

# New Age Friendly strategy launched in Limerick

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015

A new five year strategy which commits for the first time to improving key areas of infrastructure, services, information and an overall social response to older person's issues in Limerick was unveiled today (Tuesday).

**Age Friendly Limerick 2015-2020** officially declaring Limerick as an 'Age Friendly' location was launched by Minister of State for Primary and Social Care, Kathleen Lynch TD at an event in the South Court Hotel, Raheen, Limerick.

The strategy, led by Limerick City and County Council, was developed by Limerick Age Friendly Alliance in consultation and co-operation with older people in the area.

The Alliance is a voluntary partnership made up of representatives from public sector agencies in the area - Limerick City and County Council, the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána, TUSLA Children and Family Service and Limerick Clare Education and Training Board and other organisations that promote a positive approach to ageing. These other agencies include; the Irish Farmers Association, the Irish Country Woman's Association, Limerick Chamber of Commerce, University of Limerick, the GAA, Dromin Athlacca Voluntary Housing Scheme and St Munchin's Community Enterprise Centre.

All have given commitments to significantly help to improve the quality of life of older people in Limerick in the coming years under key headings including: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Transportation, Housing, Respect and Social Inclusion, Social Participation, Communication and Information, Civic Participation, Community Support and Health Services.

Speaking at today's launch, **Limerick Age Friendly Alliance chairperson, Limerick City and County Council Chief Executive Conn Murray** said the delivery and implementation of the strategy is both "urgent and timely".

"It is clear that the percentage of Limerick's population aged 65 years or over will continue to increase over time and therefore we must be ready to face the challenges that this brings," Mr Murray said. "This strategy is the culmination of a detailed consultation process that has brought together the older persons of Limerick and the key service providers from the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to identify how we can make Limerick an excellent place in which to live, work, enjoy life and grow older.

He added: "We've identified what the issues are and Limerick City and County Council together with its partners is committed to ensuring that this strategy is implemented and that no section of the local community is left behind when it comes to the delivery of these services."

Extensive consultation revealed that issues raised by older people in Limerick include:

- A need for greater accessibility on streets, public spaces and public buildings
- Worry over closure of essential services and the sustainability of services in rural areas
- A desire to live as independently as possible in one's own homes for as long as possible
- Loneliness and isolation can be detrimental to both the physical and mental health of older people
- High incidences of depression among older people
- Need for a wide range of home support and care services
- Increase opportunities to participate in physical and social activities
- Recognise the diversity and range of what older people have to offer their communities
- Stronger need for inclusion of older people on decision making boards

Speaking on behalf of the Health Service Executive, **Bernard Gloster, Chief Officer, HSE Mid-West Community Care** said, "the HSE is delighted to be a partner in this shared approach to improving quality of life for older people, wherever they live that life, be it at home or in a supported setting. We know from evidence that we have seen a major change in life expectancy and the remaining challenge is to improve the quality lived in those years. What is most encouraging about this strategy is that we don't see attention to our older citizens as simply a health issue. It is everyone's business. Today is an important day for Limerick and I would ask people to reflect on the fact that the preparation of this strategy has been a timely reminder on one key factor, not only can we do and give a lot to older people but we can still learn a lot from them – by listening to them."

Also speaking at today's launch, **Garda Chief Superintendent David Sheahan** said the Limerick Garda Division is committed to ensure the needs and priorities of older people living in Limerick are met to the highest possible standard.

"The Limerick Garda Division Older Person's Strategy has been developed to feed into the larger multi-agency strategy to enable us to engage with older people so that we can focus on what really matters to them," he explained.

"We want our older population to have confidence in the services we offer and for them to feel safe and secure in their homes. We want our older people to be able to access our services easily and encourage them to communicate with us without hesitation through a variety of mediums. To do this we need to ensure we engage and respond to their needs and reach out to those who may not be easily accessible. We will continue to work in partnership with other agencies and support groups towards identifying who our older people are and how we can deliver a responsive and visual policing service to them which will hopefully have a positive impact on their quality of life."

The World Health Organisation defines an “age-friendly” community as one in which service providers, public officials, community leaders, faith leaders, business people and citizens recognise the great diversity among older persons, promote their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life, respect their decisions and lifestyle choices, and anticipate and respond flexibly to ageing related needs and preferences.

Limerick’s ambition to be Age Friendly means it will

- Become a great place to grow older
- Have easily accessible public buildings, shops and services
- Incorporate older people’s views into significant decisions being made about Limerick
- Promote a positive attitude to ageing and address stereotypes about older people
- Create opportunities for older people to be engaged with their Limerick socially as employees and as volunteers.

The full Age Friendly Limerick Strategy 2015-2020 can be accessed at [www.limerick.ie/council/age-friendly-limerick](http://www.limerick.ie/council/age-friendly-limerick).