



**OFFALY AGE
FRIENDLY
STRATEGY**

2024-2029

*Offaly - A great place
in which to grow old*



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Foreword

Our vision for Offaly is to make it a great county in which to grow old. To do this we need to ensure that older people can live full and active healthy lives and remain valued members of the community for as long as possible.

The population in Ireland is ageing. According to the CSO between April 2016 and April 2022 the highest increase in population was seen among the over 70s, and the number of people aged 85 years and over increased by 25%. The Offaly Age Friendly Strategy is being developed in the context of the growing international awareness of the need to plan for an ageing population.

As life expectancy increases, the onus is on society to adapt in a manner that provides older people with the physical, economic and cultural opportunities to ensure they enjoy the best quality of life. The development of this Age Friendly Strategy in Offaly must be reflective of the positive contribution that a healthier and more active ageing population can make to our community and our society in general. Having the key agencies working together to achieve the objectives is vital to the success of the implementation of this strategy.

Improvements made to the physical and social environments in the county can in turn lead to older people remaining healthy and independent active members in society.

I wish to extend a special thank you to the Offaly Age Friendly Alliance for their collaboration and support in the delivery of our previous strategy and their input in the development of this strategy.



Cllr Eddie Fitzpatrick
Cathaoirleach
Offaly County Council



Anna Marie Delaney
Chief Executive of
Offaly County Council

Introduction

AGE FRIENDLY IRELAND - NATIONAL SHARED SERVICE

Age Friendly Ireland is a shared service of local government hosted by Meath County Council. The shared services manage the national Age Friendly Programme, affiliated with the World Health Organisation’s Age Friendly Cities and Communities Network. The national programme is operated through a team-based framework of 35 local Age Friendly programmes hosted in local government.

The National Age Friendly Shared Service supports cities, counties, towns, villages, and rural communities across Ireland to prepare for the rapid ageing of our population by paying increased attention to the environmental, economic, and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.

Age Friendly Programmes work to provide walkable streets, housing and transportation options, access to key services and opportunities for older people to participate in community activities. By doing so, these communities are better equipped to become great places, and even lifelong homes for people of all ages.

Local Age Friendly Programmes are informed by a positive ageing perspective and seek to enhance and improve the lives of older people across the country by giving them a voice in the decision-making process that affect their ability to live full and active lives. Initiatives focus on areas such as housing, transport, caregiving, community engagement, volunteering, social inclusion and combating isolation among older citizens.

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE



LOCAL AGE FRIENDLY PROGRAMME COMPONENTS



AGE FRIENDLY PROGRAMME

Each local Age Friendly Programme operates with a common structure which includes an active Older People's Council, an Age Friendly Alliance, an Age Friendly Programme Manager, Age Friendly Housing Technical Advisor, and an Age Friendly Interdepartmental Group within the local authority.

Older Peoples Council

The Older People's Council is a representative group of older people, established by the local authority as part of the local Age Friendly Programme. The Older People's Council is a two-tier structure with an elected Executive Committee and a wide membership base. Older People's Councils identify

priorities or areas of need; highlight and discuss relevant areas of concern; influence the decision-making process of the local Age Friendly Programme; and also participate in national level structures. The key purpose of the Older People's Council is to provide the authentic voice of older people representing the diversity that exists among our ageing population. Older People's Council representatives are key collaborators and stakeholders who co-design the actions and objectives of the Age Friendly Strategy.

Offaly Age Friendly Alliance

The Offaly Age Friendly Alliance is a high-level cross-sector group, chaired by the Chief Executive of Offaly County Council. The member agencies of the local Age Friendly Alliance form a strategic partnership to develop and oversee the Age Friendly Strategy.

The Age Friendly Alliance brings together older people, community/voluntary, public and private sector service providers seeking to change thinking about ageing and how services to our older people are planned and delivered. The Alliance oversaw the implementation of our Age Friendly Strategy 2018-2021, a four-year plan which set out actions that provided a vision for a county where our older people were supported, connected and valued for their contribution to community and family life.



Above: Consultation meeting for the Age Friendly Strategy

Offaly Alliance members have progressed a huge variety of invaluable actions in recent years including providing services which target the older isolated members of rural Offaly; providing door to door transport services in rural areas; provision of respite and rehabilitation beds; Meals on Wheels services; Bealtaine and craft workshops for older people;

digital skills classes for Active Retirement Groups; Walkability audits, etc.

Offaly Age Friendly Alliance was established in 2017 with key people from Agencies and support services across the county. The Offaly Age Friendly Alliance meet bi-monthly, its membership includes the following:

MEMBERS OF OFFALY AGE FRIENDLY ALLIANCE

Offaly County Council	Offaly Local Enterprise Office	Laois Offaly Education & Training Board	Dept or Rural and Community Development
An Garda Síochána	Offaly Older People's Council	Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore	Local Link Laois Offaly
Offaly Local Development Company	Offaly Library Service	Offaly Sports Partnership	Technological University of the Shannon



“ If you design for the young you exclude the old, but if you design for the old you include everyone ”

Glenn Millar, Director of Education and Research, Canadian Urban Development

Offaly Age Friendly Programme Manager

The Offaly Age Friendly Programme is coordinated by the Age Friendly Programme Manager who plays a fundamental role in the implementation of the Age Friendly Programme across the county. They work with their local Alliance to develop and implement an Age Friendly Strategy and yearly Action Plans.

The Programme Manager adopts initiatives that respond to priorities raised at local level and supports the scaling up and replication of good practices across all participating Age Friendly Programme areas. They support the local Older People’s Council and are the primary contact for same. Technical guidance is given to Programme Managers through the shared service programme office in Meath.

The Age Friendly Programme Manager provides the following services and supports to the Age Friendly Alliance and Older People’s Council Executive and wider OPC Council:

- Provision of executive role (meetings, notices, minutes, reports, etc)
- Co-ordination & liaising with lead agencies and stakeholders
- Facilitation & Communication

Age Friendly Housing Technical Advisor

Offaly County Council has assigned a key staff member as the local authority Age Friendly Housing Technical Advisor. This initiative was assigned under the national policy ‘Housing Options for our Ageing Population’. The Advisor provides specialist advice to the authority itself, to private sector organisations interested in providing age friendly housing and to the general public.

The role of the Age Friendly Housing Technical Advisor is to:

- Act as the key point of contact for matters relating to age friendly housing technical queries specifically around designing for life and universal design principles
- Respond to and progress referrals and queries from a range of sectors including in house staff (particularly across Planning & Housing), external stakeholders & agencies, private sector developers, Approved Housing Bodies and individuals
- Provide clients with information on key contacts within their local authority who can discuss issues and solutions around age friendly housing and public realm works

Age Friendly Interdepartmental Group

Offaly County Council established an Age Friendly Interdepartmental Group in September 2021. The Interdepartmental Group meets bi-monthly and includes members from Community, Housing, Planning, Roads, Libraries, and Environment Sections of Offaly County Council.

The primary aim of the team is to work together to identify opportunities for collaboration supported by the Age Friendly Programme Manager and Age Friendly Technical Advisor.

This strategic Interdepartmental Group support key areas of work in the delivery of multifaceted actions which include but are not limited to the following:

- The local implementation of the actions under the Joint Departmental Housing for an Ageing Population Policy
- The integration of health supports for older people into housing and public realm
- Promotion of rightsizing housing options among older people
- Delivering Age Friendly initiatives through local strategic planning processes, including the County Development Plan and Local Economic and Community Plan
- Utilising statutory funding to deliver capital projects that are in line with Age Friendly principles such as universal design in housing and public realm developments
- Promotion of climate action initiatives that include housing retro-fitting, active travel, providing information and advice on energy efficiency

OFFALY AGE FRIENDLY PROGRAMME

A successful Age Friendly County Programme works to create the kinds of communities in which older people live autonomous, independent and valued lives. Positive health and wellbeing as we age is fundamental to our vision for Offaly. A great deal of the Offaly Age Friendly County Programme will also focus on actions and developments in other areas; in creating walkable, attractive and

accessible communities and age-friendly spaces, and by introducing actions to address participation and inequality. People of all ages across Offaly will be supported to enjoy healthier, more active and connected lives.

Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme

The Age Friendly Healthy Homes Programme aims to support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence, for as long as possible. The programme's ambition is to enable everyone to live longer healthier lives by keeping care close to home and expanding the range of health and social care services in the community. It aims to provide a range of alternatives for older people who may otherwise transition into long term residential care prematurely.

To do this a Healthy Age Friendly Homes Co-ordinator has been appointed in Offaly. The Co-ordinator will case manage a support package for each person referred, linking the supports from the variety of public, voluntary, private and community agencies in the area. The Co-ordinator provides information on: Housing, Health, Climate/Energy, Technology, Community and Finance and Education and Training.

The Co-ordinator will carry out a home-based assessment and, in partnership with the older person, will identify and design a range of supports to enable the older person to continue living independently.

The 4 Key Objectives of the Programme are:

- Enable older people to continue living in their homes or in a home more suited to their needs
- Live with a sense of independence and autonomy
- Be and feel part of their Community
- Support the avoidance of early or premature admission to long term residential care

If you would like to arrange a visit from your local Co-ordinator please contact:

National Office **046 924 8899**

healthyagefriendlyhomes@meathcoco.ie

Age	2011	2016	2022	Number Increase 2016-2022	% Increase 2016-2022
55-60	4,081	4,571	5,138	567	12.40
61-69	6,537	7,524	8,680	1,156	15.36
70-79	3,892	4,551	5,984	1,433	31.49
80+	2,147	2,503	2,961	458	18.30
Total	16,657	19,149	22,763	3,614	18.87

Population Increase by Offaly Age Groups 2011-2022. Source: CSO

OFFALY CONTEXT

County Offaly is located in the centre of Ireland in the province of Leinster and is one of twelve local authorities comprising the Eastern and Midlands Region. The principal towns are Tullamore (the county town), Edenderry, Birr and Clara. Offaly shares a border with seven other counties and has a total land mass of approximately 200,000 hectares. The county is traversed by the Grand Canal and is bordered by the River Shannon to the West and Slieve Bloom mountains to the South, both of which play a key role in the economic and tourism development of the county.

The population figures from Census 2022 indicate significant population growth in Ireland, with the population increasing from 4,761,865 to 5,123,536 between 2016 and 2022. This is a population increase of 7.59%. The population in Ireland has exceeded five million people for the first time in over 170 years.

Offaly has a slightly higher projected old age dependency ratio in comparison to the national average. The old age dependency rate refers to the number of old age people (aged 65+) in relation to the number of working (economically active) population (aged 15 to 64).

CSO Predictions on Population

County Offaly has an overall population of 83,150 (2022 Census) with approximately 60% of the population residing in rural areas, and 21.2% of the population of Offaly being over 60. According to national and international research, there will be a significant and continuous ageing of the population within developed countries. Therefore, this presents issues for the planning and delivery of age-appropriate services, especially for older people. A growing old age dependency ratio implies a higher proportion of dependents relying on those who are economically active within society. The actions included in this strategy are designed to address this challenge.

Marital Status of Over 65's in Offaly (2022 Census)	No.
Married	7,407
Widowed	2,941
Single	1,426
Divorced	425
Separated	479
Re-married	278
Registered Same-Sex Couple	2
Total	12,958

Above: Consultation meeting for the Age Friendly Strategy

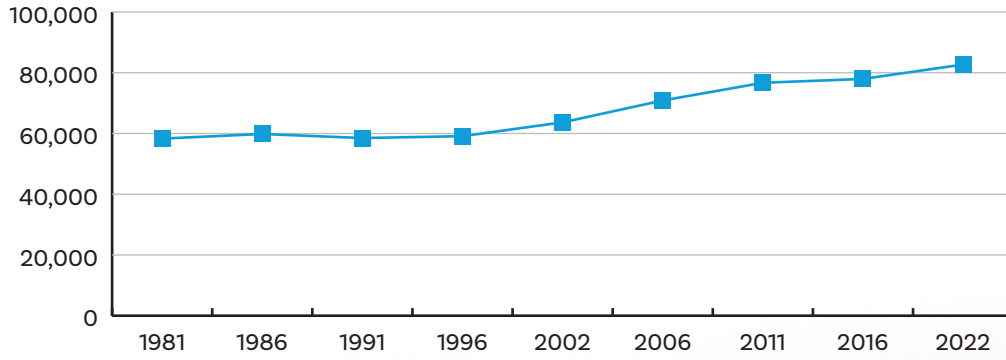


Ageing Population

Projected population aged 65 years and over in Ireland

2031
1,007,000

2051
1,597,000



Population of Co. Offaly, 1981 - 2022

Age	Males	Females	Total
Age 0-4	2,511	2,322	4,833
Age 5-9	2,994	2,848	5,842
Age 10-14	3,364	3,128	6,492
Age 15-19	3,075	2,744	5,819
Age 20-24	2,362	2,207	4,569
Age 25-29	2,065	2,072	4,137
Age 30-34	2,284	2,473	4,757
Age 35-39	2,775	2,986	5,761
Age 40-44	3,133	3,391	6,524
Age 45-49	3,090	2,982	6,072
Age 50-54	2,811	2,770	5,581
Age 55-59	2,594	2,544	5,138
Age 60-64	2,328	2,339	4,667
Age 65-69	2,035	1,978	4,013
Age 70-74	1,703	1,736	3,439
Age 75-79	1,230	1,315	2,545
Age 80-84	702	850	1,552
Age 85 and over	572	837	1,409
Total	41,628	41,522	83,150

Census 2022: Offaly population 2022 broken down by Age cohort



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO)

The World Health Organization (WHO) Age Friendly Cities & Communities Guides provides an appropriate framework which helps communities to become more supportive of older people by addressing their needs across eight themes



1. Outdoor Spaces & Buildings
2. Transportation
3. Housing
4. Respect & Social Inclusion
5. Social Participation
6. Communication & Information
7. Community Support & Health Services
8. Civic Participation and Employment

These themes overlap and interact with each other. For example, respect is reflected in the accessibility of public buildings and spaces and in the range of opportunities that the cities/towns offer to older people for social participation, entertainment, volunteering or employment.

The lack of affordable public transport for example isolates older people who no longer drive and make participation in community life difficult, increasing the risk of isolation and loneliness. When transport is available and adapted to the needs of seniors, both in terms of scheduling and destinations, it enhances mobility and facilitates social participation and a sense of belonging in one's community.

It is equally important that older people continue to have a good reason to go out and participate. Cultural offers and entertainment that cater to the interests of older people, opportunities for volunteering or civic engagement contribute to a fulfilling and enjoyable older age.



THEME 1

Outdoor Spaces & Buildings

GOAL:

To make outdoor spaces and buildings across Offaly pleasant, accessible, and safe for older people, creating walkable communities and age friendly spaces

To keep our communities accessible for our older population, accessible public transport; level pavements; places to sit; the removal of trip hazards; good street lighting and public toilets are all vital components. The aim is to encourage older people to be out and about within the community and to feel safe in doing so.

Consultation with Offaly's Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- Additional seating areas throughout communities both indoors and outdoors
- Improvement/upgrades to existing bus stops, to include seating and sheltered waiting area
- Age Friendly parking in all main towns and villages
- Footpaths clear of obstructions
- Ramps into buildings
- Longer timers on pedestrian traffic lights to help with crossing the road.



Actions

No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
1.1	Implement Age Friendly Town Initiatives	Age Friendly Town established in county	Offaly County Council
1.2	Carry out survey of Age Friendly Parking in county	Age Friendly Parking Pilot complete and additional AF parking identified and provided in other towns in the county	Offaly County Council
1.3	Ensure that local elected representatives and senior decision makers in service providing organisations are aware of the Age Friendly standards	Awareness campaigns and training provided to organisations to assist in considering Age Friendly Practices	Offaly County Council
1.4	Ensure that the County Development Plan, Housing Action Plan, Local Area Plans, other key local authority plans together with planning guidelines incorporate relevant universal design and Age Friendly concepts and principles.	Offaly County Council Plans & Strategies are developed/ reviewed with Age Friendly concepts and principles.	Offaly County Council
1.5	Promote availability of existing recreational and green spaces across the county.	Increased use of existing recreational and green spaces	All
1.6	Establish if there is demand in communities for age friendly exercise equipment and tone zones in outdoor spaces.	Demand for additional suitable areas for Age Friendly adult exercise equipment and tone zones identified.	Offaly Local Development Company
1.7	Provide instruction for groups of older persons on how to safely use and enjoy any outdoor adult exercise equipment installed in the county.	Older Persons classes/ demonstrations provided on use of available adult exercise equipment.	Offaly Sports Partnership
1.8	Progression of an Age Friendly Business Programme to support and encourage retailers, restaurateurs, hoteliers, business owners and other relevant service providers to introduce practical changes, including the provision of access to toilets, to their business to better meet the needs of an ageing population.	Age Friendly Businesses established or businesses engaging in the process of becoming a certified Age Friendly Business.	LEO Offaly
1.9	Ensure all new public buildings are accessible to all	Planning applications for new public buildings assessed for AF universal design	OCC Planning

Outcomes

- People of all ages in the community have walkable access to public and other essential services, recreation and amenities, and can use them more readily
- Older people feel safe when out and about, and so feel more confident to stay active and to participate in the wider community
- Enhanced awareness of the accessibility needs of older people in Offaly
- Future proofing of developmental works to help ensure our infrastructure and services do not become outdated in the near future and that they do not require unnecessary and costly retrofitting to take account of the needs of an ageing population
- Improved access to key buildings housing health services, such as GPs' surgeries and primary care clinics, and to those which provide essential services, such as post offices, shops and libraries
- Older people are enabled to stay independent for longer

THEME 2

Transportation

GOAL:

Promote safe, accessible, reliable, and comfortable transport services and infrastructure for older people

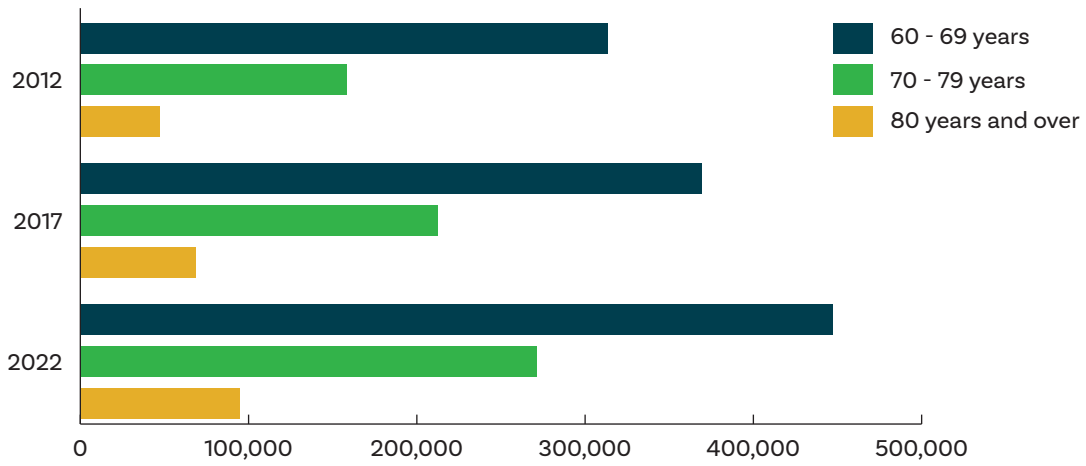
Access to reliable and appropriate transport is essential for our older people to stay an integrated part of our communities. People who don't have access to appropriate transport are less likely to engage in the community and therefore their social and leisure needs become neglected. The aim is to provide/ support the provision of appropriate transport for older people to ensure their social and leisure needs are met and they continue to be valuable members of communities.

Consultation with Offaly's Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- More accessible bus stops, with clearer signage/ timetable information
- Road speed of other road users can deter older people from getting out and about in their own cars
- Road users are not always aware and respectful of older people
- There is a strong sense that access to transport has improved considerably following the ongoing extension of the Laois-Offaly Local Link service. More communication in relation to routes would be welcomed.
- There can be problems with the interconnectivity of key transport services. This can be particularly challenging for those older people looking to make it to important hospital appointments
- Transport to medical facilities is a challenge for a number of older people
- Parking within easy, walkable access of public and other essential services can be difficult and can deter older people from using such services more readily

Actions

No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
2.1	Identify suitable locations for Age Friendly Bus Shelters	Number of Age Friendly Bus Shelters in place and operational.	Offaly County Council, NTA, TII
2.2	Identify suitable areas in towns and villages for the introduction of Age-Friendly parking bays.	Age Friendly Parking introduced in the county.	Offaly Older Peoples Council/ Offaly Co Co
2.3	Older people to be involved, through walkability and consultation programmes, in planning the location of Age Friendly parking, bus stops, shelters and seating	Walkability Audits carried out in selected towns/villages with the involvement of older people	Local Link Laois Offaly Offaly Local Development Company. Offaly Co. Co
2.4	Undertake a survey of bus and train stations, transport terminals and taxi ranks to determine supports required to incorporate Age Friendly design.	Recommendations made for improvements to transport terminals, works started on recommendations	Offaly Co. Co. TII
2.5	Work with Iarnrod Eireann to develop an Age Friendly Train Station in Tullamore	WHO's four stage process to be recognised as Age Friendly Train Station completed	Iarnrod Eireann Offaly Co. Co



Number of persons with current full driving licences by age group and year

Outcomes

- Safer, comfortable, sheltered social spaces which people of all ages can use when waiting for transport provided.
- Older people have walkable access to key public and other essential services and so can use them more readily
- Older people feel safe when out and about, and confident to stay active and to participate in the wider community
- People of all ages are fully informed about transport options, routes, accessibility, prices and schedules in the locality
- Specialised transport is more easily available to those who need it
- Road users are aware and respectful of older people



THEME 3

Housing

GOAL:

To provide support to older people to live independently in their own homes/communities for as long as possible and to provide appropriate continuum of housing choices and options

As people age, they tend to spend more time in their own homes. This leads to a greater need for adequate homes to meet their needs.

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. An environment (or any building, product, or service in that environment) should be designed to meet the needs of all people who wish to use it. This is not a special requirement, for the benefit of only a minority of the population. It is a fundamental condition of good design.

If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits. By considering the diverse needs and abilities of all throughout the design process, Universal Design creates products, services and environments that meet people's needs. Simply put, Universal Design is good design.

Offaly County Council will be including a larger percentage of Universal Design dwellings in all new housing stock and will also ensure a mix of tenure sizes in all schemes where feasible to allow future adaptability of housing stock to accommodate the changing needs of tenants as families grow and change and people age. "Right Sizing" will be facilitated in housing schemes where possible, through the inclusion of a wide variety of house typologies to accommodate movement of

family units within housing estates.

Offaly County Council will endeavour to include practice design models as promoted by Age Friendly Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association to achieve recommended minimum targets for accessibility.

It is envisaged that as more land is acquired further suitable projects will manifest thereby increasing the number of units available under this category.

The Age Friendly Technical Advisor is employed in the Housing Section in Offaly County Council where they are best placed to advise on public and private schemes in order to increase the numbers of age friendly and universally designed units. The Housing and Disability Steering Group is also in place to offer support and feedback.

Consultation with Offaly's Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- Better access to information on Housing Adaptation Grants
- "Lifetime adaptable houses"
- Better access to information on Heating Systems/ Upgrades of Systems
- Better access to information on Home Security Systems/ how to use them, costs etc
- Better availability of basic social and home care supports and assistance with simple household tasks to better enable independent living



Actions

No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
3.1	Maximise Local Authority Housing Adaptation Budgets and streamline delivery of homes for older people.	Increase in number of adaptations completed.	OCC
3.2	Ensure that planning guidelines incorporate Age Friendly design and facilitate appropriate placement of older person accommodation so that older people have walkable access to public and other essential services.	Actions taken to promote lifetime adaptable and Age Friendly Housing design among planners and architects. Town Centre First policies implemented.	OCC
3.3	Facilitation of a showcase event to demonstrate existing successful, good practice older person housing models.	Events held to provide information to Older People in communities. Training courses provided to Council staff.	OPC
3.4	Provision of advice on 'smart house' technologies together with simple, accessible information and advice to older people about housing options, grants, services and personal alarms which can help older people to live independently for longer.	Events held to provide information to Older People in communities.	OLDC, OCC Alliance Members
3.5	Promote Warmer Homes Scheme, provide information and offer support on application process.	Number of promotional campaigns, extent of uptake in scheme, reduction in fuel poverty	Alliance Members, Citizens Information
3.6	Promote 'Be Winter Ready' campaign in Older People's Groups	Number of promotions. Increase in overall comfort at home for older people	OCC, Libraries
3.7	Promote Agefriendlyhomes.ie website for information on Homes for Older People	Increased awareness of website among older people	OCC, OPC, OLDC, Alliance Members
3.8	Promote the option to right-size for older people	Increased awareness of right-sizing options among older people	OCC
3.9	Delivery of Age Friendly Housing in accordance with Offaly Housing Delivery Action Plan 2022-2026.	61 Age Friendly homes to be delivered by 2026	OCC
3.10	Support introduction and implementation of Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme	Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme implemented	OCC
3.11	Council will seek to include housing units, designed for older persons, in the Housing Retrofit Programme	Number of units of older person housing retrofitted	OCC

Outcomes

- Older people are supported to age comfortably in their own homes.
- Older people are enabled to stay part of their local community.
- Available housing design and choices address a broader range of needs.
- Older people experience less social isolation and maintain greater autonomy, control and independence when living independently in the community.
- Older people are better informed and supported to participate in decision making about their own housing environment.

THEME 4

Respect & Social Inclusion

GOAL:

To promote social inclusion of older people within communities, and provide supports that enable older people to be valued, respected and integrated members of the community

The extent to which older people participate in social, civic and economic life is closely linked to their experience of inclusion. Respect and feelings of social inclusion often have an impact on an older person's health and wellbeing and their levels of social, civic and economic participation. Promoting age awareness is key in reducing ageism and preventing the stereotyping and exclusion of older people.

Consultation with Offaly's Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- Increased awareness among local communities and businesses in relation to age and dementia awareness.
- Provision on intergenerational activities, to promote link between younger and older population
- Supports for those experiencing social exclusion

Actions

No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
4.1	Support the continued running of the Offaly Older People's Council and ensure it is representative of the diversity of older people, and supportive of the most marginalised.	OPC meets regularly and identifies supports required in communities.	Offaly Local Development Company
4.2	Ensure that public, voluntary and commercial services involve the Older People's Council, and broad consultation with older people generally, in policy development and the planning of service provision.	Public, Voluntary & Commercial Services consult with OPC, OPC, Older People in Policy Development.	All
4.3	<p>A. Provide Age Friendly awareness training to the staff of local public, voluntary and commercial services.</p> <p>B. Support local public, voluntary and commercial services to appoint "Age Friendly Ambassadors" to undertake age proofing in their organisation.</p> <p>C. Support local businesses to adopt age-friendly practices, such as tailored customer service arrangements for older people.</p>	<p>A. Training provided to all staff to raise awareness.</p> <p>B. Age Friendly Ambassadors Appointed</p> <p>C. Age Friendly Business Status Awarded to local Businesses</p>	Age Friendly Programme



4.4	Delivery of intergenerational initiatives and link-ups between older people's and young people's organisations, which involve meaningful skills exchange, storytelling and addressing social isolation.	Intergenerational initiatives delivered in communities	OPC, OLDC Offaly Libraries
4.5	Promote inclusivity of older people from all cultural and economic backgrounds.	Promotional Campaigns/Events run	All
4.6	Promote Age Friendly Programme to older people, particularly those from marginalised groups. Encourage new membership and increased diversity in the Older People's Council	Promotional Campaigns/Events run	OPC, OCC, Offaly Libraries
4.7	Promote Offaly Libraries' Age Friendly status & Age Friendly library resources (e.g. hearing loops, magnifiers, audiobooks and large print reading collections). Highlight availability of 6 Magic Tables (Tovertafels) across the library network, providing assistance to those on their dementia journey and encourage social interaction	Increased use of Library Services	Offaly Libraries

Outcomes

- Older People in Offaly feel included in their communities
- Local democracy and social cohesion enhanced
- Reduction in the number of older people experiencing discrimination & social isolation.
- Older People have positive experiences in public, voluntary and private services and are supported and respected

THEME 5

Social Participation

GOAL:

To Support older people's participation in social life and provide opportunities for older people to stay socially connected to help prevent social isolation



Older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness. This can lead to declines in both mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Social isolation is a challenge facing county Offaly due to its large rural area, meaning prevention of social isolation is a priority for all stakeholders.

Consultation with Offaly's Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- Additional IT Courses
- Adequate Transport as this can be a barrier. Many older people were prioritising requests for transport to essential appointments over transport to social activities
- Additional social events to attend
- Better advertisement/communication of activities/events
- Guidance on how to set up groups
- Intergenerational events

Actions

No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
5.1	Promote a range of exercise programmes for older persons in active age groups, day care centres, nursing homes and other relevant settings	Programmes for Older People held successfully	Offaly Sports Partnership
5.2	Host intergenerational events/ programmes in local communities	Intergenerational Programmes/Events held successfully	OPC, TUS, LOETB, Libraries
5.3	Ensure affordable transport is available to enable older people to travel to social activities & events where resources permit	Transport services provided/maintained	Local Link
5.4	Continued support of Active Age Groups	Support provided, groups continue to grow	All
5.5	Improvements to communication methods with Older People	New forms of communication identified and implemented	All
5.6	Host social events, gatherings for older people	Events hosted for older people throughout the year	OCC OPC OLDC Libraries
5.7	Supports provided to set up new older person's groups	New groups formed where needs are identified	OLDC

Outcomes

- Older people can access a broad range of events and activities
- Older people have the confidence and capacity to maintain social networks and participate in their communities
- Offaly enjoys a culture of multi-generational respect
- Social isolation is reduced amongst older people

THEME 6

Communications & Information

GOAL:

To ensure that older people can access timely, practical reliable and understandable information about what is happening in their communities

A basic, effective communication system is required to ensure that community residents of all ages are included. Older people within Offaly need to be able to easily access relevant and practical information. Information leaflets should use plain language, contain simple and familiar words in short, straightforward sentences.

In a world where social media and online communication dominates, it is important that our older population don't get left behind.

Table 1 below shows the % of older people surveyed at the Offaly OPC AGM who have a smart phone.

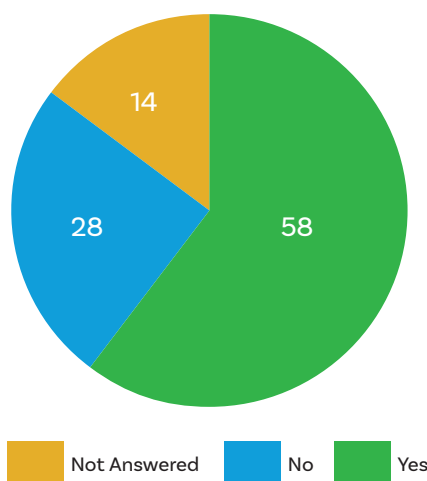


Table 1-Data from OPC AGM held May 2023

Table 2 below shows the % of older people surveyed at the Offaly OPC AGM who are happy with the format of information received.

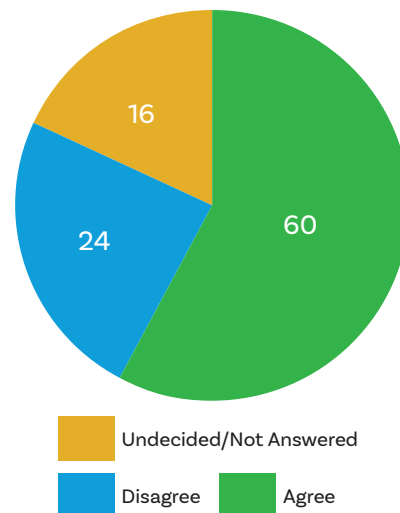


Table 2-Data from OPC AGM held May 2023

Consultation with Offaly's Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- Dedicated phone services for older people within businesses/service providers
- More variety of training for IT skills
- Increased use in radio/newspaper advertisements
- In person information assistance
- Improved Broadband

Actions

No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
6.1	Promotion of Directory of Services developed by ICPOP relevant to older people.	Older People are aware of the Directory of Services	HSE Offaly Co Co
6.2	Review effectiveness of communication within Age Friendly Alliance	Communication methods reviewed	Age Friendly Alliance
6.3	Digital Skills training courses, to train/support older people in the set up/use of technology, including Digital Ambassador Programme in Offaly Libraries	Courses and workshops delivered in formal and informal locations	LOETB, Offaly Libraries BTTC WOT
6.4	Promote the provision of library based free access to computers and the internet	Greater awareness of library services amongst older people	Libraries
6.5	Deliver Information workshops in communities	Workshops/Info sessions in local communities	Citizens Information, OLDC

Outcomes

- Older people have access to relevant, timely and practical information
- Older people can make informed decisions



THEME 7

Civic Participation & Employment

GOAL:

To increase employment, volunteering and civic participation among older people

Given the ageing population, it is important that older people do not stop contributing to their communities once they reach a certain age. Supports and encouragement need to be in place for older people to volunteer, to continue learning, or engage in work if they so wish.

The continued mental stimulation in later life promotes good physical and mental health. Enhanced social status and purpose result in measurable gains in physical and mental health.

Consultation with Offaly’s Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- Better information about volunteering opportunities
- Opportunities for older people to offer support or mentoring to people about business ideas, etc.
- Transportation can be a limiting factor in older people remaining in employment.
- Better workplace options to facilitate a “phased” retirement.

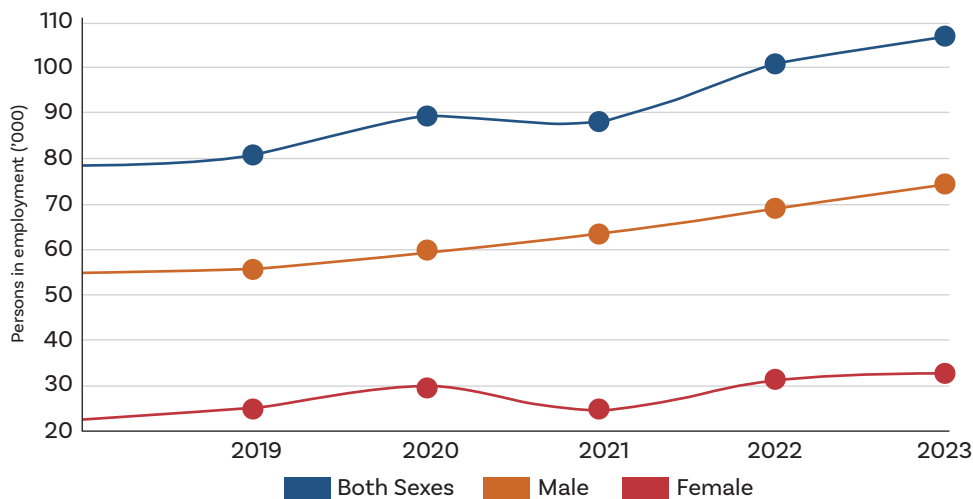


Table 1-Number of persons aged 65 years and over in employment (000) b3



No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
7.1	Develop Age Friendly shared workspaces/hubs, to enable commuting for older workforce to remain in work or support phased retirement	Shared workspaces/hub in use by older workforce	LEO
7.2	Develop an Age Friendly senior enterprise programme that supports intergenerational transfer of skills	Age Friendly senior enterprise programme active in County	LEO
7.3	Encourage, organise and deliver a diverse range of educational activities based on needs and interests of older people	Courses, educational activities held	LOETB TUS
7.4	Training for older people on the use of technology	Training provided	LOETB, LEO
7.5	Promotion of volunteering opportunities to older people	Increased number of older volunteers across county	OCC, OLDC OVC

Outcomes

- Older people have improved access to opportunities for learning, working and social contribution
- Older peoples wisdom and skills are utilised and passed on
- Older people have a stronger sense of purpose

THEME 8

Community Support & Health Services

GOAL:

To provide older people with easily accessible health and community services and help with access to everyday activities, high quality home care and residential facilities

It is important for older people to remain healthy and independent. People are living longer and are becoming more active in later life. This has increased the need for physical & social activities for older people. It has also increased the demand for local health services.

Health and support services are vital to maintaining health and independence of older people in the community. Older people have emphasised the significant importance of good quality and accessible health care services as they age.

Consultation with Offaly's Older Residents told us there is a need for:

- Improved local community-based healthcare services
- Better transport options to healthcare appointments
- Access to GP's is a challenge for many
- An emphasis on the important role played by home support services in respect of basic assistance with household chores



No.	Action	Success Indicators	Lead Agency
8.1	Support the local hospital and health facilities to adhere to Age Friendly standards and older person preferences	The Midlands Regional Hospital will undergo the Age Friendly hospital recognition process.	HSE
8.2	Ensure better co-ordinated care for older people accessing health care services in local communities.	A Primary Care Centre will be selected to undergo the WHO four stage process to become recognised as an age friendly primary care centre	HSE
8.3	Continuation and expansion of proven social prescribing for health and wellbeing model.	Social Prescribing continues to be delivered and expanded to cover all of county	OLDC HSE
8.4	Support and promote exercise activities for older people in the community	Activities/events take place throughout the county	Offaly Sports Partnership
8.5	Provision of books in a variety of accessible formats to support the information needs of older people and to promote reading for pleasure and wellbeing	Increased use of Library Services	Offaly Libraries
8.6	Older people to have access to nutritional meals delivered where necessary	Number of older person households where meals on wheels service is available	HSE, OLDC KDA, NOCDN
8.7	Increase access to and frequency of wellbeing activities throughout the county	More opportunities for older people to avail of wellbeing activities in their local communities	HSE, OLDC, NOCDN

Outcomes

- Community support and health services are conveniently located and easily accessible, with Age Friendly practices in place
- Older people are supported in physical and social activities in their communities



Monitoring & Review

This Strategy will be monitored by Offaly Age Friendly Alliance, and will be a permanent fixture on the agenda of all Age Friendly Alliance, Age Friendly Interdepartmental Team and Older Person Council's meetings.

Each Age Friendly Alliance member has a responsibility to ensure the delivery of the identified actions set out throughout the strategy, and will be requested to report progress to the Alliance at the bi monthly meetings.

An interim review of the Strategy shall be carried out in year 3, and a full review will be carried out in the strategies final year.

Acknowledgements

Ms Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive of Offaly County Council and Chairperson of Offaly Age Friendly Alliance together with the Alliance members, wishes to acknowledge the collaboration and interagency working which took place in the preparation of this strategy. Particular thanks are extended to Ms. Eileen Hughes, Age Friendly Ireland Regional Programme Manager and the staff in the Age Friendly unit of Offaly County Council.

We would especially like to thank all older people in Offaly who responded to the consultation process and we look forward to working together to implement this strategy.



References

AGENCY	DOCUMENT	LINK
Central Statistics Office	Older Persons Information Hub	https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/hubs/p-opi/olderpersonsinformationhub/
Central Statistics Office	Population Distribution	https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp1/censusofpopulation2022profile1-populationdistributionandmovements/populationdistribution/
World Health Organisation	Age Friendly Cities Framework	https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-cities-framework/
Age Friendly Ireland	Age Friendly Ireland website	https://agefriendlyireland.ie/
Local Link Laois Offaly	FAQ's	https://locallinklaoisoffaly.ie/faqs/
HSE	Loneliness in older people	https://www2.hse.ie/mental-health/life-situations-events/loneliness/older-people/
An Garda Síochana	Crime Prevention	https://garda.ie/en/crime-prevention/community-engagement/community-engagement-offices/older-person-strategy-an-garda-siochana-2010.pdf
Gov.ie	National Positive Ageing Strategy	https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/11714/d859109de8984a50b9f2ae2c1f325456.pdf#page=null
Offaly County Council	Housing Delivery Action Plan	https://www.offaly.ie/app/uploads/Council/Council_Services_A-Z/Housing/Offaly-Housing-Delivery-Action-Plan-2022-2026-1.pdf
Offaly County Council	Corporate Plan 2019-2024	Corporate Plan Publication - Offaly County Council Offaly County Council
Offaly County Council	Local Economic & Community Plan	Local Economic and Community Plan Consultation - Offaly County Council Offaly County Council
Offaly County Council	County Development Plan	County Development Plan 2021-2027 Archives - Offaly County Council Offaly County Council
Offaly County Council	Offaly PPN Website	Offaly PPN Public Participation Network Offaly PPN Community Voluntary Network Offaly Ireland





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