

Ageing matters *in Ireland*

Coldest cuts in Fuel Allowance

Hot water bottles may be one way of remaining warm this winter after the Budget measures kick in.

Pages 3-5



Protests in Abbeyleigh

Pages 12-13

Nursing homes staff honoured

Pages 8-9

We wish all Age Action members and supporters a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year

Age Action**Ireland***For All Older People*

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Protecting the most vulnerable

One of the principles of Ireland's deal with the EU and IMF was promoting economic growth while protecting the most vulnerable, and this has been reaffirmed by government ministers several times, most recently in presenting next year's Budget. Our understanding of this commitment was that, whatever the Government did to overcome the current economic crisis, it would protect people who had fewest resources to cope with poverty (including fuel poverty), sickness, disability (including dementia), homelessness and unemployment. So one of the key tests of this budget is whether it will protect the most vulnerable: the answer must be yes and no.

Taking the good news first, we should welcome the maintenance of the current levels of the state pension and most other social welfare payments, which keep many people out of poverty. Secondly, we should applaud the removal of 330,000 people on very low incomes from the tax net by raising the income threshold for the Universal Social Charge. Thirdly, we should acknowledge the decision to withdraw the proposed cut in the disability allowance for young people. The uproar at this move was fully justified as it undermined the principle of independent living for people with disabilities, but the change of heart suggested the government was listening.

The worst aspect of the budget was the reduction in the period of the Fuel Allowance from 32 to 26 weeks. This is a most retrograde step because it will be imposed on people whose incomes are already so low that they have passed a means test. This will undoubtedly increase fuel poverty and could result in extra deaths, mostly of older people in winter months. The impact of this cut will be compounded by the earlier cuts in the Household Benefits Package and the increase of the Carbon Tax next May without any waiver for people on low incomes.

The reduction in the fuel allowance and the proposed cut in the disability allowance for young people have one thing in common: they are both further attacks on the people who are already vulnerable. We will continue to urge the Government to withdraw both and play by the all the EU/IMF rules.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers, I wish all our members, readers and supporters peace and every blessing at Christmas and in the New Year. Age Action will be 20 years old on 9 March 2012 so we want to make 2012 a special year for all of us.

— **Robin Webster**



■ The reduction of the Fuel Allowance payment period from 32 to 26 weeks represents a €120 cut for low-income older people depending on this payment.

Fuel allowance cuts will hit older people hardest

The big story of Budget 2012 for older people is undoubtedly the cut to the Fuel Allowance, writes Gerard Scully

The reduction of the payment period from 32 to 26 weeks represents a €120 cut for low-income older people depending on this payment.

The Government have yet to decide officially how this cut is to be implemented,

but at the post-Budget forum, officials from the Dept of Social protection said it would be split between the beginning and end of the winter period.

The previous Government had extended the period over which this means-tested allowance was paid as recognition of the impact of Carbon Tax and the general financial burden that winter places on many older people, which makes this particular cut unforfeitable.

To make matters tougher for those struggling to afford to heat their homes, the cut follows the recent cutback in the Household Benefits package and the €5 per tonne increase for Carbon Tax on fossil fuels announced in the budget. The additional Carbon Tax rate will add €14.40 to the cost of 1,000 litres of home heating oil and €14.46 to the average household's natural gas bill.

There will be some relief,

albeit it temporary, that the increase in Carbon Tax will not begin until May 2012.

There were also some things in the Budget to be welcomed. The increase in the income exemption level from €4,004 to €10,000 will mean 330,000 people will not have to pay the

Universal Social Charge. However, many people on low public service pensions will still fall into the net.

And of course the second big story of this Budget is the fact that social welfare rates were not reduced. On the other hand, the 2% increase in VAT, as well as

the €120 cut in value of the Fuel Allowance, and the 20% cut in the value of the Household Benefits Package all eat into the income of older pensioners.

There were also “technical readjustments designed to ‘iron out anomalies,’” which translates as “sneaky cuts”. For instance, carers who do not live with the person being cared for have lost their automatic right to the Household Benefits Package. They may, of course, still apply in their own right if their income is low enough.

There were also changes in PRSI contribution bands, which meant that individuals with reduced PRSI contributions will get less money.

The new bands are as follows: 20 to 29 contributions get €129, 30-39 get €207, 40 to 47 get €225.80 and 48 contributions get the full contributory of €230.30.

Many of the kites flown before the Budget proved to be just that. The prescription charge remains at 50 cent; we are still waiting for its removal. And the €50 application fee did not come to pass. Also safe for the moment is the Free Travel scheme and the Half Rate Carers Allowance.

Those on the Drugs Payment Scheme will be feeling a little sore however. As the limit goes from €120 to €132, this is rapidly becoming “an old reliable” for raising money.

Main changes affecting older people

- The payment period for the means-tested fuel allowance will be cut from 32 weeks to 26 weeks in 2012 – a loss of €120;
- The State Pension and other basic social welfare payments remain unchanged;
- There will be no waiver for low income home owners for the new €100 Household Charge, although payments can be made in installments;
- The payment threshold for the Drugs Payment Scheme will rise by €12 to €132;
- The Carbon Tax will be increased by €5 per tonne, adding €14.40 to the cost of 1,000 litres of home heating oil and €14.46 to the natural gas bill of an average home. Solid fuels will remain exempt from the charge;
- The income threshold below which the Universal Social Contribution will apply has been increased from €4,004 to €10,036;
- Health spending is to be cut by €543 million. Age Action is concerned that older people services (especially community-based services such as home helps) will be cut;
- An additional €55 million was allocated for the Fair Deal;
- DIRT and the EXIT tax on pension and insurance schemes are increased by 3% to 30% for payments made annually or more frequently, and 33% for payments made less frequently than annually;
- From September, 2012, if you have less than 48 contributions per year, you will receive a reduced pension (those with 30-39 contributions will receive €207 and those with 40-47 contributions will receive €225.80);
- The top rate of VAT will increase by 2% to 23% from January, 2012.

Another nasty cut was to those who have to use hearing aids. The waiting period between grants for replacing hearing aids has doubled from two to four years, while the value of the grant has been reduced from €760 to €500 for one hearing aid and from €1,520 to €1,000 for two hearing aids.

The fact that health spending is to be cut by €543 million next year is not good news for older people. We must await the HSE service plan later this month to see where the cuts will come, but Age Action is warning that older people's services (especially community-based services) must

be protected.

The Budget includes an additional €55 million for the Fair Deal scheme to fund nursing home beds. However, Health Minister James Reilly has warned that after the Budget it was "inevitable" that there would be further public nursing home beds closed in 2012.

On the tax side of the Budget, apart from the VAT and Carbon Tax, some older people were hit by an increase in DIRT, and the EXIT tax on pension and insurance schemes, which have risen to 30%. There was no change in the Marginal Interest Relief

available to older people of €18,000 for single/widowed people and €36,000 for couples, nor in the tax credits of €245 for single/widowed and €490 for couples.

After all that, if you think you need a smoke, remember the 25 cent increase on the price of a packet of cigarettes.

Still, if you want to get drunk, Minister Noonan placed no extra tax on alcohol — but warned they were looking at the problem of cheap drink from off-licences and supermarkets. So while the Spirit of Christmas Present is safe, the Spirit of Christmas Future is still in serious doubt.



■ Apart from the VAT and Carbon Tax, some older people were hit by an increase in DIRT, and the EXIT tax on pension and insurance schemes, which have risen to 30%.



■ Eager tutors and students on first day of recent class in Heskin Court, Merrion Road.

Getting Started in sheltered housing

Over half a million Irish people over the age of 55 don't use the internet regularly.

Even among those who can access the internet, a large number have never learned how to carry out online transactions such as paying the TV licence or motor tax, getting an insurance quote or booking a flight or hotel.

Hundreds of thousands of people are in danger of being "digitally excluded": cut off from access to services and sources of information and communication which are increasingly available only online.

By providing basic computer classes, Age Action's Getting Started programme has been hugely successful in helping people cross the "digital divide". Using trained volunteers working one-to-one with learners means that classes can be tailored

to the learner's pace and interests. Nearly 10,000 learners have taken classes as part of the programme.

Dublin City Council has been a consistent supporter of the programme over the last four years. As part of its commitment to promoting digital inclusion in the city, the Council funds Age Action to offer free classes in venues throughout the city.

The classes take place in 18 Sheltered Housing Complexes (SHCs) in different parts of the city. Classes are open to SHC residents and also to members of the surrounding community.

The majority of classes are aimed at helping absolute beginners take their first steps with computers. However, a variety of other activities are aimed at encouraging sustained use of new technology. These include: running "improvers" classes; organising "drop

in" times when learners can practice outside formal classes; mobile phone classes; help in setting up and maintaining websites; guidance on acquiring and buying personal computers and mobile phones.

A series of workshops on internet shopping have proved popular since the bad weather last winter. The project has proved an effective approach in promoting digital inclusion. Since it started in 2008, nearly 1,500 learners and over 150 volunteer tutors have taken part.

There are venues in Dublin 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 20.

For more information on the project see <http://www.dublin.ie/neighbourhood/olderperson-computer-training.htm> or contact Robert Carroll at (01) 475-6989 or rcarroll@ageaction.ie.

— Rob Carroll



■ At the handover of the **EuROPEAN Reference Framework Report in Brussels** were (from left): **Sven Matzke** from the **European Commission Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities**; **Lambert Van Nistelrooij**, **EU Intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity**; and **Marjan Sedmak**, **President of Age Platform Europe**.

EU action urged on elder abuse

Political Action at European level is required to protect older people from elder abuse, according to a new European report.

Tackling elder abuse through raising awareness and research is one of Age Action’s core objectives. As part of this work, Age Action has been working with community and voluntary groups in eight countries on a European research project, the European Reference Framework Online for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and Neglect (EuROPEAN).

The project, funded by the European Commission and coordinated by ANBO, a Dutch older people’s advocacy organisation, mapped existing national policy approaches and good practices to prevent elder abuse in domestic and institutional settings in nine countries.

The completed report

was handed over to Sven Matzke from the European Commission Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; Lambert Van Nistelrooij, EU Intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity; and Marjan Sedmak, President of Age Platform Europe, in Brussels on November 29.

The report outlines good practices used in several countries for the prevention of elder abuse. To tackle elder abuse, the report found that action must be taken at national level. Ireland and the Netherlands are the only countries to have implemented a national policy or action plan.

Another key factor in preventing elder abuse is raising public awareness of it. However, to raise awareness, there must be a willingness by the wider society to recognise that elder abuse occurs and that as a society we need to talk

about this and look at ways of preventing it.

The report illustrates how wider social, economic and cultural aspects influence how much recognition elder abuse receives. In countries like Italy and Poland, elder abuse remains a taboo subject, a private family matter, outside the remit of the public and political system.

Elder abuse is not seen as a social issue that requires national policies and procedures. The outcome is that older people have little or no recourse but to endure abuse in these countries.

To protect the civil and human rights of all older European citizens, the EuROPEAN Reference Report recommends that the EU should press for the recognition of elder abuse as a political issue and promote integral and comprehensive national policies to prevent and combat elder abuse in each member state.

— **Marita O’Brien**



■ **Back (all l-r):** NHI Care Awards Judging Chair Professor Brendan McCormack, MC Marty Whelan, NHI CEO Tadhg Daly. **Middle:** Director winner Eileen Burke, RN of the Year Malgorzata Sucharewska, Carer of the Year Mary Moran, Activities Co-Ordinator winner Piotr Jokiel, Catering and Nutrition winner Emanuele Ferri, Ancillary Worker winner Mary Foley. **Front:** (accepting Resident Achievement Award for PJ Flood) Vicky McDwyer, Resident Achievement winner PJ Halligan, Innovation winner Imelda Burke, Community Initiative winner Deirdre Mullins, Resident Achievement winner Julia Thurmann.

Nursing homes staff honoured

The excellent care provided in nursing homes across the country was recognised and honoured at the Nursing Homes Ireland (NHI) Care Awards 2011, which brought 500 nursing home staff and residents together for a night of celebration.

NHI, the representative body for private and voluntary nursing homes, celebrated those who work tirelessly to create a happy and fulfilling 'home from home' for residents, the contribution nursing homes

are making to their communities, and the achievement of residents living in them.

The 2011 event, held in the Citywest Hotel in Dublin on November 10th, featured RTE personality Marty Whelan as MC and built on the success of the inaugural celebration in 2010, with over 200 nominees submitted for nine categories and 27 finalists. The awards were open to those working and living in the 330+ NHI member homes.

First honoured on the night was Eileen Burke, nurse manager at Innis Ree Lodge, Roscommon, who took home the Director of Nursing/Person in Charge Award. "I have the best

team behind me, and we push the boundaries," she explained. "We believe in giving the residents a purpose to get up in the morning, and we're always looking for a way to provide them with refreshing activities."

Malgorzata Sucharewska of Nenagh Manor Nursing Home, Tipperary, was crowned Registered Nurse of the Year. "I work with a great team and get great support from them," she remarked. "It's a great environment to work in and we treat people the way you yourself would like to be treated."

The next honour, Nursing Home Carer of the Year,

went to St Peter's Nursing Home in Louth and Mary Moran. "I've been in St Peter's 10 years and I love what I do and I work from my heart," Mary told Marty. "I love every one of the residents, and I'm very proud to get this award tonight."

Piotr Jokiel, a finalist in 2010, was a winner in 2011, taking home the Nursing Home Activities Co-ordinator Award for his work at Bloomfield Care Centre in Rathfarnham. "The most important thing about the home is the people," Piotr explained. "The people need to be joined to the home, and the message to send out is 'we will provide you with full access to engagement in life'."

It was two-in-a-row for Haven Bay Care Centre in Cork, who won the Catering and Nutrition Award. "What we're trying to do in Haven Bay is bring a revolution in home food, Emanuele Ferri of the team explained. "It's about talking to the resident, meeting their needs and developing their interests in food."

The Kingdom was next to celebrate, as Mary Foley of Ocean View Nursing Home in Tralee, accepted the Ancillary Worker Award. "I'm proud to get this award," she said.

The Community Initiative Award celebrates nursing homes interaction with their communities. Deirdre Mullins of Haven Bay

accepted the award for the links it has forged with local groups and individuals, and its role in transforming Kinsale into a Positive Ageing Town. "We strive to bring our community into Haven Bay," Deirdre explained. "It's important to

'I've been in St Peter's 10 years and I love what I do and I work from my heart.'

recognise positive ageing is for anybody who is actively getting old, and it is about embracing it; we are all getting older."

The night's penultimate honour, the Nursing Home Innovation Award, was accepted by Imelda Burke of TLC Citywest, Dublin, in recognition of a programme it has implemented with Irish Residential Dental Care for its 139 residents, to meet each of their dental needs. "It's brilliant to have the programme recognised, and the template is there for other nursing homes to follow," Deirdre explained.

The Resident Achievement Award, which had three recipients, was awarded to PJ Flood of Esker Lodge Nursing Home in Cavan; PJ Halligan of Moorehall Lodge in Louth; and Julia

Thurmann of Hamilton Park Care Facility. It celebrates the lives of individual residents and their continued achievements as members of the nursing home community.

The Nursing Homes Ireland Care Awards 2011 judging process was overseen by an independent judging panel led by Professor Brendan McCormack. These were Margot Brennan, PRO, Irish Nutrition & Dietetic Institute; Dr Suzanne Cahill, Dementia Services Information Development Centre, St James's Hospital; Mary J Foley, Vice President, All Ireland Gerontological Nursing Association; Mairead Hayes, Irish Senior Citizens Parliament; Jean Manahan, Head of National Development, Third Age Foundation; and Robin Webster, CEO, Age Action Ireland.

NHI CEO Tadhg Daly concluded: "We're delighted with the response and enthusiasm shown towards the 2011 NHI Care Awards. They go some way towards recognising the outstanding commitment and dedication that is a daily feature in nursing homes across the country. We look forward to once again celebrating excellence in care in 2012."

Visit www.nhicareawards.ie to view more information about the awards.



■ Zephra Johnston, who works in Greystones Nursing Home, Co. Wicklow, was a gold prize winner for her poem. 'Lovely to see the sunshine in this poem', the judges said.

Impressive writing contest entries

The response to our Is Feidir Linn writing competition was phenomenal. Below are the details of a selection of the gold prize winners in the short story and poetry categories, with the judges' comments.

The judges were impressed by the standard of the entries, with gold, silver and bronze prizes awarded.

Short Story

Mary Dwyer, Glasnevin, Dublin
The Golden Bottle is a beautiful short story. I find myself sitting back and treasuring its affect and puzzling how she managed to impart such gloriously full impressions in such a short word count.

I'm fascinated. The structured use of flashback (and cleverly, the technique isn't revealed until the end), the revealed inner thoughts, the hinted-at judgements, the understandably 'real' hopes/dreams and a lipstick leitmotif are just some of the delivery techniques used. It's a great story.

John Harte, Carthage Nursing Home, Tullamore
In 'My Short Stories' John brought us into his world and shared the places where he lived, the people he knew and the way of life he led. His account is in characteristic snapshots that are so well painted and written that I feel I've got to know him in a deeply personal way.

Poem

Zephra Johnson, Greystones Nursing Home, Co Wicklow
Molly is loved, cared for, respected and held in very high esteem in this lovely poem. It was lovely to see the sunshine in this piece.

Bridie Clarke, Drogheda, Co Louth
This poem is a lovely reflection on the passing of time. It brings alive images of nature, relating age to autumn.

Kathleen McEntee, St Mary's, Merrion Road, Dublin
'Out of Time' is a funny, direct and multi-layered poem. It's a prayer to self, an excuse to another. It is super that Kathleen does not allow her blindness to restrict her creative writing.



GET YOUR FOLKS ONLINE

Enlisting help to use the internet

Google and Age Action have launched a new website to help Ireland's younger generations teach their parents and older loved ones how to get the most from the Internet. **GetYourFolksOnline.ie** hopes to mobilise younger people across Ireland to pass their Internet skills on to the older people in their lives.

This partnership project uses best practice guidelines on how to teach older people to get the most from the Internet. The website uses course materials adapted from Age Action's Getting Started computer training programme for older people.

According to ComReg's most recent statistics, only 35% of people over the age of 50 are using the Internet,

while the majority of people under the age of 50 are online. Google is calling on anyone who is in a position to help, to check out the website, which has detailed lesson plans to help teach basic computer skills in an organised way.

"Older people are reluctant to ask family members for help, despite the fact that most people know someone in their own family, who would be well able to teach them," said Sinéad Gibney, Head of Social Action at Google.

Google's Social Action team have identified that when family members try to teach a parent Internet skills, they do it in a very reactive fashion, usually when their parents are stuck. When this happens, they tend not to teach but to 'fix' the immediate problem without helping their parents understand what went wrong. As a result, frustration grows and tensions rise - which doesn't make for happy families!

Win a Chrome Book

To celebrate the launch of www.getyourfolksonline.ie, Age Action is giving away a Chrome Book.

Since the launch of the website on November 25, the response has been fantastic. Christmas is an ideal time to visit the website and begin teaching an older relative or friend how to use a computer.

For details on how to enter the competition for the Chrome Book, visit <http://www.ageaction.ie/win-chrome-book-getyourfolksonlineie>. But hurry, the closing date for entries is December 20.

Age Action hopes the website will build on the success of our Getting Started computer training classes for older people, as it will be accessible to people who may not otherwise be able to get to one of our classes.

For details log on to www.getyourfolksonline.ie



■ A section of the 5,000 strong march in Abbeyleigh. Local protesters were joined by people from Athy, Thurles and as far away as Galway and Dublin to show solidarity and express dissatisfaction at what they are seeing in their communities.

Photo: Alf Harvey

Protest over Abbeyleigh closure

Age Action policy officer **Lorna Roe** joined the 5,000 people who took to the streets of Abbeyleigh recently to protest at moves to close their community nursing unit. She reflects on how austerity measures are hurting the poorest and sickest of older people.

The Irish are known worldwide for their good hospitality and charity. But after recent events, people could

be forgiven for not seeing the Government as a poster boy for our legendary warmth and heart.

Many older people are feeling the worst results of this new approach. Being parked here and there, never getting a 'straight answer' from those 'who are in the know', left stranded on trolley beds, jumping through bureaucratic hoops only to be put on endless waiting lists and having services cut.

In the most recent example, on November 20th the residents of Abbeyleigh Community Nursing Unit in

Co. Laois found they would be moved to another facility and their home shut down.

Like prisoners, it seems older people are to gather their belongings and transfer life and limb between facilities.

But what wrong did any sick older person do to justify being moved around like dead weight in the system? What wrong have they done to justify treating their homes as mere facilities, their ward companions as 'clients of the HSE', their day-to-day staff as faceless, transferable workers?

The people Age Action

met at the Abbeyleix protest march (November 22) spoke of the value of the nursing home in Abbeyleix; the sense of place it gave older people, how it was a pillar of support for local families; and how the staff were like extended family where 'everyone knows everyone'. Mary McCartney (89), who has been living at the hospital for eight years, said: "I love it in here. It's like home to me."

This top-down decision by the HSE, made with little consultation and no consideration for residents' views, is reminiscent of Julia Neuberger's feelings in her book *Not Dead Yet*: "Something is seriously wrong here. It isn't that somehow the providers have made a mistake about what older people want, it's that they haven't even thought it was important to find out."

For the 28 long-stay residents and eight respite clients, this is a devastating and uncertain time. But as Deputy Brian Stanley pointed out, this is not a Laois issue; it is a national one.

Demonstrators came from far and wide. Travelling from Athy, Thurles and as far away as Galway and Dublin, to show solidarity and express dissatisfaction at what they are seeing in their own communities.

Government spokesman and local TD Charlie Flanagan, addressing the

protest, said there is a "crisis in care of the elderly" brought on by bankruptcy. The response Age Action has seen so far is no better than plucking at the skeleton of services for older people.

Unlike trimming fat within the public sector, reductions have been focused on the essentials: basic community services, acute hospital beds, respite care services, public nursing home beds and increases in fees for services.

David Lawlor, who has a family member in the threatened Shaen psycho-geriatric unit, Co. Laois, said: "This is attacking the most vulnerable and poor in society."

As the numbers waiting for the Fair Deal rise again, families bear the pressure of constantly seeking clarification, chasing beds and trying to keep track of their parents' care.

But it is now time to call a halt. Services for older people can be stretched no further.

Just a day after more than 5,000 protesters took to the streets in County Laois, the outgoing European Central Bank member Dr Jurgen Stark found it appropriate to say that Ireland is the "role model" for bailout countries, and that progress is possible with "support from society and consensus across political parties".

Let there be no doubt. The Abbeyleix and Shaen resi-

dents do not support these austerity measures. The hundreds waiting sick in acute hospitals for nursing home care do not support these austerity measures. The thousands leaving the country because of the recruitment embargo do not support these austerity measures. People facing this winter with even less money to pay for ever more expensive fuel do not support these austerity measures.

It is time for the Government to consider the real value of the human beings behind their budgetary numbers. It is time to observe the principles at the heart of our Constitution to "safeguard with special care the economic interests of the weaker sections of the community" (Article 45.4.1. Bunreacht na hEireann)

It is time to stop picking the lowest hanging fruit and to develop proper measures to tackle the real issues at the top.

● **Three of the home's residents at the Abbeyleix Community Nursing Unit – Maureen Delaney (89), Bridget O'Neill (92) and Catherine Kelly (93) – secured leave in the High Court last month to bring a judicial challenge to the HSE's decision to close the home. Earlier this month, the court was told the closure decision had been reversed to facilitate a 12-week consultation process with the residents about their future care.**



■ The greatest increase in the number of older people in the world between now and 2050 will occur in the developing world.

Photo: Chris Leslie

Age proofing guidelines completed

Last month Age Action finalised the 'Age Proofing' guide — a resource for development policy makers.

Population ageing

The guide highlights the important demographics of ageing, which cannot be ignored in future policy decisions. For instance, the global population of older people (defined as over 60) will increase by an average 29 million each year between 2010 and 2050 — with 80% of this increase in developing countries. Therefore, by 2050, older people will account for 20% of the population in developing countries — the same percentage now experienced in developed countries. This means an unprecedented pace of population ageing, leaving less time to adjust to the consequences,

with fewer resources.

Human rights

Ageing and development was the first of three key themes when the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing was agreed by the UN General Assembly in 2002. The plan prompted many countries to take action on ageing, including publishing national policy, conducting research or setting up national ageing bodies. However, the plan is not legally binding, so its accountability mechanisms, budgets and mainstreaming of ageing as part of core public policy are often not addressed. Consequently, older people's groups and some member states have pushed for a rights-based approach to ageing, with the intention of bringing international legal obligations into play.

Human rights provide

a baseline for the guide. A fundamental tenet of human rights is that they are universal, to be enjoyed equally by all groups without discrimination. There has been a shift in focus in recent years away from the 'needs' of poor people to the rights of all human beings. Until recently, issues affecting older people were not mentioned explicitly in human rights law. The guide provides three key programming areas relating to older people's issues in the developing world: Livelihoods; HIV & AIDS; and Humanitarian assistance.

For more information please contact Margaret or Charlotte at 01 475 6989 or email gloaled@ageaction.ie

With thanks to Hannah Grene of Barncat Consulting who created the guide.

Kildare completes Age-Friendly strategy

A four-year strategy, aimed at making Kildare a great county in which to grow old, was published last month.

The Kildare Age-Friendly County Strategy 2011-2014, was produced by an alliance of older people's representatives and decision makers from key public, private and not-for-profit agencies in the county. Alliance members included Kildare Co. Council, the HSE, the Gardai, Kildare Leader Partnership, the

Ageing Well Network, Kildare VEC, Intel, NUI Maynooth and EngAGE Kildare.

Kildare is one of nine counties participating in the Ageing Well Network's National Age Friendly Counties Programme.

The strategy followed a countywide consultation on people's experiences as they age. Older people were consulted, as well as service providers, agencies, businesses and other organisations that help older people.

U3A MEETINGS



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Meetings last Tuesday of the month, (excluding June-August), 11am, at the Chester Beatty Library. Contact John Roche, (01) 201-7490

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Contact Eileen Larkin: (087) 4128607, (01) 455-7653

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Meet every 2nd Monday at 11am in Ballyroan Library. Contact Al Connor: (01) 490-3212

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Meetings every 2nd Monday 2pm in Ballymun Library. Contact: Vera Butler (01) 842-2256

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Meetings first Thursday of every month, Ballyowen Castle. Contact Gretta

Rabbitte: (085)

710-4853

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Meetings 3rd Tuesday of each month. Contact Anne Cowie: (045) 865-159

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Meetings second Wednesday each month, 10.45am-12.45pm at Baldoyle Library. Contact: u3asutbal@gmail.com or just come along to hear all about what is going on. You can also find out more on our website <https://sites.google.com/site/u3asuttonbaldoyledublin/>, <http://twitter.com/U3ASuttonbaldoyle> and www.myLocalNews.com.

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Meet every week. Contact Ann Brodie at (049) 854-8232

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Maynooth Library

Meet every 2nd Friday 11am. Contact Helena Kirkpatrick: (01) 628-5128

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Meet every 2nd Thursday. Contact Imelda Hanratty: (01) 462-8488

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Contact Terry (Theresa) Moloney: (051) 876542 or email tmoloney@wit.ie

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For more information, you can email Age Action Education Officer Margaret Fitzpatrick at u3a@ageaction.ie or phone (01) 475-6989

Annual membership application

We/I wish to join Age Action Ireland and enclose € membership fee, plus € voluntary donation = € total payable to Age Action Ireland Ltd

- €20 Individual — retired/unwaged
- €40 Individual — employed
- €60 Voluntary body
- €200 Statutory agency
- €500 Corporate/commercial

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Signature

Date

Please return to:

**Age Action Ireland Ltd,
30/31 Lower Camden Street,
Dublin 2**

Tel: (01) 475-6989

Fax: (01) 475-6011

Email: info@ageaction.ie

Fuel poverty petition



Age Action chief executive Robin Webster (pictured left) handed over our “How Low Can They Go” fuel poverty petition to the Minister for Older People

Kathleen Lynch before Budget Day.

Almost 2,500 people from across Ireland signed the petition, which called on the Government to reverse the cuts to the electricity/gas allocation that older people received under the Household Benefits Package, given the hardship it would cause.

THANKS!

Age Action would like to thank you if you:

... Entered a draw ... volunteered to do a Care and Repair call ... bought a raffle ticket ... donated an item to our charity shops ... went to a Getting Started training course ... made a donation ... sponsored someone ... gave of your time in any small way ... became a member ... ran a marathon, walked a 10K, struggled through a triathlon nominated someone for a Silver Surfer Award attended our Story Telling Event ... baked a cake ... made a will and left Age Action a legacy ... bought an item in our charity shop ... came to a photo shoot ... got involved in Positive Ageing Week ... knitted even one little hat for the Big Knit (or 500 as some of our fantastic ladies did),... .wrote for the Is Feidir Linn Competition.... baked a cake for the Big Bake dropped €2 in an Age Action bucket had afternoon tea and a dance at In the Mood.

Thank you SO much....YOU have helped us to make a big difference in older people's lives during 2011.

Holiday closing

Age Action would like to wish all readers of *Ageing Matters*, Age Action members and supporters, a happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year. Our offices will close at 5pm on Friday, December 23rd, and reopen at 9am on Tuesday, January 3rd.