County Cork Age Friendly Town Fund

Supporting the development of a network of Age Friendly Towns across County Cork

2020 - 2021

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and context

This document sets out an initiative to support the development of a network of Age Friendly Towns across Cork during the lifetime of the Cork Age Friendly County Programme.

This document sets out the proposal, its context and rationale, scope and benefits. The Age Friendly Ireland "**Age Friendly Towns – a Guide**" should be consulted for more detail. These forms are available through the Cork Age Friendly Office:

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2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: AGE FRIENDLY TOWNS

One of the most significant social changes facing countries around the world today is the 'ageing population' phenomenon. Globally we are witnessing a shift in the distribution of our population towards older ages. And Ireland is no different:

According to the Central Statistics Office:

- average life expectancy for men in Ireland is 76.8 years and 81.6 years for women
- life expectancy at 65 is rising faster in Ireland than anywhere else in the EU
- by 2041, there will be around 1.3-1.4m people in Ireland over the age of 65 – that's one out of every four or five people
- of these, 440,000 will be aged 80 or more – that's four times as many as in 2006.

The initiative proposed – developing a network of Age Friendly Towns in Cork – will complement and enhance the wider and now well established national Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme which is currently operational in all 31 local authority areas across Ireland.

Established in 2009, the overarching goal of the national Age Friendly Cities & Counties Programme is that every county in Ireland will be a great place in which to grow old. The programme works from the premise that older people are a valuable resource to their communities and to our society in general. Their voice and their involvement in shaping the strategies and plans at local level is one of the key success factors of the national programme. The Irish programme is affiliated to the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and has taken a lead role in the international effort by the WHO to address the twin

global challenges of demographic ageing and urbanisation by focusing on the environmental, economic and social factors that contribute to active and healthy ageing in societies. Indeed, at this stage, Ireland is considerably more advanced in the roll-out of a national programme than any of the other participating countries in the network.

Age Friendly places benefit everybody in the community: Where we live impacts hugely on how we live. Taking an Age Friendly approach to planning improves life for everyone in the community because environments, services and systems which are designed to be accessible and open to older people also benefit children and young people, their parents and people with disabilities:

- Age friendly environments are safer: better lighting, less trip hazards, improved accessibility for people with disabilities…age-friendly universal design suits everyone, throughout the life cycle
- Age friendly services are more people-focussed: everyone receives the kind of locally-based service delivery that they really value
- Age friendly systems are sensitive to individual needs: local people feel that they have a say, and that their needs and interests are considered, fostering good community relations and increasing civic pride and civic engagement.

Everyone hopes that as they grow older, they will be supported to stay in their own home, be listened to and taken seriously, be able to work or volunteer, enjoy a good social life, and have access to good information and healthcare. Neighbourliness, a sense of belonging, feeling safe, feeling valued…these are things that everybody wants in their lives. The Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme is a proven, cost-effective way of making those things a real possibility for every member of the community.

The Cork Age Friendly County Programme is led by the Alliance, chaired by Mr Niall Healy, Director of Services, Cork County Council, and including senior leaders from the Gardaí, HSE, voluntary organisations, third level institutions and individual leaders who share a passion to realise the shared vision. The Programme has been successful in securing very senior level engagement and has been successful in:

- Creating a climate and culture that promotes more integrated services and seeks solutions to problems.
- Raising the profile and awareness of the needs of older people across the county and placing age friendly policies formally on the agenda and developing greater awareness of the important role older people can play.
- Bringing an empowered NGO community to the table, again for the first time, and providing access to senior officials for voluntary and community organizations in a collaborative atmosphere in which older people can feel that they are heard.
- Securing involvement and engagement by older people through consultation and through the Older Peoples Council.

The Age-Friendly towns programme has been successful in Kinsale, which was the County's first Age-Friendly Town, and in Bandon, Cobh and Mitchelstown. The objective of this current proposal is to build on those successes and make the age-friendly vision a reality in additional towns across County Cork in 2020.
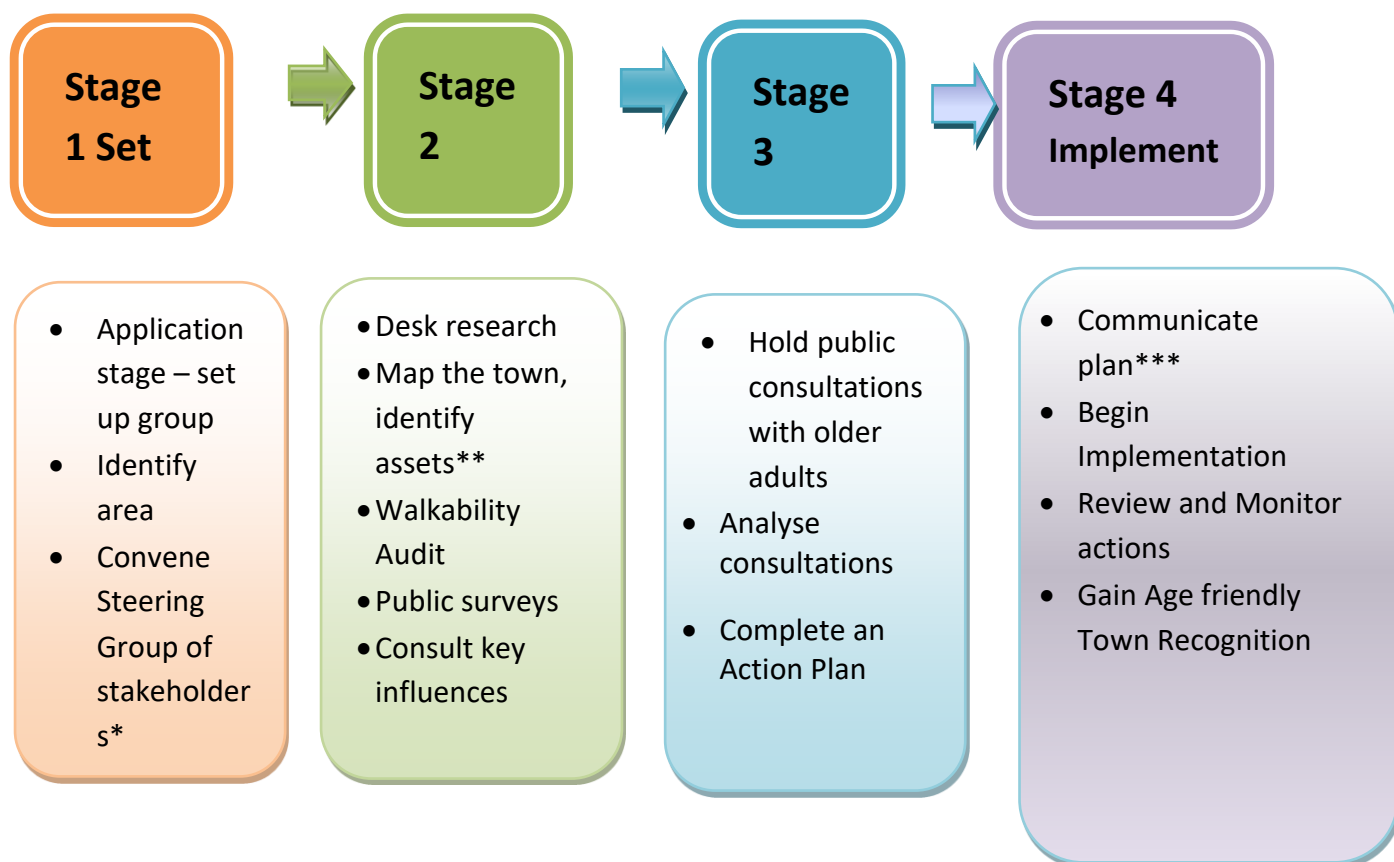
The Age Friendly Towns programme addresses a critical issue; Implementation. The smaller scale of the town allows for timely, real change and impact on the lives of older people in the areas in which they live – where factors such as the extent to which they feel safe in own homes, lead healthy and active lives, stay living independently in their own homes and participate in the life of the community is determined. The Age Friendly Towns process provides evidence to demonstrate what can be done at a local level, what practical projects can be effective, and initiatives that are less beneficial.

2.1 Approach: The development of an Age Friendly Town will involve a clear four stage process which was developed by the Age Friendly Ireland National Programme Team as part of a successful pilot Age Friendly Towns programme run across a number of years. The AFI Guide to Age Friendly Towns and other documents are available for more detail and help but the basics of the towns programme include:

1. **Set Up:** Local older leaders and stakeholders form a Steering Group and securing agreement and support for the project from those that they represent, the Age Friendly Alliance and public representatives.

2. **Audit and Consult:** Consulting extensively with older people by means of walk-ability audit, surveys, and town mapping, collate issues and suggestions for action

3. **Plan:** Hold public consultations and developing and getting agreement to an Age Friendly Action Plan for the Town informed by the priorities and preferences of older adults as they emerged from the consultations.

4. **Act:** Communicate the plan and begin the implementation of the Age Friendly Town Action Plan and apply for Age Friendly Town Recognition.

The key feature, underpinning the initiative, is that the process will be led by older adults. These older adults will have a role to play in bringing key stakeholders together to prioritise the changes needed *and* in implementing the changes that have been agreed as part of the plan.

Figure 1: Development of an Age Friendly Town – Four stage process.

Stage 1 Set	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4 Implement
• Application stage – set up group • Identify area • Convene Steering Group of stakeholders*	• Desk research • Map the town, identify assets** • Walkability Audit • Public surveys • Consult key influences	• Hold public consultations with older adults • Analyse consultations • Complete an Action Plan	• Communicate plan*** • Begin Implementation • Review and Monitor actions • Gain Age friendly Town Recognition

*Town based Steering Group will typically include representatives from County/City Council, Gardaí, Health Services Executive, NGO's, local business representatives, local volunteer organisations, active retirement groups and local older people.

** Assets will include both 'hard' assets (schools, health services, libraries, parks, transports services, information services etc.) mapped by the Age Friendly Outcomes and colour coded, and 'soft' assets (resources for older people such as groups and meetings in local community centres, local social events, training courses, drop in services etc. that take place at local level.

***Without being overly prescriptive and mindful that the changes identified ought to reflect the needs and interests of the local older population in each of the three towns the actions committed to *could* include projects such as community gardens; men's sheds; intergenerational skills exchanges; provision of places to walk safely and/or walking groups; development of local networks of Age Friendly Businesses; Age Friendly libraries; changes to the outdoor environment (benches, pedestrian crossings, pavements etc.) enhancement of parks for greater social and age friendly exercise opportunities (tone zones etc.); establishment of care and repair services; befriending services to support isolated people or other similar projects.

2.2 Objectives and Benefits: The objectives of the Age Friendly Town initiative are to:

- Make the town a great place to grow old

- Engage older adults in shaping and enhancing their communities for the benefit of everyone.

- Demonstrate the benefits of a multi-stakeholder planning approach, informed and supported by older adults.

- Learn 'what works' in this context and use the findings to inform better approaches to town planning.

2.3 Key features / elements

- The process will focus on how best to realise the core Age Friendly Outcomes e.g. "More older people living in their own homes, more older people feeling safer at home and while out and about" (see Appendix 1) which correlate directly with the eight World Health Organisation(WHO) domains.

- Where possible the programme will align and integrate with existing initiatives e.g. Tidy Towns, Heritage Towns etc.

- The project is a brief intervention which lasts two years. This will be reflected in the number and types of actions identified in the implementation plans. Implementation of longer-term actions is ensured by embedding them in the operational and strategic plans of the Alliance and participating stakeholder organisations where possible.

- It is a flexible approach with a simple structure.

- The initiative will focus across the life course rather than exclusively on the needs of older people. The desired result is for shared spaces being 'friendly for all'.

3 PROCESS

3.1 Stage 1 – Set Up (March – May 2020)

- Invite proposals from towns to participate in the programme.

- The County Programme will identify suitable towns based on the submitted applications.

- The County Programme will provide the steering groups with suitable induction and initial training.

- A learning network will be established.

- Support will be sought from the Alliance for the project.

- Steering groups- possible members of the steering groups might include:

  o Key Community or Volunteer groups/ Local business representatives
  o Older Person's Council member(s) and/or key groups e.g. Active Retirement Ireland
  o Other possible members - Community & Enterprise / Arts / Sports Partnerships, RAPID
  o Key Local Authority 'champion' - e.g. town planner / town engineer
  o HSE (Health Services Executive), Gardaí (Police Service)

- The Steering Group will in turn recruit a group of older adults who will be identified to act as leaders for the town's initiative. Ideally this group will be able to draw on a mix of relevant expertise e.g. planning, transport and community development to audit and profile the town.

3.2 Stage 2 – Audit and Consult (June to September 2020)

- **Desk research**, compiling local demographics, and identifying the soft and hard assets and stakeholders within the town.

- Conduct an **audit** of their community using three elements; the Walkability Audit and the public survey (both available on request) and other existing information, such as the accessibility survey and CSO data.

  - Walkability audit gives information on three issues - 'walkability', transport and access. This audit can be planned and conducted by older local volunteers in each of the three towns.

  - Survey the community: The group will carry out a survey of local residents in local shopping centres and other gathering points across the town...

- **Consultation with key stakeholders**: Interview personnel in key agencies such as HSE, Gardaí, Local Authorities, Libraries, GAA, community leaders, NGOs to identify what is currently happening and what they consider to be the key issues, gaps and the opportunities for improvement.

- **Mapping** of the town, showing current land-use -identify the town's 'assets' and create a **profile** of the town, drawing on relevant data.

- Public **consultation** meeting(s) where all older adults and key stakeholders are invited. These meetings will provide an opportunity to explore the profile of the town with the groups and participants.

3.3 Stage 3 – Plan (October to December 2020)

- The Steering Group will develop **an Action Plan**, based on the audit, consultation and mapping findings and the desired outcomes. The plan will reflect the results of the stakeholder consultation, community consultation, audits and the mapping exercise. The plan will be structured to reflect the nine outcomes identified and used by the wider Age Friendly Cities & Counties programme as part of its City and County wide planning processes (see Appendix One). The plan will include a timeframe for implementation, identify performance measures and agree a mechanism for ongoing review.

- Communicate with other key statutory and community groups seeking inclusion of key actions in their operational plans and their general endorsement and support for the recommendations put forward.

- Steering Group will begin to recruit volunteers to implement the relevant actions and commitments set out within the Plan.

3.4 Stage 4 – Implement and Review (January to December 2021)

- The Steering group, will review the initial stages of implementation. Their role is to support the groups where they encounter difficulties and where needed to engage the support of the local Authority and other key decision makers.

- Progress report on implementing the Action Plan.

- The Steering Group to reach agreement on how to continue the Age Friendly Town initiative beyond 2022 and where appropriate secure agreement from the local county/city Alliance to take responsibility for the medium to long term management of the projects.

- Final review of the initiative, reporting against objectives and targeted outcomes.

- Draw conclusions and recommendations on how the relevant systems might be strengthened. A seminar will be organised to allow the groups to share key findings and recommendations with relevant policy makers.

- The local Steering groups will submit the towns for **Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement Awards.**

4   Monitoring & Evaluation

Measuring the impact of Age Friendly Towns:

The objectives of the Age Friendly Town initiative will be evaluated using both process and outcome measures.

Process measures

4.1 Engage older adults in shaping and enhancing their communities for the benefit of everyone.

- Measured by the number of older adults volunteering,
- the number of hours volunteered and
- the number of projects successfully launched through the Age Friendly Towns programme

4.2 Demonstrate the benefits of a multi-stakeholder planning approach, informed and supported by older adults.

- Measured by the number of key stakeholders approached.
- The number of key stakeholders who took part in consultations.
- The number of key stakeholders who were involved in the solutions (projects launched)

4.3 Learn 'what works' in this context and use the findings to inform better approaches to planning

- Measured by the findings documented in the reports.

Outcome measures

4.4 Make the town a great place to grow old:

- Measured by the Age Friendly outcomes in a survey, before and after the project.
- A training session devised to assist planners and engineers assess their town and make them Age Friendly.
- An associated set of guidelines that outline the recommendations so towns can take steps towards being age friendly without consultation, these guidelines will summarise the relevant portions of existing resources and disability guides, as a reference point for planners in generating county corporate and development plans.
- A network of Age Friendly Towns that shares learnings and collects data from the project together.

5 Budget

- Seed money of €5,000 per town, per year, over two years, to 'kick start' age friendly action projects.

6 Conclusion

The process ensures that changes are implemented in each town under the areas that older people identify as important. In the existing age friendly towns across Ireland, redeployment of existing resources has resulted in new walks and parks, community gardens; men's sheds; intergenerational skills exchanges; provision of places to walk in safety and/or walking groups; development of local networks of Age Friendly Businesses; Age Friendly libraries; changes to the outdoor environment (benches, pedestrian crossings, pavements etc.), establishment of care and repair services and befriending services to support isolated people with minimal additional cost to governmental agencies.

APPENDIX 1: Age Friendly Towns Outcomes for Older People

The outcomes which older people agree they want are:

1. **Lead healthier and more active lives for longer.**

2. **Stay living in our own homes and communities.**

3. **Get to where we need to go, when we need to.**

4. **Be enabled by the built and social environment.**

5. **Feel safe at home, and out and about.**

6. **Have the information we need to lead full lives.**

7. **Be truly valued and respected.**

8. **Participate in social, economic and public life.**

9. **Continue to learn, develop and work.**