

ageing matters

Members set agenda at AGM

Last year was our busiest ever **Pages 4-6**



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For all older people

This booklet is a publication of Age Action. It is published 10 times a year.

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■ Cover photo: Chief Commissioner at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Emily Logan with Age Action CEO Eamon Timmins at this year's AGM. (See report pages 4-6.)

Help plan for our future

Do you ever think about where you will be in three years time? And if you do, are you one of those people who puts a plan in place to achieve your goals, puts money aside to fund them and sets deadlines and targets for yourself? Or do you just aspire to be happy and healthy and (like many people) leave it at that?

Age Action is currently planning for the next three years. And we are looking for your help. We are working on a strategic plan — setting out where the organisation should be by the end of the 2018, how we are going to get there and how this will be funded.

It is a plan which will shape our work over the coming three years, directing how we should use our limited resources and how we best work together to achieve our goal of making Ireland the best place in the world in which to grow older.

In the words of President John F. Kennedy: “Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.”

Drive our work

Once complete, it will drive the work of staff and volunteers and the direction of the organisation.

We have restricted the plan to three years because it would be unrealistic to plan beyond that. However, we recognise that new opportunities may emerge in the coming years, and new threats. A good strategic plan will help us respond accordingly.

As part of our work on the strategic plan, we are consulting widely with our members. That process began last month when members attended a workshop prior to the AGM. It is continuing during July and early August.

So what do you think Age Action should be doing over the next three years? Where should the organisation be by the end of 2018? What are the key issues for older people, and which ones should Age Action prioritise? Are there things we are doing and ways of working which need to change?

These issues and more are covered in a questionnaire inserted in this edition. For those reading the magazine online, a version can be accessed at www.surveymonkey.com/r/8L7BGDL.

Please take a few minutes to share your views and insights, and return the completed questionnaire to us by 5 August.

— Eamon Timmins



■ Age Action members campaigning in 2007 – many of the issues sadly remain the same.

Pension increase demanded

The Minister for Social Protection was left in no doubt about the need for older people to see benefits from the upturn in the economy at the department's pre-budget forum in Dublin Castle at the start of July.

At a workshop focusing on issues for older people, Age Action was joined by Active Retirement Ireland, Alone and the Irish Senior Citizen's Parliament in pushing for an increase of €5 a week in the State Pension.

In April, the Government announced it expected to have at least €600 million available for additional spending in the October budget. Positive tax returns

since then suggest the figure may be even higher.

Age Action has urged the Government to set aside some of the additional spending promised in the coming budget to reverse the cuts to the incomes of older people imposed since 2009.

"Many older people have seen their weekly income cut by almost €14 a week since 2009," said Age Action's Naomi Feely.

"The majority are trying to get by solely on the State Pension. These last six years of austerity have been tough for older people."

Rising costs

Health and energy costs have risen steeply in recent years, and many older people find themselves forced to choose between paying for medicine or staying warm, while struggling to pay the new charges and

taxes introduced since 2011.

"The Government is considering a minimum of €600 million of additional spending, according to the Spring Statement in April," continued Naomi.

"Some of this can, and must, be used to reverse the cuts to the weekly income of some of the country's most vulnerable people.

"Older people spent a lifetime building this country. They shouldered their share of the austerity burden. As the economy returns to growth, they have a legitimate expectation that the sacrifices they made will be rewarded."

Other issues highlighted by older people's groups included the need to restore the telephone allowance and to allow private bus operators to join the Travel Pass Scheme.



■ CEO Eamon Timmins with presentations made to Emily Logan and Robin Webster after the AGM.

Growing stronger — hundreds attend Age Action AGM

Hundreds of Age Action members and supporters gathered in Croke Park last month for the organisation's Annual General Meeting.

For some, it was their first AGM, but for many others it was an opportunity to renew friendships, to discuss the direction of the organisation and to highlight issues, often ignored by the media, that affect older people in Ireland.

The chairperson of Age

Action's board, Mr Owen O'Sullivan, welcomed members and opened proceedings by presenting the draft annual report for approval.

"I'm very pleased to tell you that during 2014 we increased our income and reduced our expenditure, resulting in a fivefold increase in our surplus, and at the same time the report which is presented to you today shows that 2014 has been the busiest year in Age Action's history," said Owen.

He also paid tribute to our former CEO, Robin Webster.

"Robin was Age Action's first Chief Executive and he has led and shaped the organisation since 1993," said Owen.

"He has changed people's views of ageing. He has also inspired members and staff and, I would say, the general public to recognise Age Action. He leaves behind him a remarkable legacy."

New CEO

Owen's warm words to Robin were echoed by our new CEO, Eamon Timmins, who referred to Robin's success in challenging "the

way we think about older people and the way we structure society”.

Eamon gave members an overview of Age Action’s work in 2014. He highlighted the successful campaign to save the Travel Pass. He also praised the work of the fundraising team through Christmas FM and our thriving network of charity shops.

Eamon took members past the statistics and the annual report to talk about the difference the organisation makes in the daily lives of the people we represent.

He spoke of the Cork woman who didn’t know what to do with a tablet she received as a gift from her family. Thanks to our Getting Started programme she now enjoys watching TV programmes, checking cinema times and going on YouTube.

He told us about a Care and Repair client in Dublin who got locks installed in her home. Without this, she would have been afraid instead of confident and happy.

Emily Logan

The keynote address at the AGM was delivered by Ms Emily Logan, recently appointed the Chief Commissioner at the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), who received a warm welcome from delegates.

Ms Logan said she

thought Age Action has put older people on the map. She also shares many of the organisation’s concerns about the serious challenges older people face.

She particularly highlighted discrimination in employment and the need for meaningful protection from elder abuse.

She particularly highlighted discrimination in employment and the need for meaningful protection from elder abuse. She also said older people should be empowered to live in their own homes through quality, well-resourced community care that evolves to meet their needs as they grow older.

But she focused too on the positive contribution made by older people.

“It is important to celebrate

and wholly acknowledge the invaluable contribution that you’re making to society in terms of intergenerational exchange, caring for younger siblings, volunteering, sharing expertise, active contribution to the economy and supporting families and relatives through the recession,” she said.

The IHREC is developing its strategic plan for the next three years with a public consultation due to begin in the autumn. Ms Logan encouraged people to take part and concluded her remarks by saying she looked forward to working with Age Action to promote human rights and equality for older people in Ireland.

As members prepared for the journey home, there was satisfaction at everything that we, together, have accomplished in 2014 and determination that we will continue to grow and campaign on behalf of older people in the years to come.



■ Age Action members Bernie Carroll and Gloria Murphy chatting to former CEO Robin Webster after the AGM.

Voices from the AGM

**Bill Kelly:**

Some of us here, I'm sorry to say including myself, might shortly end up in a nursing home when we'd be far happier to spend the rest of our lives in our homes. I'm asking that members and the executive lobby TDs so that funds are made available so that this doesn't happen.



Marie Comerford: I don't have a medical card and nor does my husband, so we have to buy medical insurance. Because we're in our 60s, we have to pay a high rate, more than €1,500 a year, and then to pay for your doctor and whatever else. It's ridiculous.



Neilus Moriarty: In rural Ireland, and this also applies to urban areas, post offices are under threat. Pensioners like to go to the post office each week and I hope Age Action will lobby to retain our rural post offices and smaller post offices in urban areas.



■ Aileen Nolan, Catherine Smyth, Sean O'Gorman, Maria O'Sullivan, Gabriel O'Connell, Claire Bellis and Francis McCarron at the Helping Hands seminar.

Helping Hands in Monaghan

An evaluation seminar for Monaghan Integrated Development's Helping Hands last month was a valuable opportunity for community organisations to learn from each other, writes **Claire Bellis**.

The event was organised by Francis McCarron's community development team to look at how best to deliver sustainable Care and Repair services. Helping Hands was launched in 2011 and carries out small repairs for older and vulnerable people in Monaghan.

The seminar heard from representatives of various programmes. Aileen Nolan, Carlow Care and Repair's Tús Supervisor, outlined its phenomenal growth since its launch three years ago.

Additional services – such as a library drop-off – have proved popular, and the team is now looking to fund a second maintenance van for the county.

Sean O'Gorman from Laois Services to Elderly People described their own social economy service model, which provides a paid-for service that can undertake more complex jobs than Age Action.

Life story project

Catherine Smyth from Ballyhoura Rural Services gave a presentation on delivering a visiting and befriending service in a large rural community. She also gave details of a "Life Story" project which encouraged reminiscences and led to the production of a book telling each participant's story.

My presentation concentrated on the advantage of

working in community partnership with Age Action. The support and training, as well as association with a national charity, are real advantages for organisations starting a Care and Repair service.

Age Action's Care and Repair programme is directly delivered by our teams in Cork, Dublin and Galway and by a growing number of community partners nationwide.

I would encourage any community group to contact Age Action for information on starting a local Care and Repair service.

The seminar findings will be circulated once they're available.

Helping Hands serves the whole of Co. Monaghan and can be contacted on (042) 9749500 or by email at helpinghands@midl.ie.



■ The number of injuries in nursing homes reported to HIQA is a cause for concern.

Concern over nursing home inspection report

Age Action has expressed concern at the number of notifications of injury and abuse contained in the annual report from HIQA of its nursing home inspection service.

The report, published at the start of the month, revealed that there were more than 4,000 notifications of injury in 2014 – more than ten a day – and 357 allegations of abuse.

HIQA defines such injuries as those requiring medical or hospital treatment. A total of 909 cases required admission to a hospital.

“We need to see improvements, as HIQA says in its report, in risk management and safer care for residents in nursing homes,” said Age Action’s Head of Advo-

cacy and Communications Justin Moran.

HIQA carried out 758 inspections of public, private and voluntary nursing homes in 2014, the majority of which were unannounced.

Although HIQA issued more than 5,800 notices of corrective action to nursing homes, requiring changes to ensure they met the required standards, Nursing Homes of Ireland pointed out this was down substantially on 2013, suggesting there has been some improvement.

Bigger question

“But there is a much bigger question to be asked,” Justin continued. “Why are so many Irish people in nursing homes in the first place? Figures published by Alone in June indicate that the proportion of older people in nursing homes is 35 per cent greater than

the EU average.

“Many older people need quality nursing home care, but thousands could be at home with their families and in their communities if the proper supports were provided. That’s what they want.

“It’s what the Government’s National Positive Ageing Strategy promises. And it’s better value for money.”

Despite commitments from the Government to support people to stay at home, funding for home help services has dropped by more than 12 per cent since 2009 to €185 million.

“The practical impact of this,” Justin said, “is that more than a million and a half home help hours have been lost, and there are 6,000 fewer people getting home help today despite the continuing increase in the number of people over the age of 65.



■ Carer's Week began with a very successful launch event in Dublin. Photo: Paul Sherwood Photography

Celebrating the vital work of carers

The 9th annual Carers Week took place across Ireland between 8 and 15 June.

More than 150 events were organised across 26 counties. These ranged from a butter making class in Kilkenny to a Mamma Mia sing-along night in Cork, with lots of pamper days, lunches, talks and days out in between!

Carers Week Coordinator Zoe Hughes said: "This year's Carers Week was the biggest and most successful to date. Thousands of Family Carers had the chance to take a well-earned break and get some acknowledgement from their community for the vital role they play in society."

The week is coordinated by Care Alliance Ireland who work in partnership with eight other leading

Irish charities.

These were the Carers Association, Caring for Carers, Disability Federation Ireland, MS Ireland, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, Irish Hospice Foundation and the Irish Cancer Society.

National launch

The week began with the national launch in the Irish Hospice Foundation offices in Dublin.

Speakers at the launch included Family Carer Shirley Thornton, Senator Jillian van Turnhout, Yvonne Rossiter from Acquired Brain Injury Ireland, Care Alliance Ireland Director Liam O'Sullivan and television weather presenter Nuala Carey.

Ms Carey presented prizes to the winners of the schools' "How We Care" Art and Writing Competition.

At the same event, Professor Suzanne Cahill from Trinity College Dublin launched new Dementia Factsheets produced jointly by the Irish Hospice Foundation and the Alzheimer Society for Family Carers.

Next year will see the 10th anniversary of Carers Week. As it goes from strength to strength, we are sure it will be the best and most successful yet.

But it's vital that the contribution of Family Carers is recognised all year long.

As Liam O'Sullivan, Executive Director of Care Alliance, said during the week: "Whether you just call in, make a meal, offer help and support or, if they are far away, give them a call to say 'You are doing something really important,' there is a huge value in simply offering your thanks."



■ Age Action CEO Eamon Timmins, Senator Feargal Quinn and Ulster Bank Head of Communications and Corporate Affairs Sarah Dempsey at the forum on financial elder abuse. Photo: Fennell Photography

Working to tackle elder abuse

The latest figures from the HSE indicate that there were 2,437 referrals to its elder abuse service in 2014 with 26 per cent of these relating to financial abuse.

Financial abuse includes theft, fraud or exploitation; pressure in connection with wills, power of attorney, property, inheritance or financial transactions; or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

In 2014, Age Action received funding from

Ulster Bank to raise awareness about this issue among bank staff and older people. As part of this work, Age Action and Ulster Bank jointly hosted a stakeholder forum in June.

More than a hundred people came together at Ulster Bank's offices on George's Quay in Dublin. They included older people, social workers, bank officials and representative organisations from the financial, community and voluntary sectors.

Tackling the issue

Senator Feargal Quinn chaired the event and opened the proceedings,

urging everyone to work together to tackle the issue. The forum heard valuable presentations from some of the country's top experts in their fields.

Dr Attracta Lafferty from the National Centre for the Protection of Older People (NCPOP) described research undertaken in the area of financial elder abuse both in Ireland and internationally.

In particular, she highlighted the work that the NCPOP and the Older People's Empowerment Network (OPEN) had undertaken on a campaign called Keep Control.

Keep Control "is an edu-

cational and information campaign developed by older people for older people” (www.keepcontrol.ie) that empowers older people to take control of their finances and protect themselves from financial abuse.

Thelma Doran from OPEN spoke about the value of the campaign and how its content was driven by older people and their experiences.

Bridget McDaid from the HSE next provided an overview of referrals to the elder abuse service since it was set up in 2007.

A startling statistic highlighted by Bridget in her presentation was that in 45 per cent of substantiated cases the perpetrator of financial abuse was an older person’s son or daughter.

The HSE provides a valuable service for those concerned about issues of elder abuse and the extensive work they do each year was evident in Bridget’s presentation.

Key personnel from Ulster Bank’s fraud department gave an eye-opening insight into scams and frauds. Nichola Priestly and Margaret Hunter both have extensive experience of helping Ulster Bank’s customers deal with these issues.

They provided valuable advice for everyone present, making it clear just how seriously the bank takes its

responsibility to protect the savings of those who trust it with their money.

Detective Sergeant Catharina Dunne from the Garda Fraud Bureau showed the audience skimming devices used at ATMs and advised on how customers could best protect themselves.

Survey

In the second half of the forum, Age Action’s Senior Policy Officer Naomi Feely presented the findings of our surveys of older people and bank officials.

Forty-two per cent of the older people surveyed indicated that they were aware of the issue of financial abuse, while almost 50 per cent of bank officials indicated that they have dealt with cases of suspected financial elder abuse.

The issue of financial abuse requires a response from social workers, financial institutions and older

people themselves.

To explore this further, we held roundtable discussions about the challenges to addressing financial abuse and how we could work together to help protect older people and their families.

Through these discussions and an open question and answer session, we received many helpful suggestions that will be incorporated in the training and awareness materials we will produce at the end of the project.

For more information on the project, contact Naomi Feely by email at socialinclusion@ageaction.ie or by phone on (01) 475-6989.

● To report a case of suspected elder abuse, contact the HSE on 1850-24-1850 from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Saturday.



■ Age Action members discuss ways of preventing financial elder abuse.

Photo: Fennell Photography.



■ Pauline Power, Eamon Timmins and Jennifer Glansford with some of the equipment generously donated by Google.

Partners in fighting digital exclusion

Age Action and Google have been working together to fight digital exclusion since 2010.

The partnership is probably best known for the annual Silver Surfer Awards, which Google supported for four years. These recognised the online achievements of many older people and encouraged thousands more to get online. The awards also led to the roll-out of the Silver Surfer towns in Donegal, Mallow and Navan.

But the relationship between Google and Age Action goes much deeper. The company runs weekly Age Engage classes at its offices where employees (known as Googlers) volunteer to tutor older people in basic IT skills. The classes have been very successful and

there has been no shortage of Googlers willing to give back to the local community.

Age Action and Google jointly developed a website, Get Your Folks Online, to encourage people to provide IT training to an older relative or friend.

Technology barriers

Google also funded a joint research project with Age Action which looked at some of the barriers older people face in using new technology.

This led to the setting up of our drop-in facilities in Dublin and Galway for people with specific questions or who want to practise a little. It also drove the expansion of our free technical support service through Care and Repair in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

The company has also

provided funding and equipment for various computer training projects.

Google employees raised funds for the refurbishment of the computer room at the Cambridge Court sheltered housing complex in Ringsend and also made generous donations to Age Action. Through Google's Goodware donation programme, Age Action has received refurbished PCs and laptops, along with a donation earlier this year of tablet computers, which will be used for a pilot project with older people who are housebound.

"Our partnership with Google has been a huge success story," said Age Action's Pauline Power. "There are literally thousands of older people who wouldn't be online without their help, and we hope to continue working together for years to come."



■ Brian Hayes MEP (centre) with a group after a tour of the European Parliament. If you or your group would like to visit the European Parliament, please contact colm@brianhayes.ie.

EU solution to Irish waiting lists

As part of the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive patients have the right to receive medical treatment in another EU member state and to have some or all of the costs repaid, writes **Brian Hayes MEP**.

Your home country has an obligation to ensure that the medical follow-up is of the same quality, regardless of where in the EU the treatment takes place.

Once you have been properly referred and have received approval, patients can avail of healthcare in a public or private facility in another EU country. You can recoup the costs of the treatment, up to what it costs in the public system here.

This has the potential to

radically reduce waiting times for people throughout Ireland waiting for elective procedures. The trouble is that not enough people know about these rights.

Each EU country must have a National Contact Point to inform the public and provide information.

Each EU country must have a National Contact Point to inform the public and provide information. In Ireland the HSE runs our National Contact Point. We know there is an interest in this scheme as 742 people have enquired about it over 12 months, but only 62 have had treatment paid for.

That's why I'm campaigning to have the HSE notify all those on elective waiting

lists of their rights directly.

Travelling to another country and having to pay the costs upfront will not be an option for all patients. But for others it could mean that a life changing procedure can happen sooner rather than later. The reduced waiting lists benefit all.

The HSE has made efforts to reduce the paperwork involved and recently cut the application form to seven pages. I welcome these improvements, but the HSE needs to do more to make it easier for patients to apply for this important new EU right.

For more information, phone the HSE's National Contact Point at (056) 778-4546 or email crossborderdirective@hse.ie. You can also log on to www.hse.ie/crossborderdirective for more details.



■ Members of the Roscommon team at Go for Life Games 2015.

Photo: Tommy Clancy

Going for gold with Go for Life

The Go for Life Games bring together more than 300 people to compete and have fun with leisure sports and maybe even taking home some glory for their county.

The games are a fun festival of sport. People from across 20 counties come to Dublin City University to get active, to compete and, most importantly, to socialise and have some craic with their team and with other competitors.

“We have people here who probably didn’t do any sports for the last 30 or 40 years,” says Niall Farrelly of the Offaly Team, “and now they are here enjoying themselves – and winning!”

Over the past four years, the games have grown

from being a single day to having an infrastructure of leagues and practice sessions that have sprung up around the country, supported by Local Sports Partnerships.

Growing interest

“Interest has grown in some counties to the extent that the final county team has to see off some stiff competition before they get to DCU,” says Mary Harkin, Head of Sport and Physical Activity in Age and Opportunity, which runs the games with the support of the Irish Sports Council.

“But there is still an emphasis on being a good sport, and we award Spirit of the Games awards to people who add to the cooperative and good humoured nature of the day.”

The games themselves

are devised specifically for Go for Life. ‘Lobbers’ is a target game adapted from pétanque and boules, for example, and ‘Scidils’ is a two-sided adaptation of ten pin bowling but using two skittles.

These games can be played and practised by anyone no matter what level of sporting ability.

For groups that are interested in playing the games (or getting fitter and more active in general), the Go for Life Small Grant Scheme will be open for applications at the end of August.

Find out more about Go for Life, the games and the upcoming Go for Life Small Grant Scheme by contacting Ciara Dawson in Age and Opportunity. Email gfl@ageandopportunity.ie or phone (01) 805-7733.

Members focus on coming Budget

Members of the Cork Glór group after a policy and advocacy training session for Age Action members in Galway, which focused on the October Budget and the coming general election. Our members and supporters across the country will need to work together to put older people's issues on the political agenda.



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475-6989.

Ombudsman to investigate private nursing homes

Ombudsman Peter Tyndall has welcomed the announcement that his office will be able to examine complaints from the public about private nursing homes.

Residents of public nursing homes could have their complaints independently examined, but most residents in private nursing homes could not.

“The Government’s decision will ensure that some of the most vulnerable people in our communities will have their complaints examined independently,” said Mr Tyndall.



■ Ombudsman Peter Tyndall.

The extension of the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction will apply only to complaints which occur on or after 24 August 2015 and will not have retrospective effect.

Annual membership application

I wish to join Age Action and enclose
€..... membership fee, plus €.....
voluntary donation payable to Age Action
Ireland Ltd.

If you are already an existing Age Action
member and wish to renew your membership
please write your membership number here ...

Full name:.....
(Block capitals please)

Address:

Tel:

Email:

Date:

FEES

€20 Individual – retired/unwaged

€40 Individual – employed

€60 Voluntary Body

€200 Statutory Agency

€500 Commercial

STANDING ORDER

To the Manager
(Name of Bank/Building Society)

Bank Address:

Please pay annually to Age Action Ireland,
Permanent TSB, 70 Grafton Street, Dublin 2,
BIC: IPBSIE2D

IBAN: IE82 IPBS 9906 2587 7790 21
the following amount €.....

until further notice. Starting on: 1st Day of
January 20

Name:

(Block capitals please)

BIC:

IBAN:.....

Signature:

Please return to:

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