "free" chiropody visits per year;
- €100 per month for "doctor services".

This list of additional charges, by no means exhaustive, comes to a grand total of €4,474 per annum on top of her Fair Deal contribution.



▲ GAA stars and Bank of Ireland employees Briege Corkery and Killian Young join Dublin’s Alan Brogan and Carmel Gormley from East Wall in Dublin for a bit of gardening to launch the Backyard Blitz. Photo: Naoise Culhane Photography

Bank of Ireland and Age Action working together for older people

Earlier this year Bank of Ireland was delighted to announce that Age Action was selected as one of its new flagship charity partners, writes **Jean Young**.

“When we look for charities to support,” said Audrey Nolan, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Bank of Ireland, “we’re looking for organisations that complement our responsible business approach for customers and colleagues in com-

munities throughout Ireland.

“Bank of Ireland staff want opportunities to get involved and to give back not just by writing a cheque, but by having a much deeper involvement where they can give their time and expertise to make a real difference to the

work of incredible organisations like Age Action.”

In December 2016, Bank of Ireland was the first retail bank in Ireland to receive the Age Friendly Ireland accreditation. We have spent time listening to our older customers to understand their requirements.

Each branch has nominated an ‘Age Friendly Champion’; whose role is to promote age

friendly actions in-Branch and act as an ambassador for the Age Friendly programme in the local community.

Digital arrows

A key part of this is the way that Bank of Ireland is supporting older people through the work of its team of advisors – Digital Arrows. The Arrows provide digital training, support and knowledge to community groups and customers.

They engage with active retirement groups, transition year students, business customers, farmers and community groups, holding events at hotels, community halls and libraries.

In 2016 the Digital Arrows welcomed 30,000 participants to join their Tea & Teach sessions. Tea & Teaches are fun, free and for everyone. They provide informal teaching on the basics of the internet and digital world.

Describing how one of these sessions works, Frances Boyce, Manager BOI Digital Arrows explained, “A typical session for older people who want to get started with the basics of the internet and staying safe online lasts 90 minutes and the main areas we cover are internet security, googling and email.

“The purpose of the session is to find out exactly what the participants are struggling with, no matter how basic, break it down into small steps and allow plenty of time to practice and ask questions.

“We follow up with additional Tea & Teach sessions and offer short four-week (two hours per



▲ Seán Smith, Commercial Branch Manager at Bank of Ireland Cavan, at a Digi Arrows session with Liz Coyle.

week) academies for people who are a little more advanced. The Arrows meet hundreds of people every week so they are very experienced and ensure that what they are sharing is practical and user-friendly.

“We have been told that the training is very useful from helping someone to Skype their family in Australia to being able to do their banking from their own home.”

Backyard Blitz

Bank of Ireland is also working with Age Action on a number of other initiatives including the Great Backyard Blitz. On Friday 14 and Saturday 15 July Bank of Ireland staff came out in force in Dublin, Cork and Galway to brighten the gardens, and the lives, of hundreds of older people.

More than 300 bank staff, Age Action teams and gardening experts mobilised to mow the lawns, trim the hedges or pull

some weeds in gardens across a number of city locations.

The bank offers employees one volunteer day a year and it is a real testament to how well Age Action and the work they do is regarded, that so many people signed up to use their day for the Backyard Blitz. The Blitz was a great success and involved:

- 321 Volunteers and garden experts;
- 125 Gardens;
- 1,041 Cups of tea;
- 11,990 Metres squared grass cut;
- 2,003 Metres squared weeds pulled;
- 4,572 Metres squared paving washed;
- 7,426 Shrubs pruned.

To learn more about how to locate and sign up to a Tea & Teach session near you please drop into your local Bank of Ireland branch or email thearrows@boi.com.



▲ Mary Robinson is thanked for her remarks by Acting CEO Lorraine Fitzsimons.

Setting a challenge for Ireland's older people

Former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights **Mary Robinson** gave the keynote address at our AGM this year. This is an edited version of her remarks which are available in full on our website.

Let me begin with warm congratulations on your 25th Anniversary, which is a significant landmark to reach. You were formed during my time as President, which reminds me that was quite a while ago, and that now I am speaking to you as an Elder!

I still remember vividly the preparatory meeting in South Africa with Nelson Mandela in May 2007 when he told us why he wanted to bring together

a group of Elders, and described what he hoped we might do.

He asked us to be an independent voice and to work for peace and human rights. He reminded us that people in a country or a community know best what their problems are, and that we should listen to them.

He also urged us to link in particular with women and with young people.

“This group can speak freely and boldly, working both publicly and behind the scenes. Together they will support courage where there is fear, foster agreement where there is conflict and inspire hope where there is despair.”

It is interesting that Nelson Mandela chose a group of older people to help further his legacy, seeing us as Elders in the global village.

Be humble

He told us to be humble and to listen - perhaps remembering the words of William Cowper, “Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much; Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.”

I see some similarities between the Elders and Age Action. It is true that your main focus is on issues relating to older people, but I see that you have a very good approach to young people in your Generations Together programme, in collaboration with the National Youth Council of Ireland.

This is an important value for any country, to value the diversity of people of all ages and to foster intergenerational dialogue and engagement.

I have read Age Action Ireland’s Strategic Plan and I commend you for the priorities you have identified there, and the core values which guide you in your work. I especially liked these two sentences:

“We will continue to promote the adoption of a life course approach which recognises ageing as a lifelong process. We will particularly focus on highlighting the needs of the most disadvantaged of older people”.

Your references to the impact of austerity and the reduction in income bring home the harsh reality for a significant number of older people.

Setting a challenge

Now let me challenge you to be Elders in Ireland for a cause that we need to take more seriously – climate justice.

In 2015, Ireland and over 190 other countries signed up to the 2030 Agenda, with its 17 sustainable development goals, and the Paris Climate Agreement. We are not yet on course to fulfil these commitments.

This is not just a responsibility of government. I am sure that many of you grew up in a time when we were encouraged to be thrifty, to mend things and re-use them.

These are skills we need now, in becoming more energy efficient and learning to reduce, re-use and recycle.

As older people we need to think of the world we leave to younger generations. A child born in Ireland today will be 33 years old in 2050, and she will share the world with 9.8 billion people.

This is why it is so urgent that we take steps now to reduce our emissions and move to renewable energy. It is a challenge we can meet, but everyone needs to be involved, and older people need to give a good lead.

Let me end by wishing Age Action Ireland another successful 25 years working on behalf of older people.



◀ There was a warm welcome for Mrs Robinson’s remarks from a large crowd at the AGM.

Dear Age Action,

I have two letters from my bin company saying I owe a standing charge but I have heard on the radio that we are not to pay these anymore. What should I do?

Anne, Artane

Bins moving to pay-by-weight

The first thing to realise, writes **Gerry Scully**, is that while the Government is introducing new rules for how we pay for waste collection these changes will be introduced gradually.

There has been a lot of confusion in the media about this with different versions of what is going to happen circulating and various waste management companies making their own decisions about what to do.

If you are content to stay with your present company you should continue to pay your bin charges. But please do not ignore any letters or communications from your company because you think things will change in September.

However, these changes might be a good opportunity to compare how different companies implement the changes and what type of pricing structure they will be offering.

What the Government is doing is abolishing the system where some companies offer a 'flat rate' for bin services but they are doing this on a phased basis.

Pay-by-weight

This means people who pay a flat rate regardless of the volume of rubbish they throw out will (as their contracts ends) be faced with a new schedule of charges.

These will include some form of pay-by-lift or



▲ Even the Mayor occasionally needs some advice from Age Action.

pay-by-weight and could also include a standing charge. This is intended to encourage people to reduce the amount of rubbish they throw out.

It will also mean an increase in the price, possibly for most people, but certainly for those who are now on a 'flat rate'.

There is also a new annual allowance of €75 per person for households that includes people with long-term or lifelong medical incontinence.

The details of this scheme have not been fully disclosed but essentially the bin company will reduce the household bill by €75 and they will be reimbursed by the Government.

You can always contact Age Action's information service on 01 475 6989 or email us at helpline@ageaction.ie.



◀ Part of a packed crowd attending an Age Action meeting on pension reform in February.

Photo: Paula Geraghty

Dáil committee backs Age Action on pensions

The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Social Protection has published a report on the State Pension system that endorses many of Age Action's key priorities.

Since last year the committee has held a series of hearings with a number of organisations, including Age Action, and with the Department of Social Protection having identified the State Pension as a priority.

The committee criticised the 'averaging system' that undermines the pension entitlements of workers who have been in and out of work. It also called for the changes to the State Pension introduced in 2012 to be reversed.

"Committee members were united in the assertion that more

work must be done to ensure a sustainable and fair State Pension," said the chairperson of the committee, Deputy John Curran.

"The committee considers that mandatory retirement ages should be abolished. No employee should be contractually obliged to retire based on age if they are willing and able to remain at work.

Urgent

"We are recommending that the Minister review the disparity between retirement age and pension age and that the gender disparity that exists in pension income is addressed as a matter of urgency.

"We have sent our review to the Minister for Employment and Social Protection and it is our hope that she considers carefully our recommendations in future policy development and

the drafting of the upcoming budget."

The focus on the State Pension system was warmly welcomed by Age Action.

"The State Pension is the main source of income for older people," said Senior Policy Officer Naomi Feely. "But there are lots of ways the system works against women pensioners and those who took time off to care for loved ones.

"It's great to see the committee taking on board the proposals from ourselves and organisations like the National Women's Council and we hope the Minister will take seriously the thought and effort the committee has put into this."

Demands for a fairer State Pension will also be a priority in Age Action's pre-budget submission, to be published later this summer.

Maureen, a **true legend** of the Irish theatre

Pictures of celebrities, musicians, stars of television, screen and stage line the wall in the small bar at the back of the Olympia theatre and they all share one thing in common, writes **Justin Moran**.

Smiling out from each of them is Maureen Grant, one of the true legends of Irish theatre, who worked in the Olympia for almost 70 years.

Maureen's story began in 1949 when as a young married mother in need of work she went down to Liberty Hall with her mother-in-law to look for a cleaning job not knowing that fate had a different line of work in mind.

She was offered a three-week job with the Olympia Theatre to cover for a woman who was sick. She started that night working upstairs in the gallery bar, an old-fashioned place lined with spittoons.

She quickly fell in love with the job and was sad to leave when her three weeks were up but the very next day got a card asking her to call back to the Olympia as the woman for whom she was covering had decided not to come back.

Although Maureen was delighted at the news she was also worried because she had a secret. She had told no one that she was not only married but pregnant in case she would lose her job.

Luckily, she had some friends who were willing to help out.

Hiding babies in cloakrooms

"After nine weeks there I told Billy (the manager) I had to go out sick," she explained. "I went down to the hospital and delivered himself, Jimmy. Then I used to sneak him in at night and use a hanger to hang him off the back of the cloakroom door.



▲ Maureen with some of the friends she met over almost 70 years in the Olympia.

"I'd a friend outside the theatre who kept an eye on the pram and when the interval was over we'd leave and away over Capel Street bridge. That's how they were all reared!"

And something of the theatre must have stuck with the children as many of them went into the business themselves with Jimmy eventually becoming the manager of the theatre.

The regime when Maureen started was a lot stricter than it is now.

"The way it worked was you'd come in, clock in and you'd go out on parade," she remembers.



“Everything had to be just so. You had a white blouse and a skirt, black shoes and stockings. You had to make sure you kept the seams of your tights dead straight or you wouldn’t be allowed out on the floor.”

Over time conditions improved for women in the Olympia, due in no small part to Maureen who got heavily involved in the trade union and remains a trustee for the branch.

Meeting Laurel & Hardy

As the years went by Maureen became the manager of the Circle Bar with everyone who performed at the Olympia wanting to get their picture taken with her. She fondly remembers meeting those great comedy stars Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy.

“I used to take the child for a walk in the Phoenix Park,” she said. “They heard me talking about it and said they’d love to see it. So they got the car and I put herself in it and away we went. They were mad about my baby!”

Laurel and Hardy are among the hundreds of pictures on the wall, joining others like Bono, REM, Tyrone Power, Brendan Gleeson and too many more to name.

Now 91, she retired last year but is keeping busy



▲ TOP: Brian, Domhnall and Brendan Gleeson visit Maureen.

▲ ABOVE: Bono getting to meet Maureen Grant!

as a fearsome fundraiser for Beaumont Hospital’s cancer ward, never losing an opportunity to sell a raffle ticket!

In a way, leaving the Olympia, you feel that we have it the wrong way round. It’s not Maureen who was lucky enough to meet so many famous people, you can’t help but think maybe it was they who were lucky to meet her.

Ten years **fighting** for older people

I finished working for Age Action at the end of April, writes **Eamon Timmins**. My 10 years with the charity have been among the most rewarding and inspiring periods of my working life. The experiences I had with Age Action have profoundly shaped me.

I joined in 2006 at a time when my late father (who had Parkinson's) was struggling with the grittier side of ageing. I joined as somebody committed to campaigning to protect vulnerable, older, people.

A decade later I still believe that some older people are among the most vulnerable in our society and need to be protected.

However, I now appreciate that older people represent a section of society with the most to offer in terms of experience and as role models for generations coming behind them.

I am privileged to have worked with so many great people at Age Action. They have taught me the value of experience – something that is often lost in an era where the answers to most questions can be found on the internet.

We are all ageing

They have taught me that we are all ageing, that it is part of



▲ Eamon speaking at the Silver Surfers Awards.

Photo: Marc O'Sullivan

the lifecycle. And, like all other sections of this cycle, it comes with its challenges and its opportunities.

I have been privileged to work with people in their 70s, 80s and 90s with infectious good humour, wonderful wisdom and a can-do attitude.

They do not paper over the challenges of ageing. Bette Davis famously said that old age is no place for sissies. Some of the Age Action members reminded me of that on a regular basis. They overcame chronic illness, disabilities and bereavement to help Age Action.

In some cases, the nature of the work posed by Age Action was a challenge, placing them outside their comfort zone. For example, being asked to appear on live television is a big ask for many people. But not for this apparently bullet-proof, adaptable, group.

They repeatedly defied society's often ageist attitudes of what older people should do or how they should behave. In doing so, they provided a powerful template for positive ageing.

Life is for living

The greatest lesson I took from being in their presence is that life is for living. When the opportunity arises to help other people, to take on a new challenge or learn a new skill, grab it with both hands. Your life is not a dress rehearsal.

During my time at Age Action, I also saw the powerful impact an effective advocacy organisation can have. From the



▲ Breaking records with the innocent Big Knit.

Photo: Marc O'Sullivan

Medical Card protests in 2008, to protecting supports for older people during austerity and, more recently, working to abolish mandatory retirement, Age Action made a difference.

At the heart of this work has been ensuring that our policy makers and politicians hear the voices of older people. This is so important in an Ireland where older people are often invisible.

I left Age Action with feelings of sadness (leaving so many great people) and gratitude for the opportunities I have had with this wonderful charity.

Rebuilding confidence

For my first eight years with Age Action I worked as Head of Advocacy and Communications. As a former journalist communications has long been my passion.

In 2015 I was appointed Chief

Executive. The last two years have very successful but I am now looking forward to using my experience in a wider context.

As someone working at the coalface I have seen the damage done by a series of charity scandals to the public's confidence. The great work of many wonderful charities is being hurt by the actions of a few. Public confidence and trust has been shaken.

That is why I have joined the Charities Regulatory Authority as Head of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement. As part of my job I will work with charities to help increase public trust and confidence in their vital work and ensure they meet their regulatory obligations.

It's a new challenge and a new adventure – one I am really looking forward to.

Could you be a Samaritan?

There are currently 20 branches all over Ireland with more than 1,500 volunteers keeping the phone lines at 116 123 open 24 hours a day, writes Getting Started tutor Pat Dolan.

We are also open to callers every day for those who want to speak to a Samaritan face to face, no appointment is needed, and we respond to people who text us on 087 260 90 90 or email us at jo@samaritans.org.

We are a volunteer-led organisation with volunteers answering calls, running the branch, raising funds and raising awareness about Samaritans.

We are strictly non-denominational, with volunteers of all religions and none. There's a mix of men and women, and of people at all stages of life.

Our vision is that fewer people die by suicide. We make it our mission to alleviate emotional distress and reduce the incidence of suicidal feelings and suicidal behaviour. We are privileged to listen to those who contact us and we recognise their courage.

We exist because people need us and because people believe in us and become part of Samaritans by volunteering or donating to us.

Always here for you

You do not have to be suicidal to use our service though. We're always here and we are all volunteers, and we keep conversations private.

We also reach out to people at festivals, events, in prisons, hospitals, schools and in our local communities.

People contact Samaritans about a wide range of issues, including depression, relationship and family issues, loneliness, physical or mental health issues, alcohol, drugs, self-harm, financial



▲ TG4's Deirdre Breathnach, Newstalk's Ger Gilroy and Dublin camogie star Sarah Ryan launching the 'Talk to us' campaign. Photo: Marc O'Sullivan

worries, illness and exam pressures, as well as suicidal thoughts and feelings.

We provide thorough ongoing training and support for our volunteers. New volunteers are given initial training through a structured programme which aims to impart the skills they will need to support our callers.

Upon satisfactory completion of this training our new volunteers are assigned a mentor. We are always looking for new volunteers. Could you be there when someone needs to talk?

Call us free of charge anytime on 116 123. For more information about volunteering call 1890 200 091 or email us at volunteering@samaritans.org.

Get involved and celebrate Positive Ageing

For Bank of Ireland Positive Ageing Week 2017, we go "Back to the Future" with all generations celebrating ageing in their local community from 25 September to 1 October.

Age Action wants to make Ireland the best place in the world to grow old. Bank of Ireland Positive Ageing Week supports this by highlighting the pro-active and energetic role that older persons play in their communities.

Last year we had over 550 events nationwide and we would



love to see at least 600 events in 2017! But we need your help to make it happen!

For ideas for events you can organise, to register your own

event or for more information on Bank of Ireland Positive Ageing Week, visit www.ageaction.ie, email paw@ageaction.ie or call 01 475 6989.

◀ Launching Positive Ageing Week in 2015.

Photo: Maxwells.

U3Agroups

📍 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.

📍 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 rusheenwoods3a@gmail.com

📍 Sutton-Baldoyle U3A

Christine at (01) 832-3697

📍 Tramore U3A

Mollie at molliehunt@eircom.net

📍 Waterford U3A

Josephine at (051) 871-037

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

New store opens in Galway

Age Action has opened its third new charity store in less than 18 months at 3 St Francis' Street in Galway.

The Age Action West office has also moved to the floors above the store but the phone number remains the same.

The team is fast settling in and the first days of business in Galway have been a huge success with large crowds.

With six stores operating demand for donations of clothes, furniture, books and unwanted gifts has never been higher so please drop into one of our stores or contact our stock collection team on 01 475 6989.



▲ Hunting for bargains in one of our charity stores.

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