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■ Cover: The scene in Molesworth
Street, Dublin, during the Budget protest rally on
October 22. See report and photos pages 8 and 9.
Photo: Eric Luke/The Irish Times

Human rights for older people

Government is playing a leading role in promoting human rights of older people internationally through the United Nations, but it's now time to gave the same attention to the rights of older people at home.

This year Ireland was elected to the UN Human Rights Council for the first time. In the UN meeting in Geneva in September, Ireland was the co-sponsor of a successful decision to appoint a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Older Persons. This could be an important step towards a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People. The Government, particularly Joe Costello, Minister for Development and Trade in the Department of Foreign Affairs, are to be warmly congratulated and supported in these actions. The urgent necessity for greater protection of these basic rights has been highlighted by the awful living conditions in the Philippines, before and after Typhoon Haiyan. These measures are equally important as a building block in establishing and protecting human rights for people of all ages throughout the world.

The progress in establishing rights for older people at home is less impressive. After seven years of research and consultations, the Government published its National Positive Ageing Strategy last March with the promise of an implementation plan within six months. The fact that a strategy was published without an implementation plan was worrying, but let's hope the early publication of a plan with clear objectives and measurable actions will allay our worst fears.

One major deficit in the plan is that there will be no focus on human rights because that is not even mentioned in the strategy. This omission is completely at odds with the overwhelming demand from the written comments and findings of the regional consultative meetings in developing the strategy.

Put simply, older people, like younger people, want to know what benefits and services that they are entitled to and where they go if services prove inadequate, inaccessible, late or unaffordable. This is a major gap.

Despite the Government's fear of rights, there are already examples of good practice that could be built on and copied. The Health Information Quality Authority (HIQA) has transformed the quality of residential care through its quality standards and independent inspections with real sanctions against poor standards. HIQA's remit should be extended to community care. The Government could also follow the example of Northern Ireland and appoint a Commissioner for Older People as a champion of the rights and interests of all older people (http://www.copni.org). — **Robin Webster**

Tickets going fast for Christmas Afternoon Tea event

Tickets are selling fast for Age Action's Christmas Afternoon Tea in Dublin, featuring Ronan Collins and his band.

The fun takes place at the Regency Hotel, Drumcondra, on December 10, from 2.30pm.

"The response to date has been fantastic, and we are expecting a large crowd for a great afternoon of music and friendship," Age Action's Daragh Matthews said. "We are grateful to our sponsors Bluebird Care for their generous support."

Tickets (including afternoon tea and the show) are €20. To book your place, contact Sheila or Daragh at (01) 475-6989 or email fundraising@ageaction.ie



■ Ronan Collins and his Band will be adding to the joy at the Christmas Tea Party.

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■ The group, during their tour, get to view some of the technology used at one of the units at the Great Northern Haven residential complex.

Future tech and ageing in Ireland

It's 9am August 29, and we're sitting in the sun beside the shimmering water of the River Liffey.

There are 18 of us – a motley crew, all waiting on the Bus Eireann 100X to take us north to meet the people of the Netwell Centre in Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT).

Working under the leadership of Director Rodd Bond, the centre focuses entirely on tackling the problems of older people ageing and staying in their own homes.

Through better integrated community services, moresustainable home and neighbourhood design and more age-friendly technology, they aim to enhance living by making homes smarter, and it was our pleasure to be led through their work, their passions, their curiosities and daily challenges.

We were introduced to the Great Northern Haven (GNH), a 16-unit purposebuilt smart-technology apartment block. Run in conjunction with Centre for Affective Solutions for Ambient Living Awareness (CASALA), these apartments are Europe's first livein IT design project for older people.

GNH is home to 16 single older people who go about their lives and interact with new technological appliances and software, all being tested to see if they can make the life of an older person easier.

There was the simple and obvious, such as electronic windows, curtains and blinds. But there was also the nifty, such as the kettle cradle that supported the pouring of hot liquids. And finally there was the original, as we learned when we saw the movable kitchen cabinets which could be electronically lowered to be wheelchair accessible.

Bed sensors which activated dimmed lights to help a person get their bearings in those inconvenient, middle of the night bathroom trips were impressive, as was live monitoring of data which activated alerts to close family or friends if a person wandered out of the house in the middle of the night. The group also got to see an integrated voice acti-

vation system that enabled both a good-morning call and immediate emergency calls.

But the most impressive contraption was an energy saving device that used smart technologies – a system that shut down the heating when the resident opened the window or, vice versa, increased heating when the apartment fell below a standard temperature. Imagine the savings on the electricity on that!

Our group left revived and brimming with new ideas.

And on we went to taste the fares of the DkIT student café. Not quite the Michelin star experience for food to be fair, but definitely the Michelin star of experiences. We took over a long table and filled it with the chatter and hum of new friendships and acquaintances.

At 2pm we were back promptly for our meeting with the director Rodd Bond who led us through his vision for the centre - an idea of a positive and holistic ageing experience where state and society complement each other to deliver supports and, more importantly, a welcoming and encouraging environment for older people.

We were introduced to the Cultaca project, a service run by two individuals trying to better connect vulnerable older people to services in their community.

Ann Marron led us through the how and why of Cultaca with in-depth case studies. These stories illustrated the need for developing a real connection that only a face-to-face visit can provide.

She told us about the importance of a sustained connection with a person, to build a trusting relationship where personal solutions can be explored. This relationship puts an umbrella of support over a person having difficulty and advocates for a person with other agencies, for example to help secure a local authority grant for essential home

repairs.

We were touched by the experience, and left with a deep sense of the passion and commitment of these two remarkable people and the service that had been so carefully developed.

Finally, our whistle-stop tour ended in a sci-fi fashion, where we entered the simulation CAVE. Used mainly for designing software and appliances, this 3-D imaging room came alive when we put on some futuresque goggles. A camera was on hand to capture our giggles.

Overall, it became clear to all that these individuals in Netwell are a talented bunch who are ploughing a new furrow for ageing in Ireland. And it was with great pleasure that the Age Action staff, the Age Action Glor members and U3A groups got to travel and spend a few hours in their lives.

At 4.30pm we stood on the old Dublin road waiting again on the 100X. But we left with the knowledge that these people in Dundalk were slowly shifting the landscape on ageing. And for that, we were all entirely grateful.

Age Action would like to express our sincere gratitude to Rodd Bond and his team for this trip, and notably to Ms Karen Doherty who patiently worked to make this happen.



Members of the Age **Action group** wear their special glasses during their visit to the CAVE 3-D imaging room at the Netwell Centre.



At the launch of the Age Action booklet on income security were (from left) Age **Action chief execu**tive Robin Webster, **HelpAge International Head of Policy Eppu** Mikkonen-Jeanneret, **Minister of State** for Trade and **Development Joe Costello and Age Action's Ageing and Development officer Lianne Murphy.**

Income security booklet launched

Minister of State for Trade and Development Joe Costello recently launched an Age Action booklet on income security for older people in Ireland and developing countries.

The Ageing and Development and Social Policy teams collaborated to produce *Income Security:* Why it matters for older people everywhere. The booklet highlights the importance of income security for older people across the world. It emphasises the shared issues between Ireland and developing countries and notes the importance of state pensions.

The Minister spoke about the importance of making people, particularly older people, in Ireland aware of issues older people face in developing countries. He said Irish Aid, the Irish government's programme for overseas development, had begun an initiative encouraging retired people to volunteer and bring their skills and knowledge to benefit developing countries.

He also spoke about the AFFORD programme that Irish Aid funds. It is run by HelpAge International and aims to increase access to social protection through civil society-led accountability mechanisms in Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. It is also working to ensure access to age-appropriate health services for older people in these countries. Age Action partners with HelpAge International on this programme.

HelpAge International Head of Policy Eppu Mikkonen-Jeanneret provided at the launch a global overview of income security in old age. She detailed which countries globally provide pensions for their

older populations.

Eppu looked at social security as a human right; something the booklet also touches on. She highlighted the positive impact pensions have on older people and their families, from HelpAge International's experience working in many countries around the world.

While Irish Aid provides funding for our Ageing & Development programme (through our partners HelpAge International), the Department of Social Protection funded the production and launch of the booklet on October 14 through a grant for the United Nations Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

If you would like a copy of the booklet, please contact Lianne Murphy at ageinganddevelopment@ageaction. ie. It can also be read at www.ageaction.ie

Giving dignity for Christmas

Age Action is urging members and supporters to give the gift of dignity to an older person this Christmas, to enable them live with greater independence in 2014, by supporting our festive campaign.

The campaign was launched this month and features Eileen (83), a widow who lives alone in north Dublin. Her husband died 10 years ago and her only daughter lives in Sydney. Two years ago Eileen had a stroke. She now depends on an electric wheelchair to move outside her home.

Age Action's Care and Repair team maintain her garden, where she gets great joy, sitting outside most days. Our volunteers will put up her Christmas decorations this month, and then take them down in the New Year. A tutor from our Getting Started programme has taught Eileen to use a computer. She now chats with her daughter several times a week using Skype. But Eileen needs more than computer skills and our DIY service to remain living independently. Our advocacy team are working hard to protect her pension,

the number of hours she gets from her home help and her wheelchair-accessible public transport from being cut.

"There are many older people in similar circumstances to Eileen," Age Action's Daragh Matthews said. "With Age Action's help, they are living with dignity and independence in their own homes."

We need your support to continue with, and expand, our work in 2014 to help more older people. We have launched our Christmas raffle and homebox campaign to raise urgently needed funds. We are writing to members, offering them the choice of raffle tickets or a homebox. The raffle prizes this year are very special with a top prize of €1,500. There is €1.000 for second. €500 for third and a €100 seller's prize.

Alternatively, you can use our Christmas homebox over the festive period. Place it in a central place and invite fam-





■ Eileen (83) is one of those who needs your support through our Christmas campaign.

friends to make a donation.

"We would be most grateful for your support, but if you cannot, that's fine – we don't want you to feel under any obligation," Mr Matthews said.

If you are not an Age
Action member but would
like a home box, you can
order one by phoning
Daragh or Sheila at (01)
475-6989 or emailing them
at fundraising@ageaction.
ie. You can also support
the campaign by donating
through our website at
www.ageaction.ie.

The closing date for raffle ticket returns is December 16, with the draw taking place on December 20. We would also be grateful if you could send back the proceeds of your Homebox by December 31.





- FAR LEFT:
 Diarmaid
 O'Sullivan,
 formerly of
 the Older and
 Bolder alliance,
 came with a
 message for the
 politicians.
- LEFT: Angela Nugent and Alan Lawes, from Dublin.

Solidarity against the Budget

Older people took to the streets of Dublin last month to send a powerful message to the Government about the damage which measures in Budget 2014 would do to them.

Gardai estimated that up to 13,000 people attended the rally outside the gates of Leinster House on October 22. Despite the fact that it was hastily arranged and under a steady drizzle for much of the day, older people turned out in force, armed with colourful banners and gritty determination. It was one of the largest protests in Dublin this year.

"We want you to go to

the clinics of each of the government parties and tell them that they are not to vote for this budget," Mairead Hayes, chief executive of the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, told the rally. The ISCP organised the rally, which was supported by a wide range of older people's representative groups.

Age Action chief executive Robin Webster urged the crowds to resist attempts to drive a wedge between younger and older people. He challenged politicians to explain how measures such as cutting the phone allowance and dramatically increasing the prescription charge for Medical Card holders lived up to the Government's commitment to protect the most vulnerable of older people. The

Budget had not only hit older people, he said, but had hit the sickest, the poorest and the most vulnerable of older people the hardest.

Older people were angry about a wide range of changes contained in the Budget. Speakers listed the abolition of the phone allowance, hikes in the prescription charge, the ending of the bereavement grant, further cuts to the Over-70s Medical Cards and changes to health insurance tax relief.

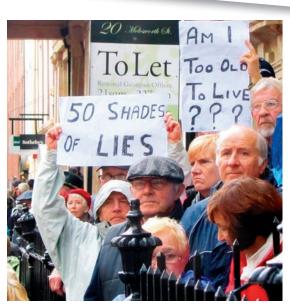
And if the politicians were left in any doubt about how older people felt, they had only to read the placards and banners, which included: "Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid of Grey Power," "Cannot Afford to Live Cannot Afford to Die," "Cuts That Don't Heal," "I'm grey, I'm proud, I vote".



- ABOVE: Age Action director Dave Henshaw travelled from Athy, Co. Kildare, to take part in the protest.
- RIGHT: Age Action chief executive Robin Webster challenged the Government in his speech from the platform.
- BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT: Sentiments of the crowds on display.









■ Departure lounge: Tadhg and Saibhe O'Sullivan and Lorraine Dorgan (right) at Dublin Airport at the start of their fundraising trek for Age Action.

A personal and eternal journey

Nothing could have prepared me for the Camino experience. It was certainly a very personal journey and a trip I will not forget

As part of our fundraising campaign, Age Action ran its own Santiago de Compostela trip in September with the support of Camino Ways. We opted for the French route, which is the most popular, and we walked from Sarria to Santiago de Compostela. The trip took eight days and seven nights, involving six

walking days to cover the 115km route.

The purpose of the trip was to raise funds for our Care & Repair programme to enable us to continue providing our free service to older people living in their own homes. However. I had a personal reason for wanting to participate on the Camino, to do it in memory of my eldest daughter Michelle who died suddenly seven years ago. She had travelled to many places around the world in her short 19 years, so she was my inspiration.

Along with some volunteers, I raised approximately €8,000 for our C&R programme. I should like to thank everyone who helped us, and especially Tadho and Saibhe O'Sullivan from Ballincollig in Cork who accompanied me on the trip.

One of the most amazing things about the Camino is the people I met. Some of them were experienced walkers, having come very long distances, and were on the home straight on the final 115km. However, the majority were inexperienced walkers of all ages, and from all over the world.

The oldest walkers I met were a couple in their late

70s who now had the time and resources to fulfil a life-long dream. They were amazing and an inspiration to anyone thinking of doing the walk.

Along the journey I talked and I listened.
Conversations on the
Camino can last for days.
You meet a group of people one day and then meet them again several days later.

For me the walking, and the nothing-to-do-but-walk thing, made for a gentle, rambling, stream-of-consciousness type conversation that's precious and unique. I will never forget some of these talks.

Everyone I met had their own reason for doing the walk, some for religious

reasons and others for the challenge. I met two lads from Northern Ireland who got drunk one night watching the movie *The Way* and decided there and then that they would book the trip the following day.

I met a father and three of his grown sons who were doing the trip because it was something their father wanted to do. He did not have much time as he had been diagnosed with terminal cancer.

Apart from talking to fellow walkers I had a lot of time to myself, which was an experience I had not had in many years. I was intensely involved with the workings and changes in my own body and this was a topic of conversation with

a wide variety of people along the way. Essentially I was undergoing a crash course in what it meant to be human.

Nothing can prepare you for the Camino experience. It's a very personal 'journey' that will leave its stamp on you for many years to come.

Age Action is accepting expressions of interest in participating on the Camino in September 2014. If you are interested, contact me on (01) 475-6989 or email lorraine.dorgan@ageaction. ie. The money raised is for a very good cause.

The Camino never ends even upon your return; it's always there.

Buen Camino.

Lorraine Dorgan



■ Everyone had a reason for doing the Camino. A father and his three sons were doing the trip because it was something their father wanted to do; he had been diagnosed with terminal cancer.



■ Final destination: Age Action fundraisers (from left) Tadhg and Saibhe O'Sullivan and Lorraine Dorgan outside the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.



■ Community Garda Marie O'Neill with St. Luke's **Home resident Patricia** Olden, casting her vote in October's referendums.

Full agenda for Age Action Cork

The Age Action office in Cork is located in St. Luke's Home, Mahon and the St. Luke's team work together with Age Action on several projects.

Among other things, **Activities Coordinator Ann** Crowley runs a fantastic programme of events during Positive Ageing Week each year. This year was no exception, and a full week of activities was arranged for the residents.

A visit to Collins Barracks Cork was organised by St Luke's volunteer Brian Lenihan. Before he retired. Brian was a Lt Colonel in the army. He spoke of his service overseas in Libya and the Far East. Brian conducted a tour for the group of 20 and gave a very interesting history of the barracks. Much of the memorabilia on display was of great interest to the group, particularly the old uniforms and weapons used in the early years. Photographs, medals and letters showing the hardship of those times brought back memories for the group.

John O'Mahony, regional manager for Age Action, and his colleague Julie Oates organised a Fun with Technology workshop for the residents, demonstrating how easy it is to use computers and how they can help the older person keep in touch with family. The workshop was attended by St Luke's CEO David O'Brien and Age Action CEO Robin Webster.

Also during Positive Ageing Week, resident advocate Eugene Browne made the arrangements to ensure that St Luke's Home residents were able to vote in the referendum. The week concluded with a visit from the Lord Mayor of Cork, Catherine Clancy, and the President of St. Luke's Home, Bishop Paul Colton.

Another project on which Age Action and St. Luke's Home work together is the Age and Dementia Friendly Community campaign. This venture, which is being piloted in Mahon, aims to make Mahon an age- and dementia-friendly community by raising awareness of dementia.

We are running free workshops for local businesses and community groups showing how they can better cater for the older adult, particularly those who suffer from dementia.

Making buildings easier for older people to navigate, recognising the symptoms of dementia and knowing how to approach a person with dementia who may be lost or confused form key parts of learning in the workshop.



Hearing loss is not something we should just tolerate

We often take the simple things in life for granted – like our hearing. People often forget the impact that good hearing has on the quality of their lives and, unfortunately, many people feel that hearing loss is something they should put up with. The most common type of hearing loss is age-related, but there are also genetic causes of deafness and hearing problems. If a GP cannot find an obvious physical cause of loss, they will then recommend you get your hearing tested.

At Hidden Hearing, the hearing test takes an hour from start to finish and is completely

painless. During this hour, the hearing specialists take a complete medical history and examine the ear before they go through the various grades of hearing. Then, depending on the results of this test, they may recommend you get a hearing aid. Fortunately, the hissing and whistling hearing aids of old are long gone and have been replaced by state-of-the-art digital hearing aids that are so discreet they are barely visible.

To book a free hearing test at any Hidden Hearing clinic nationwide visit www.hiddenhearing.ie or call free-phone 1800 882 884.

Our thanks

Age Action would like to express our genuine thanks to the Sligo Park Hotel and the Royal Marine Hotel in Dun Laoghaire for their generous support during Positive Ageing Week. Both donated prizes for the raffle at the Over-50s event in Dublin Zoo during the week.

Growing up in 1940s Dublin

From Hugs to Kisses

Self-published by Tom Bye

This memoir opens with a prologue where the author promises to recount honestly what life was like for him and his brother and sisters growing up in a rented room with their great mom on a Dublin lane in the 1940s.

His writing reflects the strong Dublin accent redolent of the life on the streets he grew up on.

He selects only certain events to describe like his first day at school, the shame of having to wear his sister's borrowed pink knickers, and the tall nun

her long beads and a slapper. Soon he passes into a kind lady teacher's class. She places him beside a beautiful girl. They become pals. This year he makes his first Communion - highlight of the story, a happy day when his mom treats him like royalty and relatives feast him and give him money. His mother takes him on a bus ride where he meets famous Bang Bang on a double decker and has his photo professionally taken.

At home his mom kept a roaring fire. The fire was all she had to cook on. She also kept a slop bucket for a toilet. The author was soon carrying it out

> to empty it in the communal toilet at the end of the

He liked the lane and the games the boys played - growing sexually aware at a young age.

He describes his dad as a cross, shadowy figure, mainly living with his aunts in the luxury of their corporation flat, who came home for short periods and beat him. His dad returned to work in England during the war and never came back, while Christina, his mother, eked out a living, cleaning big houses to feed her children.

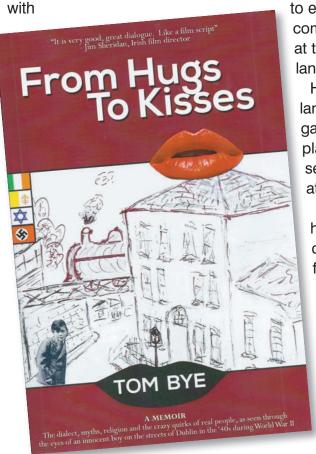
The lane had rats and flies but Stephen describes it vibrating with life where horses stood in line to have shoes mended, while a horse doctor kept sick animals overnight. Doors were always kept open, with no locks on the lane.

The author recounts how his mother had been a factory girl, who became pregnant out of wedlock. The priest suggested driving her to a convent where she could work the laundry before giving her baby up for adoption to rich people. Christina refused, marrying his father instead.

Soon he moves to a violent primary school, and so leaves directly after passing his Primary Certificate Examination to work as a factory office boy. The story ends so early - the author must plan a sequel.

— Beth Nunan

From Hugs to Kisses by Tom Bye is 270 pages in paperback. It can be ordered from Amazon.com (US\$11.69 paperback or \$4.33 Kindle purchase) or directly from the author by phoning (086) 349-6555.



New services available from ESB

As winter approaches, storms may cause interruptions to electricity supplies. ESB Networks would like customers to be aware of two new services that may help during a power outage.

In addition to their existing (1850) 372999 number, customers can call our 24/7 landline number (021) 238-2410, particularly those with free landline to landline calls.

You can also can find realtime information on power supply outages anywhere in the

country using Powercheck at www.esb.ie/esbnetworks/powercheck or on their Powercheck app. By clicking or tapping on app icons, customers can find the start time of an outage and an estimated restoration time.

Log into their website www.esb.ie/esbnetworks/powercheck or download the Powercheck app from the App Store to a smart phone (such as an iPhone) and you can keep yourself fully informed of the progress in restoring your power supply.

U3A MEETINGS

- Dublin City U3A
 Meeting last Tuesday of each month at 11am in the Chester
 Beatty Library. Contact John
 Roche: (01) 201-7490
- Blackrock U3AContact Eileen Larkin: (087)4128607, (01) 455-7653
- Ballyroan U3A
 Meet every 2nd Monday at
 11am in Ballyroan Library.
 Contact Al Connor:
 (01) 490-3212
- Ballymun U3A
 Meetings every 2nd Monday,
 2pm in Ballymun Library.
 Contact: Vera Butler (01)
 842-2256
- Lucan U3A
 Meetings 2nd Monday of the month, Ballyowen Castle.
 Contact Ann Hargaden (email: annhargaden@eircom.net)

- Blessington U3A
 Meetings 3rd Tuesday of each month. Contact Anne Cowie:
 (045) 865-159
- Sutton/Baldoyle-Dublin North-East. Meets 10.45-12.45, Baldoyle Library. Second Wednesday every month (excl Jun-Aug). Contact: u3asutbal@gmail. com. Phone: 01-832 3697 Website: u3asuttonbaldoyledublin
- Active Virginians U3A
 Meet every week.
 Contact Ann Brodie at (049) 854-8232
- Maynooth U3A.
 Community Space, beside
 Manor Mills Shopping centre
 Meet every Friday 11am.
 Contact Helena Kirkpatrick:
 (01) 628-5128
- An Cosan U3A Tallaght.

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

- Waterford U3A Contact Margaret Wheeler: mwheeler2010@live.ie
- Monaghan U3AContact Mary Beagan: (047)75942, (086) 331-4439
- Tramore U3A
 Meetings 3rd Thursday of the month, 11am, Coastguard
 Station, Love Lane, Tramore.
 Contact Mollie Hunt,
 molliehunt@eircom.net
- Roscommon U3A
 Meet every 2nd Tuesday.
 Contact Avril McTeigue:
 amcteigue@rosdisabilities.ie

Email Age Action Education Officer Margaret Fitzpatrick at u3a@ageaction.ie or (01) 475-6989 for information.

Remembering our dead

November is the month when we remember our loved ones who have died. Age Action remembers all its members, volunteers and supporters who have died since the charity was founded in 1992. May they rest in peace.



Annual membership application I wish to join Age Action and enclose STANDING ORDER €.....membership fee. plus €..... voluntary donation payable to Age Action To the Manager Ireland Ltd. If you are already an existing Age (Name of Bank/Building Society) Action member and wish to renew your mem-bership please write your membership number Bank Address: here Full Name: Please pay annually Age Action Ireland, (Block capitals please) Permanent TSB, 70 Grafton Street, Dublin 2, Organisation Name (if applicable):.... Account No: 87779021, Sort Code 99-06-25, the following amount €..... until further •••••• Address: notice. Starting on: 1st Day of **January 20.....** Name: Tel: Email: (Block capitals please) Bank Account No: (Block capitals please) Website: Sort Code: (Block capitals please) Signature: Signature: Please return to: **FEES Membership Development Age Action Ireland Ltd** €20 Individual – retired/unwaged €40 Individual - employed 30/31 Lower Camden Street, Dublin 2 €60 Voluntary Body Email: membership@ageaction.ie €200 Statutory Agency (01) 475 6989 Tel: €500 Commercial (01) 475 6011 Fax: