

TAKING STOCK

Is Government keeping its commitments to older people?

A report from The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs

Reviewed January 2024; Next Review due 2025



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Who is the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs

The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs (the Alliance) represents the collective thinking of seven significant NGOs working in the age sector.

Separately, we provide vital services for older people, support older people to contribute to and participate in community life and advocate for better policies, services and supports for older people at national and local level.

Together, we collaborate to combat ageism and to seek action on the specific issues that make older people's lives more difficult than they need to be. We work together to support Ireland in becoming a better place in which to grow older.

The Alliance is committed to collaborative leadership and the pooling of our capacity and resources to maximise our collective impact.

Standing meetings of the Alliance are held on a bi-monthly basis. These meetings are attended by the CEO's of the seven member organisations together with the Alliances independent Chair, Maurice O'Connell. A number of thematic working groups would also convene to progress specific actions.



Active Retirement Ireland: will reach out to all older people to stop loneliness through friendship and support.



Age & Opportunity: Our mission is to enable the best possible quality of life for us all as we age.



ALONE: Supporting older people to age at home.



The Alzheimer Society of Ireland: Our mission is to advocate, empower and champion the rights of people living with dementia and their communities to quality support and services.



Irish Hospice Foundation: Our mission is to work towards the best end-of-life and bereavement care for all.



The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament: Working to promote the voice of older people in policy development and decision-making.



Responding to the Opportunities and Challenges of Ageing in Ireland

Third Age: Responding to the opportunities and challenges of ageing in Ireland.

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Foreword

**By Denise Charlton,
Chief Executive, Community
Foundation Ireland**

Is Government Keeping its Commitments to Older People? Is a valid and pertinent question to be raised more than a decade after the publication of the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

Sadly, the latest findings of our partners in the Age Alliance show implementation in the 10-years since has been at best patchy with many shortfalls caused by a lack of leadership and focus. This report adds to the growing body of research making a compelling case for the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People to ensure a cross-Government and coherent approach to positive ageing.

An Independent Commissioner can introduce a much-needed focus on performance indicators, monitoring and the ongoing evaluation of positive ageing related policy implementation and outcomes. Such an independent office can examine positive ageing related policies, while also holding relevant Departments accountable.

The independent office should ensure an ambitious, whole-government approach to support positive ageing.

The coming together of the seven member organisations of the Alliance has been important in strengthening the calls for action. As a Foundation with a commitment to empowering generations we are proud to support the Alliance. It represents a strategic investment by our donors who share our mission of equality for all in thriving communities.

The research and studies which have been developed offer recommendations and actions which, if implemented, could benefit communities for generations to come.

'Telling It Like It Is', published in July 2021, captured the experiences of thousands of older people living in Ireland through the pandemic. It revealed how ageism is deeply institutionalised throughout our services and systems and across wider society.

In the second edition of the 'Telling It Like It Is' series, published in January 2023, the Age Alliance revealed how there has been an implementation deficit in relation to many of Ireland's policy commitments relevant to ageing and older people.

The health and well-being of the population is one of any nation's greatest assets. Good health improves peoples wellbeing, their productive capacity and their ability to participate in society – no matter what age one might be.

As a philanthropic hub, we are calling for this report to be studied and acted upon by all policymakers.

**Denise Charlton,
Chief Executive,
Community Foundation Ireland**

In the space of 30 years, the make-up of Ireland's population will change considerably. Often, we talk about the needs of Ireland's ageing population as if this represents a change in demographics to be considered in the future. The truth is, our population has already grown considerably older in recent years, and will continue to do so.



In 2011, there were 535,716 people aged 65+ in Ireland, making up 11.4% of the total population.



By 2021, this was projected to increase to 796,484 people; by 2031, to more than 1 million.



By 2041, the population aged 65+ is projected at almost 1.4 million, representing close to 25% of the total.



The greatest increases are expected in the over 80 year's age group, where numbers are expected to increase four-fold from 110,000 in 2006 to about 440,000 in 2041. The incidence of dementia is expected to at least double.

Our ageing population needs strong institutions, appropriate policy and effective implementation so that the human rights and ability of older people to reach their full potential are no longer denied. Our older adult population will be the fastest growing demographic of the 21st Century and must be centrally and explicitly catered for as part of any ambitions and priorities of government now and in the future.

There has been no shortage of theoretical models and policy statements relevant to ageing and older people in Ireland. Indeed, policies toward older people date all the way back to 1968 (Care of the Aged), 1988 (The years ahead) and the current policy being the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013). Furthermore, the current Programme for Government (Our Shared Future, 2020) sets out a commitment to establish a Commission on Care. The Roadmap for Social Inclusion (2020) committed to implement benchmarking of the pension by 2021 while also pledging to develop an implementation plan to deliver on the objectives of tackling loneliness and isolation. The joint policy statement Housing Options for our Ageing Population (2019) identified a programme of 40 strategic actions to progress housing options for older people. Sláintecare is a vision for a new health service detailed in the report from the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Healthcare published in May 2017 and the current Sláintecare Implementation Strategy & Action Plan 2021 — 2023 and which includes specific actions targeted at older persons.

When the National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS, 2013) was launched more than ten years ago it noted that



‘the ageing of our population from this point onwards will represent one of the most significant demographic and social developments that Irish society has encountered’.

NPAS aimed to create a “shift in mindset in how we, collectively and individually, conceptualise ageing”. It saw itself as **“the blueprint for this planning - for what we can and must do - individually and collectively - to make Ireland a good country in which to grow older in the years ahead”**. To achieve this, NPAS goals encompassed expanded housing options, accessible health services, enhanced opportunities for participation and contribution to Irish life at all levels, tackling the ageism that holds us all back, improving information provision and ensuring that older people’s own priorities and ideas form the bedrock of thinking and action about older people’s lives. More recently, Ireland has adopted the 2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing “a Sustainable Society for All Ages: Joining Forces for Solidarity and Equal Opportunities throughout life”. The Declaration reconfirms Ireland commitment to the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) and prioritises progress in the areas of health promotion, older persons’ participation in society and policy making, intergenerational solidarity, and the combatting of ageism.

‘Telling It Like It Is, Combatting ageism’ (January 2023) was an Age Alliance account which explored the nature and impacts of ageism in an Irish context. In particular, the account revealed how there has been an implementation deficit in relation to many of Ireland’s policy commitments relevant to ageing and older people. No active implementation, monitoring or reporting plans appear to be in place either for the NPAS or the Rome Declaration.

The Age Alliance has therefore developed this snapshot report in order to directly track and spotlight the progress (or perhaps lack of) made by Ireland in respect of its key pledges and policy commitments relevant to older people in Ireland. As illustrated, many of the commitments set out as part of the relevant policy frameworks have yet to be meaningfully advanced or benefited from coordinated implementation.

Much of the policy content, strategies and actions to implement positive ageing remain valid. However, strong leadership, energetic implementation and active monitoring is now called for.

Collectively, we need to hold Government to account on the pledges that have been made in respect of positive ageing as these are the issues that can make a real difference to the lived experience of our older adult population.

We see this spotlighting exercise as a call to action to Government to work on a cross-Departmental basis to improve the delivery of programmes, services and supports for older people.




In particular, the National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS), published in 2013, has been waiting for Government to dust it off, update and refresh it and take it seriously. Had it been implemented in the seven years between publication and pandemic, many of the negative effects on older people of the Covid-19 response could have been avoided.

NPAS contains still-relevant approaches to eliminating ageism, ensuring that ageing is taken seriously, that older people's needs and preferences inform policy and practice, that most older people can age with dignity and die well close to family and community, get the supports they need, have options in their lives and can participate fully in all that's going on.

Once again, the Age Alliance must ask; Is the lack of urgency itself a manifestation of institutional ageism? What has made implementation so problematic?

In addition to the 'deep dive' analysis across the 17 thematic areas, which is featured in this main body of the report, we have included in the executive summary in order to steer Government action in the short term, 15 commitments made in respect of older people and have rated the Government on its efforts in these areas.

As the Alliance has emphasised previously, an effective Positive Ageing Strategy requires:

-  **A top-level governmental commitment to older people. This would take the form of a Programme for Government Outcome which is actively monitored by a Cabinet Committee or, more preferably as proposed by the Rome Declaration 2022 of which Ireland is a signatory, establishment of an independent body such as a Commissioner for Ageing and Older People that can mediate the rights, needs and interests of older persons in all areas of society.**
-  **The allocation of specific responsibilities to government departments with such responsibilities underpinned by clear deliverables, timelines and performance indicators; and**
-  **Specified funding allocation tethered to each Strategic Outcome.**

For this first in a series of annual reports on positive ageing the Alliance has provided a snapshot on the current status of 17 policy areas relevant to our older adult population. Calls to action or recommendations are set out in each of the 17 areas.

In particular, the Alliance recommends that Ireland establish, with some urgency, an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People - similar to that which is in place in both Northern Ireland and Wales. This would help to ensure that Ireland's various policy commitments relevant to older people are meaningfully monitored and that older people are treated with respect and on an equal basis with the rest of the population.

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REPORT STRUCTURE

Consistent with the whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach to health and wellbeing adopted by Healthy Ireland, the National Positive Ageing Strategy addresses the broader determinants of health and, was described at the time of its launch in 2013 as “a new departure in policy-making for ageing in Ireland that will address the following (13) priority areas”.

The Alliance has, therefore, used this set of 13 priority areas to provide a structure for this (January 2024) audit on policy commitments relevant to positive ageing in Ireland. In addition to the 13 priority areas, the Alliance has included assessment on a further four relevant areas – the importance of which was also emphasised in the 2013 Strategy; ‘ageism’, ‘policy coordination and monitoring’, ‘mainstreaming ageing’ and ‘research’ – all key enablers to bring about positive ageing.

The seventeen areas included in this audit are therefore as follows;

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Healthy ageing | 2 Health and personal social services |
| 3 Carers | 4 Employment and retirement |
| 5 Education and lifelong learning | 6 Volunteering |
| 7 Cultural and social participation | 8 Transport |
| 9 Financial security | 10 Housing |
| 11 The built environment | 12 Safety and security |
| 13 Elder abuse | 14 Ageism |
| 15 Policy coordination and monitoring | 16 Mainstreaming ageing |
| 17 Research | |

A common template has been followed for each of the 17 priority areas setting out; why each area is relevant, the connection each has to the quality of life enjoyed by older people, the key policy commitments that have been made by Government in each area, and the status of those various commitments as at January 2024. Finally, a call to action or recommendation is set out by the Alliance for each of the 17 priority areas.

SOME HIGH-LEVEL OBSERVATIONS ON GOVERNMENTAL REPORTING ON POSITIVE AGEING

January 2022 saw the publication, by the Department of Health, of the ('Ireland National Report 2017-2021': Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (Regional Implementation Strategy)'.

The purpose of this Department led review and appraisal exercise of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing Regional Implementation Strategy (MIPAA/RIS) was "to highlight the work carried out to address the three main goals of the Lisbon Declaration, and the plans to address challenges of the near future". (Pg. 2)

Importantly, this 2022 Departmental report reaffirms, at various points throughout, Government's recognition and positioning of the National Positive Ageing Strategy (NPAS, 2013) as:

- **'a key pillar in the national progress to implement the main commitments and priorities set out in MIPPA/RIS'. (pg. 2)**
- **'one of Irelands main policy achievements in the last 20 years as this has filtered across government increasing awareness of the specific needs of older people'. (pg. 13)**
- **'a framework for cooperation to address age-related policy and service delivery across Government and society in the years ahead'. (pg. 25)**
- **'(a means to) align and can support the guiding principles set out for the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2020 – 2030'. (pg. 25)**
- **'The implementation of NPAS (and the establishment of the Commission on Care) are integral parts of the Governments agenda to improve the lives of older people in Ireland'. (pg. 26)**

The Department of Health report also reminds readers of the NPAS 'firm commitment to eliminating ageism and aligns with the current Global Campaign to Combat Ageism led by the WHO'. (pg. 12)

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It is pleasing, on the one hand, to hear of Government's continued commitment to NPAS as a framework for positive ageing in Ireland. The Age Alliance would however question the report's claim that 'since 2013 there has been many advances made on the practical implementation of NPAS' (pg. 26). The Age Alliance would also like to highlight the following reflections on this 2022 report produced by Government:

Methodology: The methodology underpinning the report which relies on a combination of (1) stakeholder consultation, (2) examples of 'activity' understood to be relevant to positive ageing goals and (3) the listing of goals and objectives across a range of associated policies and strategies.

Identifying specific and disaggregated successes for a particular grouping in society can, of course, be challenging. Monitoring and assessing any set of policies requires a rigorous methodology so that stakeholders can assess how effective a given policy has proven.

Process and Outputs V Outcomes: The 2022 Ireland Report cites outputs in places where one would hope to discover outcomes. The Report cites examples of progress relevant to the goals of the Lisbon Declaration which include, among others, the listing of objectives set out in the National Volunteering Strategy 2021-2025, the launch of the 2019 Joint Department of Health and Department of Housing Policy Document (Housing Options for our Ageing Population) and the establishment by the Department of Transport of an Accessibility Consultative Committee (ACC).

Ten years following the launch of the NPAS, the presentation of policy goals, objectives and actions to address the issues facing older people as highlights of progress to date suggests an absence of specific, practical, and successful measures achieved for older people.

Willingness to confront troubling statistics: While it is attractive to focus on positive news, policymakers and stakeholders require evidence in order to create, implement and adapt policies. In several instances, the Ireland Report does not give sufficient emphasis to troubling statistics. For example;

Older people and mental health: The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA, 2019) found 78% of older adults who have evidence of depression, and 85% who have evidence of anxiety, do not have a doctor's diagnosis. Pre-pandemic, 10% of over 50s surveyed by TILDA reported clinically significant depressive symptoms. By 2021, this figure had more than doubled. 40% of the over-70s reported their mental health was 'worse' or 'much worse' since asked to cocoon.

Older people and loneliness: An EU-wide survey (European Commission, 2022) on loneliness found over 20% of respondents in Ireland reported feeling lonely most or all of the time, compared to the European average of 13%, and the lowest levels found in the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Croatia and Austria (all below 10%).

Older people and financial security: The Latest CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC 2022) data indicates that those aged 65+ were the only cohort to see increases across all three poverty rates between 2020 and 2021 – at risk of poverty (9.8% to 11.9%); deprivation (8.1% to 8.4%); and consistent poverty (1.0% to 2.5%). The situation is worse where an older person aged 65 or older is living alone. For this cohort, the at risk of poverty rate increased from 20.5% to 21.5%, deprivation increased from 10.6% to 12.1%, and consistent poverty increased from 2.2% to 4.3%.

The existence of the National Positive Ageing Strategy and the reaffirmation, by Government, of its importance to ageing policy is, of course, to be welcomed. It is difficult, however, with the absence of active implementation and monitoring plans to assess the progress of the current Strategy against outcomes. Any new or refreshed Strategy must therefore, at commencement, unequivocally link agreed governmental action and the achievement of these strategic outcomes.

Helpfully, the 2022 Departmental Report identifies four major challenges to address (pg. 36):

- The need for an interagency and whole of Government approach to ageing.
- Appropriate levels of funding being available for all services for older people.
- Fit for purpose housing options / designs for older persons.
- Tackling ageism.

The Alliance would strongly agree with this shortlist and would welcome the introduction of specific actions which pursue well defined outcomes in each of the four areas.

PRIORITY AREA 1: 'HEALTHY AGEING'

FOCUS: MENTAL HEALTH AND LONELINESS

- Prioritised by Government when framing the National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.
- Further relevant commitments included in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion **(2020)**, the Healthy Ireland strategic plan **(2021-2025)**, and the Programme for Government; Our Shared Future **(2020)** in the form of pledges 'To develop an implementation plan to deliver on the objectives of tackling loneliness and isolation'.
- As a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing a Sustainable Society for All Ages' **(2022)**, Ireland and other members States have pledged to "Promoting active and healthy ageing throughout life' and, in particular to, 'strengthening mental health and well-being, especially among older persons' and to 'adopt(ing) concrete measures to combat loneliness and social isolation among older persons'.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'HEALTHY AGEING' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'Healthy ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for physical, social and mental health to enable older people to take an active part in society without discrimination and to enjoy an independent and good quality of life'. **(NPAS, pg. 63)**
- Research (informing the development of the 2013 NPAS) 'has further found that loneliness results in adverse mental and physical health conditions, increasing the risks of depression and cognitive decline'. **(NPAS, pg. 63)**
- Loneliness, especially for those aged 50 or older, has potential consequences, including a 50% increased risk of dementia, 29% increased risk of heart disease, 32% increased risk of a stroke and a significant increase in risk of premature death from all causes. **(National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'HEALTHY AGEING' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'Older people considered the deterioration in their physical or mental health as the biggest threat to their wellbeing. As life expectancy increases, it becomes more important that the added years to life are accompanied by good health'. It was also noted that 'recent (2013) Irish research found a high prevalence of undiagnosed depression and anxiety in the older population'. **(NPAS, pg. 28)**

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'HEALTHY AGEING'

- '(To) Promote the development of opportunities for engagement and participation of people of all ages in a range of arts and cultural, spiritual, leisure, learning and physical activities in their local communities'. (National Goal 2: Participation) Areas for action included: 'Supports for community and voluntary sector to provide opportunities for participation by people as they age'. **(NPAS, 2013)**
- '(To) Prevent and reduce disability, chronic disease and premature mortality as people age by supporting the development and implementation of policies to reduce associated lifestyle factors'. (National Goal 2: Health). Areas for action included: 'Mental health (anxiety, depression, dementia) and mental capacity'. **(NPAS, 2013)**
- 'To develop an implementation plan to deliver on the objectives of tackling loneliness and isolation'. **(Various Govt. publications)**
- **The Healthy Ireland strategy** (2013, Department of Health), set out a vision of a healthy Ireland, 'where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing to their full potential, where wellbeing is valued and supported at every level of society and is everyone's responsibility'. It also makes a commitment to improving 'partnerships, strategies and initiatives that aim to support older people to maintain, improve or manage their physical and mental wellbeing by addressing risk factors and promoting protective factors to support lifelong health and wellbeing'. **The National Physical Activity Plan (2016)** identifies older persons as a target group and Sport Ireland fund Age & Opportunity's Active programme. **'Sharing the Vision - A Mental Health Policy for Everyone** (2020) does not identify older people as a priority target group.
- The **Irish National Dementia Strategy** was published in 2014.
- **A review of Mental Health Services for Older People** was conducted by the Mental Health Commission in 2020.

STATUS OR PROGRESS ON 'HEALTHY AGEING' AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Only 33% of adults aged over 65 and 18% of adults aged over 75 are meeting the National Physical Activity Guidelines. **(Healthy Ireland Summary Report, 2019)**
- Approximately 15% of adults aged 60 and over have experience of a brain health issue and/or mental illness, including; depression, dementia, anxiety, alcohol dependence, and schizophrenia. **(Mental Health Commission, 2020)**
- EU-wide survey on loneliness found over 20% of respondents in Ireland reported feeling lonely most or all of the time, compared to the European average of 13%, and the lowest levels found in the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Croatia and Austria (all below 10%) **(European Commission, 2022)**.

- The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) found 78% of older adults who have evidence of depression, and 85% who have evidence of anxiety, do not have a doctor's diagnosis. **(TILDA, 2019)**
- Pre-pandemic, 10% of over 50s surveyed by TILDA reported clinically significant depressive symptoms. By 2021, this figure had more than doubled. 40% of the over-70s reported their mental health was 'worse' or 'much worse' since asked to cocoon. **(TILDA, 2021)**
- Almost 10 per cent of older adults are socially isolated and one third feel lonely some of the time. **(TILDA, 2019)**
- More than three quarters (76.6%) of the loneliest third of older adults had clinically significant depressive symptomology. Loneliness was associated with significantly poorer quality of life. **(TILDA, 2019)**

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Older people at risk of social isolation or loneliness must be provided with additional supports to engage (or re-engage post Covid-19) with their communities, in collaboration with experts and the community and voluntary sector.
- Mental Health Services for Older People teams, which are only staffed to 54% of what is recommended (Mental Health Commission), should be fully resourced to address access and variability across the country.
- Provide €5million in funding to support the development and implementation of the long-awaited loneliness action plan.
- Older people should be named as a priority in all physical activity and mental health policies.
- Recreational public spaces and physical activity programmes should be appropriate, affordable, accessible and welcoming to people of all ages.
- Support full implementation of the Sláintecare programme.

PRIORITY AREA 2: 'HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES'

'HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES'

- Prioritised by Government when framing the National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**. 'Government policy is to support older people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Home Helps and Home Care Packages are critical to supporting this Government policy'. **(NPAS, pg. 31)**
- Further relevant commitments included in the Programme for Government; Our Shared Future **(2020)** in the form of pledge to 'Increase the number of specialist palliative care beds countrywide over the next five years, ensuring that there will be a hospice serving every region in the country'.
- Commitment in the Programme for Government to publish, implement and invest in the new Palliative Care Policy for Adults to update the 2001 policy. This is to reflect the many developments in end-of life care and international best practice.
- As a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration¹ on Ageing a Sustainable Society for All Ages' **(2022)** Ireland and other members States have pledged to 'Addressing the growing need for adequate palliative care services through their integration into the continuum of care and support, and ensuring an end of life with dignity'.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Research (informing the development of the 2013 NPAS) found that; 'Older people are among the largest consumers of health and personal social services in Ireland' and that 'the most pressing effects of ageing are likely to be on demands for a range of community-based health and personal social services'. **(NPAS, pg. 31)**
- Research (informing the development of the 2013 NPAS) 'found that over two-thirds of Irish people expressed a wish to die at home if at all possible. However, of those aged 65 or older who die in Ireland every year, the majority die in acute hospital settings (often in multi-bedded wards) and in private and public long-stay care facilities'. **(NPAS, pg. 32)**

¹ The seven-member organisations of the Alliance are Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, ALONE, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Irish Hospice Foundation, The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and Third Age.

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'HEALTH AND PERSONAL SERVICES' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- A 2023 report from Irish Hospice Foundation "Dying Well at Home" presents the findings of focus group discussions, which included older people. The report found that facilitating a good death at home was dependent on adequate, timely information and support for family/carers. (Dying-Well-at-Home-Report-Irish-Hospice-Foundation.pdf (hospicefoundation.ie))²
- Telling it like it is – Combatting Ageism 2023 which highlighted that one in four adults aged 50+ reported experiencing discrimination in health settings (**pg. 10**).
- In 'Towards an Age-Friendly Ireland: Ageism and Older People in 2018', Active Retirement Ireland found that 42% had direct experience of health-related ageism.

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'HEALTH AND PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES'

- '(To) Promote the development and delivery of a continuum of high-quality care services and supports that are responsive to the changing needs of people as they age and at end of life. (National Goal 2: Health). Areas for action included: Quality community care services; Access to and discharge from acute settings; End of life care and palliative care'. (**NPAS, 2013**)
- **COVID-19 Nursing Homes Expert Panel Examination of Measures to 2021** acknowledges that while often overlooked by the health system and the communities they serve, nursing homes are essential to the continuum of care across the life cycle, particularly in times of crisis and it makes recommendations to address this in the future.
- **Sláintecare Implementation Strategy and Action Plan** and its references to older people, home care and health e.g. through the Integrated Care Programmes for Older People.

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Hospitals were consistently the most common place of death across the six-year period 2013-2018, accounting for approximately 40% of deaths in the State. (**Dying-and-Death-in-Ireland-what-do-we-routinely-measure-how-can-we-improve-2021.pdf (hospicefoundation.ie)**)³

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Publish the new National Adult Palliative Care Policy alongside agreed multi-annual investment and action plan with timeline of implementation. This policy will be critical in further supporting the development of generalist and community palliative care and delivering on a work force strategy for adult palliative care.

² <https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Dying-Well-at-Home-Report-Irish-Hospice-Foundation.pdf>

³ <https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Dying-and-Death-in-Ireland-what-do-we-routinely-measure-how-can-we-improve-2021.pdf>

PRIORITY AREA 3: 'CARERS'

'CARERS'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.
- The Programme for Government; Our Shared Future **(2020)** also pledged to establish a 'Commission on Care' and a Statutory Homecare scheme.
- The **National Carers Strategy** was published in 2012. The Programme for Government (2020) commits to reviewing and updating it and to developing a Carers Guarantee' proposal that will provide a core basket of services to carers across the country, regardless of where they live.
- As a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing a Sustainable Society for All Ages' **(2022)** Ireland and other members States have pledged to 'Ensuring access to long-term care and support for carers and families'. The Declaration commits signatories to 'Developing, regularly updating, and implementing national and subnational plans to address the provision of quality health, social, and long-term care services to ensure participation, dignity, and quality of life'.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'CARERS' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'Government policy is to support older people to live in dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Home Helps and Home Care Packages are critical to both supporting this Government policy and older people's own preferred wishes to remain in their own homes. These services also reduce pressures in the wider care system'. **(NPAS, pg. 31)**
- 'Across all care locations, of key importance is the availability of care staff who have the necessary skills to address the specific health and communication needs of older patients'. **(NPAS, pg. 32)**
- CSO figures, from 2022, report that 15% of all unpaid carers were aged 65 years or over and providing care to one or more persons who have an age related or chronic condition (approximately 46,000 family carers aged over 65). **(Carers - CSO - Central Statistics Office, 2022)** ⁴

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'CARERS' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'While there is some evidence of positive impacts of caring, the health and wellbeing of carers can be adversely affected by their caring role'. **(NPAS, pg. 33)**

⁴ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp4/census2022profile4-disabilityhealthandcarers/carers/>

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'CARERS'

- '(To) Promote the development and delivery of a continuum of high-quality care services and supports that are responsive to the changing needs of people as they age and at end of life. (National Goal 2: Health). Areas for action included: Quality community care services; Access to and discharge from acute settings; End of life care and palliative care'. **(NPAS, 2013)**
- The committed to 'Commission on Care' is to be 'tasked with examining care and supports for older people'. **(Programme for Government, 2020)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- 76% of people over 85 reported a disabling condition to 'any extent' and 48% to a 'great extent' in Census 2022. These figures highlight the intersection of ageing and disability. (Census 2022)
- Although funding and hours of support provided through the home support scheme have increased in recent years, a statutory scheme has not yet been introduced.
- A 2018 Review of Health Demand and Capacity Requirements in Ireland to 2031, which was conducted based on lower population growth estimates than actually transpired, forecasted a minimum of 120 per cent increase in demand for home support from 2016 to 2031, but such demand at that level had already been reached by 2018 and was expected to increase further across the period to 2031. (Health Service Capacity Review 2018)
- More than 7,800 people experienced unnecessary and costly delayed discharges from hospital in 2022 due to a failure to plan and align community services with hospital need, such as step-down beds and home care packages, including more than 1,000 delayed discharges directly linked to home care shortages, which is directly contributing to the ongoing trolley crisis.
- Assessing the implementation of the Programme for Government 'Our Shared Future' from the perspective of family carers, in 2021 Family Carers Ireland found that the progress had been regressive in terms of reviewing and updating the National Carers' Strategy—(family-carers-ireland-family-carer-scorecard-2021.pdf (familycarers.ie))⁵

⁵ <https://www.familycarers.ie/media/2370/family-carers-ireland-family-carer-scorecard-2021.pdf>

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- ◆ Demand for home support is only going to increase in the coming years, on top of the current significant unmet demand for the service.
 - ◆ Significantly increase funding to the Home Support Scheme, in order to account for the increasing demand for care and the need to provide better pay and conditions for care workers.
 - ◆ Ensure that not-for-profit home care providers are supported to continue to deliver the service. In 2022, more than 60% of total home support hours nationwide were delivered by Section 39 not-for-profit and other non-HSE providers.
 - ◆ Provide a clear commitment to an increase in both the number of hours of support being provided, and increased funding for the service. As the unit cost per hour of home care is increasing, any budget related increases in funding may not represent an increase in hours provided but simply maintenance of the current scheme. Review and update the National Carers Strategy (2012).
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PRIORITY AREA 4: 'EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT'

'EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT'

- Prioritised by Government when framing the National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**
- Programme for Government **(2020)** committed to develop a pension solution for family carers to recognise their important contribution and work.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'Employment circumstances and savings in early and middle age influence financial security in old age and healthy lifestyle choices in early life affect health status in later life'. **(NPAS, pg. 13)**
- '...establishing flexible retirement arrangements, by forming a working environment that is adapted to the needs of all generations, through continuous education and training, as well as by promoting positive images of older employees and anti-discrimination policies'. **(NPAS, pg. 17)**
- 'Older people should be enabled to continue with income generating work for as long as they want and for as long as they are able to do so productively'. **(NPAS, pg. 24)**
- Research on the impact of an ageing population on public finances found that targeted policies designed to boost employment for older workers could have a pronounced benefit in terms of ensuring fiscal sustainability'. In addition, this research found that scenarios 'in which there were no further policy responses, the impact of population ageing would be a significant increase... in the debt-to-GNI* ratio by 2070'. **(Department of Finance, 2018)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- There is evidence that longer working lives have beneficial effects on individuals' physical and psychological wellbeing. **(NPAS, pg. 24)**
- 'I had been working all my life. I was so upset when I had to retire at 65...I would have loved to kept going. I felt I had a lot still to offer but my contract meant that I had to stop working. Apart from the sense of fulfilment you get through work, money is so much tighter now as I no longer have a salary'. **(Telling It Like It Is', The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, workshop participant, 2021.)**

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'EMPLOYMENT AND RETIREMENT'

- '(To) Develop a wide range of employment options (including options for gradual retirement) for people as they age and identify any barriers (legislative, attitudinal, custom and practice) to continued employment and training opportunities for people as they age'. (National Goal 1: Participation). **(NPAS, 2013)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- The number of retirees has increased significantly in recent years, and almost doubled in the twenty years between 2002 and 2022. As of 2022, there are 657,790 retirees **(CSO, 2023)**
- Roughly 3 in 10 expect to have to work until 70 based on their current financial situation **(Royal London Ireland, 2023)**
- 11.2% of people aged 65+ are among the labour force, an increase from 9.9% in 2016 and 8.9% in 2011. One in five workers aged 65+ are working in agriculture **(CSO, 2022)**
- The Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) experienced a 176% increase (514 claims) in age-related discrimination claims in 2022, as private employers have loosely interpreted the Code of Practice 2015 in order to institute a mandatory retirement age.
- 40% of employees with no supplementary pension cover cited affordability as the main reason and 57% cited the State Pension as the expected source of income in retirement. **(The Pension Coverage 2022 Report)**
- Re; Continued Employment and training opportunities –A high proportion of older workers (women in particular) feel that their prospects are 'poor': 50% of those aged 50 or over. Older workers generally feel less employable however, improving working conditions may help keep older workers in employment. **(The 6th European Working Conditions Survey, 2015)**
- Extended Working Life Policies (i.e., increasing state pension age to 66) has unequally affected different sectors of the population and has been difficult for certain groups such as those in physically demanding jobs, low-income jobs or precarious employment.
- Inadequate State Pension: Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023, the Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025 and Report of the Commission on Pensions states that 34% of Average Earnings should be the baseline for the State Pension rate - which has still not been delivered.

- The number of private renters aged 65+ has increased by 83% since the Census in 2016, and has more than doubled since 2011. The evidence is showing more and more people retire now without owning a home and that paying rent on a pension alone is simply not possible. Census figures also show significant increases since 2016 in over 65s who are still paying off a loan or mortgage on their home (19.8%) at a time in their life when their income drops and health expenses increase. **(Central Statistics Office (CSO))**

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- With the majority of employees believing that they will have to work longer than ever before, now is the time for employers to act and prepare for a more age-diverse workplace.
- Remove discrepancies within the 2014 Code of Practice (Protected Disclosures Act) or introduce legislation to prevent private employers from enforcing mandatory retirement on capable employees.
- Create employment, upskilling and training opportunities for ageing and older workers.
- Improve working conditions for older workers, promote and provide options to continue working beyond State pension age.
- Develop awareness campaigns around retirement options and introduce diverse and gradual retirement plans to support people to work for longer.
- Particular attention needs to be paid to the capacity of people in physically demanding or high-pressure jobs to work longer in policies concerned with extending working lives (i.e., increasing retirement age). Personal choice, nature of employment, contract type and health should also be taken into account.

PRIORITY AREA 5: 'EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING'

'EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING'

- Prioritised by Government when framing the National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Research (informing the development of the 2013 NPAS) 'identified a link between lower levels of education and poor health, and that taking part in some form of educational activity helps keep body and mind healthy and active. There is evidence of a positive relationship between education and the economic, social, physical and mental wellbeing of individuals. Lifelong learning also contributes to personal development, self-esteem and confidence. It has been proposed that, as the number of older people increases and people live longer, developing and implementing strategies for maintaining cognitive health should be a priority for both individuals and societies. On-going education and training are also vital in a world of constant change and development. It is of note that the share of adult learners (aged 40 years and over) in Ireland is one of the lowest in the EU at less than 0.5 per cent compared to, for example, Belgium, Finland and Portugal with rates of 5 per cent'. **(NPAS, pg. 25)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI) research cites evidence that "Older adult learners often report increased confidence and mental stimulation the latter of which is strongly associated with the maintenance of good physical health". Participation in learning also provides intrinsic rewards: enhancing quality of life, increasing motivation, improving coping skills, and aiding independence and social connectedness. **(HaPAI, Department of Health, 2018)**

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING'

- '(To) Promote access (in terms of affordability, transport availability, accessibility of venue) to a wide range of opportunities for continued learning and education for older people'. (National Goal 1: Participation). **(NPAS, 2013)**
- Adult Literacy for Life Strategy launched in 2021 'to create an Ireland where every adult has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully engage in society and realise their full potential'. Older adults were identified as a 'potential vulnerable cohort' and were to benefit from targeted funding. **(Adult Literacy for Life Strategy, 2021)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Over 200,000 Irish people over 65 have primary school as their highest level of education. There is a lack of data available in both Ireland and Europe about lifelong learning due to a reliance on workforce statistics generally ending at 65.
- Funding for many Irish and European adult education programmes ends at age 64, thus depriving many older people the opportunity to access such programmes (Aontas 2022) Furthermore;
- Ireland lags behind the European average in lifelong learning with a participation rate of approximately 8.9% prior to Covid-19. The EU has set a target of 15% of adults in Lifelong Learning by 2020. Ireland plans to reach this 15% target by 2025. (Aontas)
- Participants to the HaPAI research into 'Barriers to Lifelong Learning' (2018) 'readily identified' barriers including 'access, cost, no available courses, care and home responsibilities, and poor health. Dispositional barriers reported by older adults also emphasise the enduring impact of low literacy, low self-esteem, feeling too old, and not placing any value on lifelong learning'.
- More than one third (38%) of adult learners in Ireland have low motivation to learn and either low or no engagement in everyday reading, writing, numeracy, and ICT skills practice. These adults are more likely to be older, not engage in non-formal education, and have poorer health and social outcomes. (HaPAI, Department of Health)

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Government to make learning in later life a priority. Older people should be considered a specific target group by all service providers offering learning opportunities both locally and nationally. Service providers should pay particular attention to attracting and supporting disadvantaged and marginalised older people to participate in learning activities addressing intrinsic and hidden barriers.
- Older people should be represented directly on the various bodies that carry forward lifelong learning proposals to policy makers.
- A reorientation of public policy on lifelong learning, with a shift in focus away from the economic priorities to the goal of promoting an inclusive society. Lifelong learning should not be limited to the work-based lifespan but should recognise the learning needs and potential contribution of older learners.
- Increase participation through awareness campaigns highlighting the benefits to older people of engaging in lifelong learning.
- Increase digital literacy and participation among older people.
- Address the needs of older people in the work force to up-skill, particularly in relation to Information and Communication Technologies.
- Improve data collection about education and lifelong learning among older people.

PRIORITY AREA 6: 'VOLUNTEERING'

'VOLUNTEERING'

- Prioritised by Government when framing the National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'VOLUNTEERING' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'The positive association between voluntary work and wellbeing has been widely established. Many studies have found that engaging in voluntary work in later life is a strong predictor of better self-rated health, functioning, physical activity, life satisfaction, and with decreases in depression, hypertension, and mortality among older people. In addition to health benefits, volunteering can enhance social support networks, increase social status, and reinforce knowledge and skills. Volunteering also provides a role identity and sense of purpose for those retired from paid work'.

(NPAS, pg. 26)

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'VOLUNTEERING' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'I worked right up until retirement and then I was at a total loss about what am I going to do. I didn't want to wake up in the morning and not have anything to do, so volunteering saved my life'. **(Josephine', National Volunteering Strategy, pg. 19)**.
- When asked why people who volunteered did so, the most common reason given was 'they enjoyed it (28% of men and 41% of women). The second most common reason was so that they could use their skills (23% men, 23% women) and the third was so they could contribute something useful (15% men, 15% women). Other reasons included: Because I am needed (10% men, 7% women), to keep fit (9% men, 4% women) and because I feel obliged to (9% men, 6% women). **(TILDA Wave 5, Chapter 6. Pg 119.)**

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'VOLUNTEERING'

- '(To) Promote the concept of active citizenship and the value of volunteering and encourage people of all ages to become more involved in and to contribute to their own communities'. **(NPAS, Objective 1.3)**
- (To) Deliver engagement programmes aimed specifically at potential volunteers reaching retirement and those over 55. **(National Volunteering Strategy 2021 – 2025, pg. 39)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Those over 70 years of age provide childcare to over 131,000 grandchildren and financial assistance to over 128,000 offspring **(TILDA, 2020)**.
- The most up-to-date research carried out by the Central Statistics Office dates back to 2013 which showed that 40% of volunteer work, at that time, was carried out by persons aged 55+ **(CSO, QNHS, 2013)**.
- CSO data shows that 17% of people aged 65+ volunteer, and 5.4% are carers. **(CSO)**
- There are no known engagement programmes to support the recruitment of older volunteers in place as of yet.
- 14% of volunteers included on Volunteer Irelands (iVOL) database were aged 50+ **(2016)**.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Provide more extensive and accessible volunteering opportunities to enable older persons to participate.
- Develop an Active and Healthy Ageing Ambassadors programme so as to promote volunteering and active citizenship.
- Consider information campaigns which specifically target older persons with opportunities and information on how to get involved. These campaigns must go beyond digital or social media campaigns to reach audiences who do not have digital access.
- Develop a volunteering policy to help protect and promote the inclusion of older adults.

PRIORITY AREA 7: 'CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION'

'CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION'

- Prioritised by Government when framing the National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Despite referencing the UN Principles for Older People's premise under self-fulfilment that older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society, the NPAS is instrumental in its underpinning of cultural and social participation as a goal. 'Fewer social networks are associated with a number of adverse health outcomes including obesity, cardiovascular disease, mental health problems and increased rates of mortality. In fact, research has found that the health risks associated with lower levels of social integration are comparable to those of smoking, high blood pressure and obesity. Engagement through activity can help to maintain quality of life, promote social contact, combat loneliness and isolation and maintain people as active members of society'. **(NPAS, pg. 26/7)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'Participation in a range of cultural and physical activities was identified by (older adult) respondents as a factor in maintaining health, mobility and motivation, and there was particular value attached to taking up new activities including computer related or recreational social activities'. **(Older and Bolder submission to inform NPAS 2013)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- Promote the development of opportunities for engagement and participation of people of all ages in a range of arts and cultural, spiritual, leisure, learning and physical activities in their local communities. **(NPAS, Objective 1.4)**
- Ireland adopted the **2022 Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing** which states that the empowerment of older persons and the promotion of their full participation are essential elements for active ageing. For older persons, appropriate sustainable social support should be provided.

- Ireland is fully affiliated with the **World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities**. Social participation is one of the Age Friendly domains which are aligned with the goals of the NPAS and the goals and actions of the Healthy Ageing Framework.

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Lack of understanding and recognition that participation in the cultural life of one's community is a right. **(Age & Opportunity 2021, 2023)**.
- No specific reference to older people in the current Arts Council Strategy Making Great Art Work (2015).
- The majority of the older adult population of Ireland is socially integrated but approximately 6% of women and 7% of men are socially isolated. **(TILDA, 2019)**
- Almost one third of adults aged 50+ in Ireland experienced emotional loneliness at least some of the time and 7.0% often felt lonely. Participants aged 75 years and older were more likely than younger participants to report being moderately lonely. **(TILDA, 2019)**
- 46% of people aged over 74 never use the internet which can reduce opportunities for social inclusion in an increasingly digital society. **(CSO, 2021)**

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Recognition of cultural and social participation as a right rather than a means to a healthier life.
- Recognition that 'older adults continue to make valuable contributions to society, with many characterised by active citizenship and participation in the lives of their families and their communities'. **(TILDA, 2017)**
- Older people to be prioritised in strategies to promote cultural and social participation.
- Greater investment in the development of accessible and age friendly public spaces, buildings, toilets, transport and activities.
- Extend eligibility of personal assistance services to persons over 65 years who need extra support to enable participation.
- Increase digital literacy and participation among older people.

PRIORITY AREA 8: 'TRANSPORT'

'TRANSPORT'

- Prioritised by Government when framing the National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'TRANSPORT' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Mobility is a key determinant of an individual's ability to access services, whether social or practical, and to engage in community activities. **(NPAS, Pg. 27)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF TRANSPORT IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- One in five adults aged 75 years and over and living in rural areas (19%) indicate that the lack of local transport facilities affects their lifestyle. 12-18% of the same age group indicate that reduced frequency of driving or no longer driving affects their ability to socialise, attend business-related appointments and health/social care appointments. **(TILDA 2017, Key Findings.)⁶**

Older adults driving, being driven by a partner/spouse and taking public transport are associated with better mental health, higher levels of social participation and greater social networks compared to those being driven by family, friends or taking taxis. The greatest benefits are observed for those driving themselves. **(TILDA, 2019)**

- 'Older people, in particular, experience barriers related to lack of accessibility to the physical environment, insufficient provision of information and inadequate public transport services' **Sammer et al 2013**. (Sammer, G., Uhlmann, T., Unbehau, W., Millonig, A., Mandl, B., Dangschat, J., & Mayr, R., 2013). Identification of mobility-impaired persons and analysis of their travel behavior and needs. Transportation Research Record, 2320, 46–54.

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'TRANSPORT'

- 'Enable people as they age 'to get out and about' through the provision of accessible, affordable, and flexible transport systems in both rural and urban areas'. **(NPAS, Objective 1.5)**
- To provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs' **(Local Link Rural Transport Programme, Strategic Plan, 2018 to 2022)**

6 https://tilda.tcd.ie/publications/reports/pdf/Report_TransportPatterns.pdf

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- All aged 66 and over, living permanently in Ireland, can avail of the Free Travel Scheme.
- Only 1 in 10 adults relied on public transport due to limited bus routes, inconvenient schedules and low frequency of services. **(TILDA, 2017)**
- Online pre-booking systems, which incur an extra cost, have left Irish Senior Citizens Parliament (ISCP) members without guaranteed seats on public bus services. Pre-booked tickets are taken first, leaving those with no digital access or the funds to pre-book a seat online, without a guaranteed seat. **(Testimonies from ISCP Members)**
- The Travel Assistance Scheme is only available in Dublin and Cork City.
- There has been a substantial increase in funding for Local Link services in recent years in keeping with increased demand for regular transport services in rural areas for age 65+. **(Our Rural Future)**
- The average distance to a public bus stop in 'highly rural/remote areas' is, at 7.1 km, 17 times longer than the average distance of 0.4 km in cities. The average distance to a train station in 'highly rural/remote areas' is 47.3 km, 14 times longer than in 'cities' where it is 3.3 km. These figures must inform investment in a connected and accessible public transport system. **(Social Justice Matters, 2023).**

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Consider governance of pre-booking systems for bus companies and the provision of alternative methods to pre-book for those without digital access and those who may lack the capability.
- Provide affordable and accessible transport options for remote dwellers who are located a far distance from the nearest bus or train stop e.g. subsidised taxi fares or specialised minibus services.
- Increase availability of the Travel Assistance Scheme beyond Dublin and Cork.
- Further develop an integrated public transport system connecting more remote areas to major urban centres.

PRIORITY AREA 9: 'FINANCIAL SECURITY'

'FINANCIAL SECURITY'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.
- Further relevant commitments included in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion **(2020)** in the form of a pledge to implement benchmarking of the pension by 2021.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'FINANCIAL SECURITY' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Studies of quality of life across a number of countries show that a person's level of income and material resources strongly affects their overall satisfaction with life and wellbeing. **(NPAS, pg. 34)**
- The Real Financial Impact of Bereavement Report by Irish Hospice Foundation in 2022 identified widowed pensioners as being particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of bereavement, as the loss of a pension can impact the household income significantly. **(The-Real-Financial-Impact-of-Bereavement-Report-October-2022.pdf, hospicefoundation.ie)** ⁷
- High Out of pocket spend currently in Ireland on health, access to healthcare does just not create financial hardship **(Slaintecare)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL SECURITY IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- In a 2011 interview with The Irish Times newspaper Ireland's most famous broadcaster Gay Byrne, whose pension was wiped out', said he was 'frightened for people of my generation...they have introduced this constant, low-level anxiety into our lives, which we could well do without'. **(Carswell, Irish Times 4 November 2011)**

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'FINANCIAL SECURITY'

- '(To) Provide income and other supports to enable people as they age to enjoy an acceptable standard of living. (National Goal 3: Security.) Areas for action included: Income supports (pensions, supplementary welfare benefits) for people as they age. Poverty reduction.' **(NPAS, 2013)**

⁷ <https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/The-Real-Financial-Impact-of-Bereavement-Report-October-2022.pdf>

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- More than 165,000 older people experience income poverty. 1 in 3 people aged 65+ living alone experience income poverty, the highest rate of all households, and equivalent to approx. 63,000 older people nationwide. **(CSO SILC, 2023)**.
- People aged 65+ living alone had the lowest household income in 2022, at €16,840. **(CSO SILC, 2023)**
- Data indicates that those aged 65+ were the only cohort to see increases across all three poverty rates between 2020 and 2021 – at risk of poverty (9.8% to 11.9%); deprivation (8.1% to 8.4%); and consistent poverty (1.0% to 2.5%). Situation is worse where an older person aged 65 or older is living alone. For this cohort, the at risk of poverty rate increased from 20.5% to 21.5%, deprivation increased from 10.6% to 12.1%, and consistent poverty increased from 2.2% to 4.3%. **(Latest CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC))**
- No visible progress or Departmental update, as of end December 2023, in respect of Government pledge to implement benchmarking of the pension by 2021. Ireland is now the only country in the eurozone without a system of benchmarking the state pension.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- While Budget 2024 increases to the State pension are welcome, they will not go far enough to reduce poverty rates among older people living alone who are in poverty now.
- Implement benchmarking of State Pension and increase Pension at a minimum in line with inflation, to prevent further increase in poverty rates among older people.
- There is a need to review communication about the Additional Needs Payments and have a specific campaign that highlights the financial supports more commonly associated with older people. This would include information about the supports available for people to cover the significant costs they may incur following a bereavement. Awareness and understanding of the payment is low and in its current form would warrant further review.

PRIORITY AREA 10: 'HOUSING'

'HOUSING'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.
- Further relevant commitments included in Housing Options for our Ageing Population **(Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health, 2019)** in the form of a pledge to advance a programme of 40 strategic actions to progress housing options for older people.
- Furthermore, Ireland is a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing 'a Sustainable Society for All Ages' **(2022)** which pledges members States to 'Investing in the creation of more age-friendly environments by implementing innovative housing solutions...enabling them to age safely in a place of their choice'.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'HOUSING' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'Housing is not just about a roof over one's head. It is a place from which a person can access services, foster social networks and support family bonds. Good quality housing is critical to the promotion of independence and the attainment of a good quality of life. However, the quality of older people's housing can be poorer than that of the general population'. **(NPAS, pg. 35)**
- 'Furthermore, older people may have changing physical, mental and medical needs that can coincide with the ageing process, which may deem accommodation unsuitable, particularly from an accessibility perspective'. **(NPAS, pg. 36)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF HOUSING IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'Housing is at the root of all my concerns – over and above my illness.' (female interviewee, aged 55 years and recovering from cancer).
- 'All of a sudden it's dawned on me. I am 70. I am getting older. It's the ageing part of it. That's why I feel so vulnerable. I see myself living in rental for the rest of my life. Unless the Council came up with something.' (male interviewee, aged 70) **(Double Deficit: Older and Ageing Persons in the Irish Private Rental Sector, A Threshold and ALONE Report, 2023, pg.54)**

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'HOUSING'

- '(To) Facilitate older people to live in well-maintained, affordable, safe and secure homes, which are suitable to their physical and social needs. (NPAS, Objective 3.2) Areas for action included: Housing grants for older people. Lifetime adaptable housing and universal design. Alternative housing options (i.e. social housing, sheltered housing; retirement villages). Assistive Technologies. Fuel Poverty.' **(NPAS, 2013)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- A significant number of people aged 55 and over experience issues with their housing. 234,848 people aged 55 and over are experiencing housing facility problems, 283,633 are experiencing problems with housing maintenance, and 113,453 are experiencing problems with housing conditions. (2023)
- A 2023 review by ALONE into Housing Adaptation Grants across the country has highlighted overspending, significant waiting lists, and difficulty in accessing funding for older people and people with disabilities. Point in time information released to ALONE under the Freedom of Information Act by Local Authorities showed that several Local Authorities could not meet the needs of all their applicants. Furthermore:
 - There were more than 3,500 older people and people with disabilities on waiting lists for housing adaptation grants in the 26 local authority areas for which responses could be collated. However, this likely underestimates the extent of the waiting lists because some Local Authorities state they 'do not keep waiting lists'. Others, such as Louth County Council, had to close applications for a period in 2023 because they were significantly oversubscribed.
 - Some local authorities had overspent or reached their annual budget for the grants by August. Monaghan County Council had overspent their annual budget by €522,715, while Meath County Council had overspent by €300,000.
- There has been a drop in home ownership among older people aged 65+ since the last Census, from 87% to 83% **(CSO, 2023)**.
- As of December 2023, 190 older people are in emergency accommodation. This is an increase from 77 in 2014 (Department of Housing, 2023)
- The number of older people living in social housing from local authorities has increased by 38%. People aged 60+ now make up almost one in three (29%) of all those in social housing rented from their Local Authority or a voluntary body. This is up from one in four (24.6%) in 2016 **(CSO, 2023)**

- The number of people aged 70+ on the social housing waiting list in 2022 increased to over 2,000 for the first time. **(Summary of Social Housing Assessments, 2022)**
- Those aged 65+ renting from a private landlord are likely to be spending more than 35% of their disposable income on rent, are more likely to be living alone, and more likely to be in receipt of rental assistance. **(CSO, 2021)**
- The complex process of applying for a Home Adaptation Grant can prevent people from completing and applying for the grant. In addition, grant amounts are too low.
- The number and value of grants issued through the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme more than halved between 2010 and 2016. **(Housing Choices for Older People in Ireland – Time for Action, 2018)**
- 8% of people aged 65+ living alone were unable to keep their home adequately warm in 2022 representing a doubling in numbers since 2021. **(CSO publication on Poverty and Deprivation)**
- The Inter Departmental Implementation Group (Departments of Housing and Health) has, as of 2022, concluded its reporting on the progress of the implementation of the Statement, 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population', though several of the actions identified have not yet been completed or meaningfully advanced.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Significantly increase funding for Housing Adaptation Grants by a minimum of €85m.
- Commit to a minimum of 25% of all new builds for social housing to be developed to age-friendly and universal design standards.
- Develop and fund a programme of strategic capital investment in care and support for older people, including the likes of Housing with Supports, to be delivered in line with demographic projections.
- Deliver the €10m fund to support people experiencing energy poverty, committed to in the Action Plan to Combat Energy Poverty.
- Adapt the Housing Adaptation Grants scheme so that the grants cover 100% of the costs of the work for people in financial hardship; and for only the income of the older person and their spouse to be included when calculating household income and eligibility for the grants.
- Provide for 'decluttering' and 'deep cleaning' to be included as potential supports that can be funded through the Housing Aid for Older People scheme for people living in hoarding situations.

PRIORITY AREA 11: 'THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT'

'THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'Many older people tend to shop locally, use local public facilities such as libraries and parks and participate in local social and recreation activities. Planning, designing and building local environments that are safe and accessible to older people are, therefore, vital to supporting them to live in their own homes and local communities. Older people who live in inaccessible environments are less likely to go outdoors, and therefore, may be more prone to isolation, depression, reduced fitness and mobility problems'. **(NPAS, Pg. 36)**
- Urbanisation is one of the most significant global trends of the 21st century. Urban environments, infrastructures, facilities and services, depending how they are planned and constructed, can prevent or enable access, participation and inclusion of members of society. **(United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Disability)**
- Isolation has a negative impact on health, and so tackling it is crucial. Small changes can make a difference in this regard. Older people are less likely to drive, preferring public transport or walking. The average person over 65 can walk at a speed of 3km/hr. At aged 80 that reduces to 2km/hr, compared with the average for a working aged person of 4.8km/hr. Reducing distances between transport stops, shops, benches, trees for shade, public toilets and improving pavements and increasing the time allowed to cross roads all encourage older people to be part of the urban environment. **(Shaping Ageing Cities, Arup)**
- In 'Shaping Ageing Cities', a report developed by Arup, HelpAge International, Intel and Systematica, it concluded that architects can design enabling cities for older people by guaranteeing accessibility, proximity, diversity, enabling social infrastructure, providing safe and secure public spaces, and developing affordable and adaptable housing.⁸

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- Perceptions of unsafety in the surrounding environment generate feelings of helplessness and fear and directly or indirectly increase the perceptions of suffering and mental stress. **(Robinette, 2016).**
 - People who perceived lower community safety had more health problems 10 years later than those perceiving more community safety. **(Robinette, 2016).**
-

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO THE 'BUILT ENVIRONMENT'

- Support the design and development of age friendly public spaces, transport and buildings. **(NPAS, Objective 3.3)**
 - Ensure that developments (and specifically those for older people) are constructed in areas that are close to essential services, promoting the use of brownfield sites and explore the optimum locations that would lend themselves to becoming 'age friendly neighbourhoods'. **(Housing Options for our Ageing Population, Action 5.9)**
 - Issue planning guidelines for the development of residential care homes and primary care centres to ensure that they are appropriately designed and located in areas with access to transport and amenities. **(Housing Options for our Ageing Population, Action 4.12)**
 - Continue to support social engagement opportunities to ensure that all older people have access to the wide range of existing services in place within communities such as libraries, amenities, shops and social services **(Housing Options for our Ageing Population, Action 5.10)**
-

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Although multiple positive actions have been identified in this area, implementation of these has been piecemeal and access to the built environment is far from universal.
- Section 28 Guidelines were not issued for the development of residential care homes and primary care centres, as per Housing Options Action 2.12. Access to amenities such as libraries is reported to have been significantly improved as per Housing Options Action 5.10, although this section has not been updated on the Age-Friendly Ireland website as of end October 2023.

- Section 25 of the Disability Act 2005 says that a public body shall ensure that its public buildings are accessible to people with disabilities where possible. An Operational Review of the Effectiveness of Section 25 of the Disability Act, carried out by the National Disability Authority and published in 2019, found that ‘Overall, the feedback suggested that in general, many public buildings remain difficult to access and to use, for older people and people with disabilities. Feedback suggested that the accessibility of some public buildings for the participants in the focus groups remains below expectations; unpredictable, stressful and alienating. In addition, participants reported that there are widely varying levels of accessibility across public buildings.’⁹
- An extensive consultation by the Irish Wheelchair Association found in 2020 that 77% of people with physical disabilities have poor or no access to public spaces and amenities because of issues with pavements, parking, pedestrian crossings and more; 66% of people reported difficulty accessing public buildings, which include healthcare, retail and leisure facilities; and 68% of people experience inadequate toilets, lifts, emergency exits and parking machines in public spaces.¹⁰
- Age-Friendly Ireland reported in 2022 that 29 towns in Ireland had achieved age-friendly status, with towns referring to ‘smaller, discrete geographic areas such as a town, village, or a suburban community within a larger urban area’.¹¹

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Local Authority development plans should integrate universal design principles for the built environment as per the National Disability Authority and Centre for Excellence in Universal Design guidelines, and ensure sufficient funding is in place to do so, for all new development projects.
- As per recommendations from the National Disability Authority, funding should be reinstated to enable the improvement of the accessibility of public buildings to ensure compliance with Section 25 of the Disability Act; compliance with the Act should be monitored; and public bodies should integrate universal design and accessibility into all building works being carried out across public buildings.
- At a national and local authority level training should be provided to key design professionals in private practice and those working with local authorities. This training should educate practitioners about the necessary consultation process associated with shared space design, end user needs and the specific design requirements of shared space design.

⁹ <https://nda.ie/uploads/publications/an-operational-review-of-the-effectiveness-of-section-25-of-the-disability-act-20051.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.iwa.ie/access-guidelines/best-practice-access-guidelines-4/>

¹¹ https://agefriendlyhomes.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/coveney-2021aarpjournal.doi_10.26419-2fint.00051.009.pdf

PRIORITY AREA 12: 'SAFETY AND SECURITY'

'SAFETY AND SECURITY'

Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'SAFETY AND SECURITY' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Research (informing the development of the 2013 NPAS) 'found that fear of crime has negative effects on quality of life. It can significantly limit or restrict the movement and activities of individuals, which can further impact on physical, social and emotional wellbeing. Fear of crime coupled with a feeling of vulnerability can lead to isolation and the social exclusion of older people. Therefore, it is important that the needs of older people with regard to policing, safety and security are addressed to ensure that they can feel safe and comfortable in their own homes and can remain active outside in their own communities'. (NPAS, Pg. 37)

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'SAFETY AND SECURITY' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- Reasons given by older people for not using the nearest available public space included safety concerns including road safety and fear of crime as well as issues such as lighting, lack of and broken footpaths and proximity to traffic. (Age & Opportunity, 2022)

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'SAFETY AND SECURITY'

- **An Garda Síochána's Older Person Strategy (2010)** aims 'to prevent, detect and disrupt crime and criminal activity and to ensure that people feel safe in their homes, on our roads and in public places, specifically as it refers to older people'. The strategy outlined a 27-point action plan under four headings:
 - Develop and maintain effective communication links between Gardaí and older people.
 - Deliver a timely and effective proactive response by An Garda Síochána for older people.
 - Increase trust and confidence by lessening the fear of crime amongst older people.
 - Determining and responding to, on an ongoing basis, the needs and expectations of older people.

- Continue to implement An Garda Síochána Older People Strategy and empower people as they age to live free from fear in their own homes, to feel safe and confident outside in their own communities, and support an environment where this sense of security is enhanced. **(NPAS, Objective 3.4)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- 72% of people aged 50+ feel that it is safe to walk alone after dark in their local area. **(HSE National Safeguarding Office/HaPAI 2018)**
- Older persons feel vulnerable and more fearful of becoming a victim of crime. **(An Garda Síochána, Garda National Crime Prevention Unit)**
- Pedestrian light settings are not compatible with older adults' walking abilities. It is possible to increase the proportion of older people who would have enough time to cross the road by changing the duration of the pedestrian light signals. **(TILDA, 2015)**
- The Irish Crime Classification System (ICCS), used for statistical reporting of crimes recorded in Ireland, contains 16 categories. In 2022, there were 1,362 adults over the age of 60 who were victims of Category 3; attempts/threats to murder, assaults, harassments and related offences **(Central Statistics Office, 2023)**. It is important to note, that these 1,362 older victims do not include all other crimes within the 15 other categories nor does the figure include any crimes that were not reported.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR

- Consultation with older persons groups and other stakeholders for An Garda Síochána's Older Person Strategy (2010) highlighted that 'Many agencies wanted more awareness and improved protocols for collaborative approaches to issues such as abuse against older people, health and welfare. They also called for more joined up thinking, more awareness of human rights and discrimination issues, such as ageism, mental health issues, accessibility to premises, documents, and information. Individuals and agencies acknowledged that there are many good initiatives occurring throughout the country, but reinforced the need for consistency across all areas. To achieve this they called for improved processes and service provision.'
- Consider broadening awareness campaigns which specifically target older persons with information and assistance on personal safety such as An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention Information Sheet. This type of information sheet should be physically delivered nationwide to persons aged 65 and over. The 'Useful Contacts' section should be amended to include more phone numbers and postal addresses as older person's digital engagement and abilities are significantly lower thus restricting access to 'useful' weblinks that are provided. **(Cabra Community Policing Forum).**¹²

¹² https://cabracommunitypolicingforum.ie/uploads/files/personal_safety_security_for_the_older_person_information_sheet.pdf

- ◆ Localised and accessible means to access to information on how older adults can protect themselves against criminal offences and clear direction on how a crime can be reported.
- ◆ Consideration should be given to introducing an older person's victim advocacy scheme which would provide support and guidance to older victims in how to navigate the justice system. The Crime Victims Helpline makes reference to the Senior Alert Scheme and Elder Abuse only.
- ◆ Accessible means of public transport to safely arrive at intended destinations which would also contribute to combatting isolation and loneliness.



PRIORITY AREA 13: 'ELDER ABUSE'

'ELDER ABUSE'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.
- Furthermore, Ireland is a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing 'a Sustainable Society for All Ages' (2022) which pledges members States to "Improving the protection of older persons,...from all forms of violence and abuse".

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'ELDER ABUSE' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Elder Abuse is a complex issue and may involve financial abuse, physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of some or all of these. Research (informing the development of the 2013 Strategy) on the prevalence of elder abuse in Ireland found that 2.2 per cent of the study population experienced abuse or neglect in the last 12 months. This suggests that approximately 10,000 people living in the community might have experienced abuse, neglect or maltreatment in the last year (2012). However, research has found that the prevalence of elder abuse in other developed countries is between 3 and 5 per cent. This could mean that up to 20,000 people living in the community, in Ireland, could be suffering abuse. **(NPAS, Pg. 38)**
- The mistreatment of older people is viewed beyond isolated family violence and is identified as a human and civil rights issue in its own right **(World Health Organisation, 2002)**

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'ELDER ABUSE' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- **ALONE** noted that many older people experienced a loss of independence due to Covid-19 safety restrictions, and had to resort to relying on others for support and assistance in their day-to-day lives, leaving them more at risk of abuse. This could be viewed as a silent abuse as a call for help is hard to make.

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'ELDER ABUSE'

- '(To) Continue to address the problem of elder abuse at all levels of society through raising awareness improving reporting rates and developing services. (National Goal 2: Health) Areas for action included: Implementation of National Policy on Elder Abuse. Awareness raising'.

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Almost 16,000 cases of elder abuse have been reported within Health Service Executive-funded services for older people over the past five years. The number of abuse concerns relating to over-65s increased from 3,029 in 2016 to a peak of 3,412 in 2020, the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. These figures do not cover abuse in private nursing homes, hospitals or other services such as homeless units or addiction centres. **(HSE's national safeguarding office, 2021)**
- The most common type of concern reported to the HSE over the five-year period involved psychological abuse, which accounted for 35 per cent of reports in 2020. Physical abuse accounted for 23 per cent of cases in that year, while 19 per cent involved financial abuse. Neglect was involved in 15 per cent of cases, and self-neglect in 4 per cent. **(HSE's national safeguarding office, 2021)**
- Many cases of elder abuse go unreported and it can often be a hidden issue. Abuse of older people is often carried out by a carer or family member that the older person relies upon and, as a result, the abused individual is often fearful of speaking out and losing their source of contact, help or support. Older people who have no support within their community, without friends, neighbours or family to turn to, are more than four times more likely to suffer abuse than those with high levels of community support. **(HSE's national safeguarding office, 2021)**
- The Adult Safeguarding Bill has been in Committee stage in the Seanad since 2021, after first being tabled in 2017.
- In 2022, the number of cases ALONE dealt with relating to elder abuse more than doubled, compared to 2021.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Despite the increase in elder abuse, national Adult safeguarding legislation has still not been introduced. An Adult Safeguarding Bill introduced in the Seanad in 2017 has, as of end December 2023, not made further progress. The purposes of the Adult Safeguarding Bill 2017 include making further and better provision for the care and protection of adults who are at risk; to establish the National Adult Safeguarding Authority; to require certain persons to make reports to the National Adult Safeguarding Authority in respect of adults at risk of abuse or harm in certain circumstances; and to provide for related matters.
- A lack of data sharing between agencies, caused by the way GDPR legislation is interpreted, is also impeding efforts to tackle elder abuse.

PRIORITY AREA 14: 'AGEISM'

'AGEISM'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy **(2013)**.
- Furthermore, Ireland is a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing 'a Sustainable Society for All Ages' **(2022)** which pledges members States to 'Establishing educational and awareness-raising programmes and campaigns' and 'Promoting a positive culture and image of ageing by making the diversity among older persons an asset and by highlighting the manifold contributions of older persons to society'.
- The Assisted Decision Making Capacity Act provides for legislation which promotes and supports the autonomy of the older person, supporting peoples capacity to consent and be involved in decision making.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'AGEISM' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'Ageism can still manifest as prejudicial attitudes and practices against older people. Eradicating all forms of ageism in society will help to create a society for all ages underpinned by equality'. **(NPAS, Pg. 44)**
- Ageism is associated with premature death - estimated by the WHO at as much as 7.5 years. **(World Health Organization, 2021)**



WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF AGEISM IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- ‘Telling It Like It Is; Combatting Ageism’ published by the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs in 2023 describes both the experience and impact of ageism in the contexts of housing, income, the media and wider discourse, lifelong learning, and the digital environment. This account reveals how ageism has ‘serious and far-reaching consequences for people’s health, well-being and human rights’.

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO ‘AGEISM’

- ‘(To) Combat ageism through awareness campaigns and by encouraging the media and other opinion-making actors to give an age-balanced image of society’. **(Cross Cutting Objective: Combatting Ageism.)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- ‘Telling It Like It Is; Combatting Ageism’ exposed the ingrained nature and impact of ageism in Ireland in which older people are typically portrayed as uniformly frail and vulnerable. **(The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, 2023)**
- 34% of people aged 50+ reported experiencing discrimination in 2011. This had increased to 45% in 2016 according to The Healthy and Positive Ageing indicators report **(Department of Health, Ireland, 2016)**. Today, post pandemic, we can safely assume the figure has increased again.
- **The Positive Ageing indicators report (2016)** quoted 2014 prevalence figures of 42% of 50-64-year-olds experiencing age discrimination, and 52% of over 65s. Broken down by setting, such discrimination was most evident in looking for work (87%); shops, pubs and restaurants (37%); banks (36%); the workplace (33%); transport (25%); health (24%) and public services (16%). The experience of ageism is more pronounced as one grows older. The 2016 report notes ‘a consistently higher percentage of people aged 65+ reported experiencing discrimination compared with those aged 50-64, and reported discrimination increased among people aged 50-54 from 35% to 42% between 2010 and 2014’.

The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), in consultation with older people and age sector organisations, is currently developing a campaign relevant to the combat of ageism for broadcast and print media.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Implement the nine recommendations as framed in The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs 2023 Report, 'Telling It Like It Is; Combatting Ageism'. The establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would, in particular, support our ageing population by actioning a programme for government which prioritises older people. It would ensure that the commitment to mainstreaming ageing is kept to the fore of policy and decision-making.
 - Develop the awareness campaigns, as first planned in the 2013 National Positive Ageing Strategy, to promote an age-balanced image of society.
-



PRIORITY AREA 15: 'POLICY COORDINATION AND MONITORING'

'POLICY COORDINATION AND MONITORING'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'POLICY COORDINATION AND MONITORING' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'If programmes and policies are to be designed to support and enable positive ageing, timely and regular access to comprehensive information about all of the determinants of health, wellbeing and quality of life and the inter-relationships between them is necessary. Information and data to assist in monitoring the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy is also a key requirement'. (NPAS, pg. 40)
- 'It is envisaged that these (Older Peoples) Councils will have a 'bottom-up' role in monitoring the implementation of the Strategy'. (NPAS, pg. 49)

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'POLICY COORDINATION AND MONITORING' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'There seems to be a lack of joined up thinking when it comes to so many of these (positive ageing related) initiatives on the ground'. **Active Retirement Ireland member, Regional meetings, 2023.**

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'POLICY COORDINATION AND MONITORING'

- 'A separate implementation plan, based on the strategic direction laid out in the National Positive Ageing Strategy, will be developed. This implementation plan will facilitate;...Translation of Goals and Objectives of the Strategy into action on the ground; Development of key deliverables in a more detailed manner; Development of timelines and performance indicators; Specification of 'direct responsible individuals' across Government and wider civil society'. (NPAS, pg. 47)
- 'The Health and Wellbeing Programme in the Department of Health will work with the Office for Older People, policy units in Government Departments and partner organisations to produce inter-sectoral plans to promote positive ageing. It will coordinate specific initiatives in this regard through the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy'. (NPAS, pg. 47)

- 'Annual updates on positive ageing activity will be produced including the preparation of an Annual Report. These will be presented to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy'. **(NPAS, pg. 59)**
- 'The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, chaired by the Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy'. **(NPAS, pg. 60)**
- 'The Department of Health will convene an Annual Positive Ageing Forum to assess progress from the perspective of older people and their representative organisations'. **(NPAS, pg. 23)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- No implementation plan ever developed for the National Positive Ageing Strategy.
- No clear deliverables framed for the National Positive Ageing Strategy.
- No timelines or performance indicators set for the National Positive Ageing Strategy.
- No visible coordination with the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy in respect of the National Positive Ageing Strategy.
- No visibility of any annual update or Annual Report on the National Positive Ageing Strategy since 2019.
- No statement from the Cabinet Committee in respect of positive ageing activity.
- One-day NPAS Stakeholder Forums hosted by the Department of Health in 2017, 2018 and 2019. No forums have been held since 2019.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- 'Develop implementation and monitoring plan to support effective delivery of the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).
- Expedite the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People so as to safeguard and protect the interests and well-being of older people and to actively monitor the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy.
- Enable Older Peoples Councils to meaningfully play the sought after 'bottom-up role of OPCs in monitoring the implementation of the Strategy'. **(NPAS, pg. 49).**

PRIORITY AREA 16: 'MAINSTREAMING AGEING'

'MAINSTREAMING AGEING'

- Ireland is a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing a Sustainable Society for All Ages' (2022) which pledges members States to 'Mainstream(ing) ageing to advance a society for all ages'.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'MAINSTREAMING AGEING' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- 'Mainstreaming ageing is a strategy, process and multi-dimensional effort of integrating ageing issues into all policy fields and all policy levels. The ultimate objective is to achieve a more equitable society. Mainstreaming is considered as an important tool for achieving a society for all ages. The implementation of this National Positive Ageing Strategy should be considered as a first and necessary step in mainstreaming the concerns of older people in all policy fields'. (NPAS, Pg. 44)

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF 'MAINSTREAMING AGEING' IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'It seems like they (Government) have all the policy you would want in place but nobody tying it all together. You need someone who can hold them all to account for the commitments that are in place. Plans on their own are no good. They need to be implemented'. ('Telling It Like It Is' workshop participant, The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, 2021.)

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'MAINSTREAMING AGEING'

- 'Encouraging the establishment of independent bodies, for example, ombudspersons, at national, subnational, and local levels that can mediate the rights, needs and interests of older persons in all areas of society'. (Rome Declaration 2022)
- 'Developing or strengthening, where existent, a national strategic framework or process for mainstreaming ageing to support the systematic consideration and integration of both individual and population ageing aspects into all policies'. (Rome Declaration 2022)
- 'Developing a participatory stakeholder engagement approach in a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort to ensure that older persons and organizations that represent them are listened to and actively involved in meaningful cross-sectoral dialogue and collaboration on ageing between all relevant actors in the public and private sector, academia, social partners, and civil society'. (Rome Declaration 2022)

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- ‘Telling It Like It Is; Combatting Ageism’ revealed how there has been an implementation deficit in relation to many of Ireland’s policy commitments relevant to ageing and older people. **(The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, 2023)**
 - Declaration that we are fully committed to mainstreaming ageing and our ultimate objective to make Ireland a great place to grow old. **(Minister for Mental Health and Older People, participating in the 5th United Nations Economic Commission for Europe [UNECE] Ministerial Conference on Ageing, Rome 2022.)**
 - Currently, there is a lack of infrastructure to ensure that the rights of older people with respect to their age are respected and protected.
-

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- Expedite the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People so as to safeguard and protect the interests and well-being of older people and monitor the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. This would help to ensure that Ireland’s various policy commitments relevant to older people are meaningfully monitored and that older people are treated with respect and on an equal basis with the rest of the population.
- The establishment of a Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would also support our ageing population by actioning a programme for government which prioritises older people. It would ensure that the commitment to mainstreaming ageing is kept to the fore of policy and decision-making and that there is enhanced investment in programmes and services to combat ageism nationally.
- All sectors of society, including the state, employers, and non-governmental organisations, have a role in ensuring full participation of and equality for older people. The respective roles of these actors must be devised and implemented in partnership with older people and their organisations.
- All policy decisions and public investment decisions must be analysed to ensure that they do not adversely impact on the current generation of older people, to ensure that they do not provide incentives to any age group to make decisions which may adversely affect them in older age, and to ensure that they contribute to greater equality for older people.
- There must be a systematic analysis of all policies and investment decisions to ensure that they promote equality for older people and that the planning and implementation processes must be imbued with the equality agenda at every stage.

- Mainstreaming a focus on age equality will require the assessment of impact of policy and resource allocation decisions on older people alongside clear equality objectives for older people, the participation of older peoples' organisations in the impact assessment process and a monitoring of outcomes for older people.
- Develop implementation and monitoring plan to support effective delivery of the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).
- Coordinate ageing-related policies across all levels of government.
- Strengthen national frameworks for mainstreaming ageing.



PRIORITY AREA 17: 'RESEARCH'

'RESEARCH'

- Prioritised by Government when framing National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013) 'supporting the generation and use of high-quality research on ageing and older people. '(NPAS, Pg. 19)
- Furthermore, Ireland is a signatory to the Rome Ministerial Declaration on Ageing 'a Sustainable Society for All Ages' (2022) which pledges members States to 'Building on the lessons learned during the Covid-19 pandemic to respond to older persons' rights, needs, and preferences regarding their personal freedom, privacy, autonomy and self-determination, including in health crises and other emergency situations'.

WHY IS THIS RELEVANT? WHAT DID GOVERNMENT MEAN WHEN INCLUDING 'RESEARCH' AS A PRIORITY POLICY AREA IN THE 2013 STRATEGY?

- Given the importance of evidence-informed policy making, the Strategy also contains a fourth Goal of supporting the generation and use of high-quality research on ageing and older people. This is also consistent with recommendations of the Active Ageing Framework which proposes that actions to promote active ageing should be supported by knowledge development activities including evaluation, research and surveillance and the dissemination of research findings. (NPAS, Pg. 19)
- The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) was noted, in NPAS, for its role in addressing a number of data deficits and that many Government Departments are working in partnership with the Office for Older People in the Department of Health to access TILDA data to inform policy and service developments relevant to ageing and older people.

WHAT HAVE OLDER PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH IN SUPPORTING POSITIVE AGEING?

- 'The message that permeated through Covid was that older people are vulnerable and need to be protected. There is a difference between providing protection and care for a section of the population who may be more vulnerable and making decisions on their behalf. We must learn to talk with, rather than talk at, older people'. (**'Telling It Like It Is' workshop participant, The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, 2021.**)
- **Creating Our Future (2022)** was a national conversation about the future of research in Ireland. It received over 18,000 submissions from people across the country and a wide set of age groups and identified many cross-cutting themes related to ageing, particularly in terms of health care.

POLICY COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS RELEVANT TO 'RESEARCH'

- Continue to employ an evidence-informed approach to decision-making at all levels of planning. **(NPAS, Objective 4.1)**
- Promote the development of a comprehensive framework for gathering data in relation to all aspects of ageing and older people to underpin evidence-informed policy making. **(NPAS, Objective 4.2)**

STATUS OR PROGRESS AS AT DECEMBER 2023

- Most recent framework report produced by the HaPAI (Department of Health) in 2019.
- No evaluation has been conducted of the now more than 11-year-old National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).
- No visibility of any annual update or Annual Report on the National Positive Ageing Strategy since 2019.
- No statement from the Cabinet Committee in respect of positive ageing activity.
- One-day NPAS Stakeholder Forums hosted by the Department of Health in 2017, 2018 and 2019. No forums have been held since 2019.

CALL TO ACTION: WHAT OLDER PEOPLE WANT. WHAT THE ALLIANCE IS CALLING FOR.

- 'The message that permeated through Covid was that older people are vulnerable and need to be protected. There is a difference between providing protection and care for a section of the population who may be more vulnerable and making decisions on their behalf. We must learn to talk with, rather than talk at, older people'. ('Telling It Like It Is' workshop participant, The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, 2021.)
- Creating Our Future (2022) was a national conversation about the future of research in Ireland. It received over 18,000 submissions from people across the country and a wide set of age groups and identified many cross-cutting themes related to ageing, particularly in terms of health care.

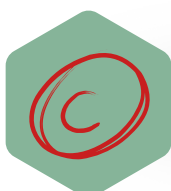
Explanation of grades



Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives



Good effort, positive results for older people



Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting



Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people



Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people

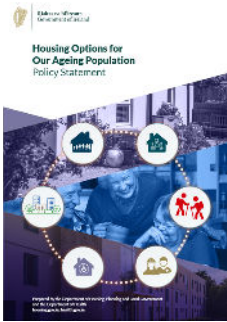
















Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing



Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE	RATIONALE
Develop a separate implementation plan so as to translate Goals and Objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy into action on the ground	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013		<p>No implementation plan ever developed.</p> <p>No allocation of ring-fenced funding ever provided.</p> <p>No Ministerial drive, since 2013, of implementation of the Strategy at political level.</p>
The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, chaired by the Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013		<p>No publication of annual updates on positive ageing or annual reports on progress.</p> <p>No evidence of oversight of implementation by the Cabinet Committee.</p>
Combat ageism through awareness campaigns and by encouraging the media and other opinion-making actors to give an age-balanced image of society	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013		<p>Launch of January 2024 IHREC national awareness campaign (TV, radio and online); 'For Equality in Ageing'.</p>
Work closely with local authorities to review the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and the waiting lists in place for adaptations and publish this data on a yearly basis. This will identify any barriers and gaps at local and national level and help to streamline the process to ensure timely intervention	 Housing Options for our Ageing Population 2019		<p>Commitment defined in 2019 but waiting lists for the grants have never been published.</p> <p>Some Local Authorities have had to close grant processes at times due to waiting lists being too long.</p>

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE	RATIONALE
To develop a far-reaching range of housing options to provide appropriate housing choices for older people, suited to their individual needs so they can plan ahead and, in so far as possible, choose the right home for them			<p>Demonstrator housing with supports project in Inchicore, (commitment first referenced in Rebuilding Ireland, 2016) still in development.</p> <p>Increasing number of older renters, many of whom do not want to be in the rental sector.</p> <p>Increased numbers of older people on the waiting list for social housing.</p> <p>No national 'rightsizing' strategy, nor Government-led delivery of broadscale home-sharing schemes.</p> <p>The commitment to introduce a Healthy Age Friendly Homes Coordinator, to all 31 local authority areas demonstrates promise.</p>
Protect the incomes of older people through the delivery of the commitment to benchmark State pension payments			<p>Benchmarking of State pension payments has not been introduced.</p> <p>Increase in poverty rates among older people.</p>
Provide income and other supports to enable people as they age to enjoy an acceptable standard of living			<p>Those aged 65+ were the only age cohort to see increases across all three poverty rates between 2020 and 2021.</p> <p>The State Pension will not provide the basis of an adequate income for an older person living alone.</p>

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE	RATIONALE
Examine options for (and ultimately develop) a pension solution for family carers to recognise their important contribution and work			New 'Long-Term Carer Contributions' scheme will make it easier for long-term family carers to qualify for the State Pension.
<p>Accessible, affordable, and flexible transport systems in both rural and urban areas</p> <p>Provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs'</p>	 National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013  Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022		Lack of transport connectivity, particularly in rural areas, reduces efficacy of the Free Travel Scheme.
Introduce a statutory scheme to support people to live in their own homes, which will provide equitable access to high-quality, regulated home care			Work on the development of such a scheme is ongoing but no scheme would appear to be close to being put in place.
To underpin a planned national health sector policy on safeguarding vulnerable or at-risk adults in the context of their interactions with the health sector.			Evidence of scoping work underway but no policy yet launched.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE	RATIONALE
Increase the number of specialist palliative care beds countrywide over the next five years, ensuring that there will be a hospice serving every region in the country.			New funding commitments in place but access to specialist palliative/hospice care is still limited in some areas and settings.
	Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020		
Develop a plan aimed at tackling loneliness and isolation, particularly among older people	   		No plan developed /launched or sign of plan being in development.
	Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020 The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025 Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 - 2025 Sláintecare Strategy & Action Plan 2021-2023		
Increase hospital bed capacity			October 2023 HSE Statement on 'Delayed Transfers of Care' from hospital settings.
	National Development Plan 2021-2030		
Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities			Evidence of good practices exist but ageism, digital disadvantage, funding and structural barriers still drive social exclusion.
	National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013		

We have a wonderful opportunity in Ireland to embrace our improving life expectancy, to promote independent living and add healthy years to life. And we must embrace it.

We all want to age well. As a country we must strive to become an Ireland that leads the world in becoming age-attuned, age-accommodating and age-friendly. An Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People can play a key role in getting us to this point.

