



**Mid Ulster  
Age Friendly  
Strategic Plan  
2023-2026**



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council



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# FORWARD FROM THE CHAIR

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Mid Ulster District Council are fully aware we have an ageing population meaning that the demographic profile will change significantly over the next 10-20 years. These changes are welcome as older people are a great asset to society, but they also present significant challenges and opportunities. Being better prepared to adapt to demographic changes is a priority now for our older people and future generations. In response to this change, the Council is committed to improving the lives of older people through the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Framework, which will positively impact our residents.

Old age can result in experiences of active and positive living, but older residents can be presented with ill health, disability, dependence, social isolation or loneliness. This can significantly impact a person, especially their physical and social environment. Transforming environments into supportive and inclusive places with the right policies and services in place, older people can thrive in their local community, contributing to healthy ageing.

The Age Friendly initiative aims to encourage active and healthy ageing by improving health, promoting inclusion and supporting wellbeing in older age. The population as a whole benefits from designing environments for older people and prepares for future generations. New plans for delivering an Age Friendly community can help tackle some of the biggest challenges to healthy and active ageing, such as social isolation and loneliness, injuries and falls, inactivity, mental and physical ill-health.

New interventions, policies and co-design age sector projects are needed to ensure we transform our Council area into a supportive environment for our ageing population. This Age Friendly Strategy and Action Plan publication celebrates the beginning of a process that will see a coordinated approach being embraced by organisations and communities to create a more Age Friendly society.

I welcome this strategic plan not only as the Mayor of Mid Ulster District Council but also as a resident who knows we need to take responsibility for the health and wellness of everyone in our area. I look forward to the implementation of an Age Friendly plan through extensive collaboration with our partners to make Mid Ulster a great place to live and grow old.

# GLOSSARY TERMS

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**Age Friendly Domains:** Thematic domains agreed by the World Health Organisation that should be considered as part of the application to be designated 'Age Friendly'.

**Age Friendly Alliance:** A group of representatives from specialist organisations who are collectively working together to make sure Mid Ulster is a great place to live and grow older.

**Community Planning Partnership:** Senior leaders from public sector organisations work together to deliver the Community Plan for Mid Ulster.

**The Community Plan:** Also known as the Community Plan. A document setting out a 10-year vision for Mid Ulster that all members of the Community Planning Partnership are working towards achieving.

**Guided Conversations and Engagement:** Across the area to gather feedback from the public on issues that are important to them.

**The World Health Organisation (WHO):** is a specialised agency of the United Nations concerned with international public health. The WHO Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities was established to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning between cities and communities worldwide.

**Thematic Action Plan Groups:** Community planning groups used to implement and review the progress of community planning actions and agree to report on progress to presenting to the Strategic Community Planning Partnership.

# I. INTRODUCTION – AGE FRIENDLY PLANS FOR MID ULSTER

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Age Friendly is a framework developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to support the development of Age Friendly communities due to an ageing population. An age-friendly world and an Age Friendly Council enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age. An Age Friendly community is a place that makes it easy for older people to stay connected to people and things that are important to them. It also helps people stay healthy and active and provides appropriate support to those who can no longer look after themselves. The framework outlines eight thematic areas which should be considered when developing plans and they are designed to overlap and interact with one another. These eight domains are:

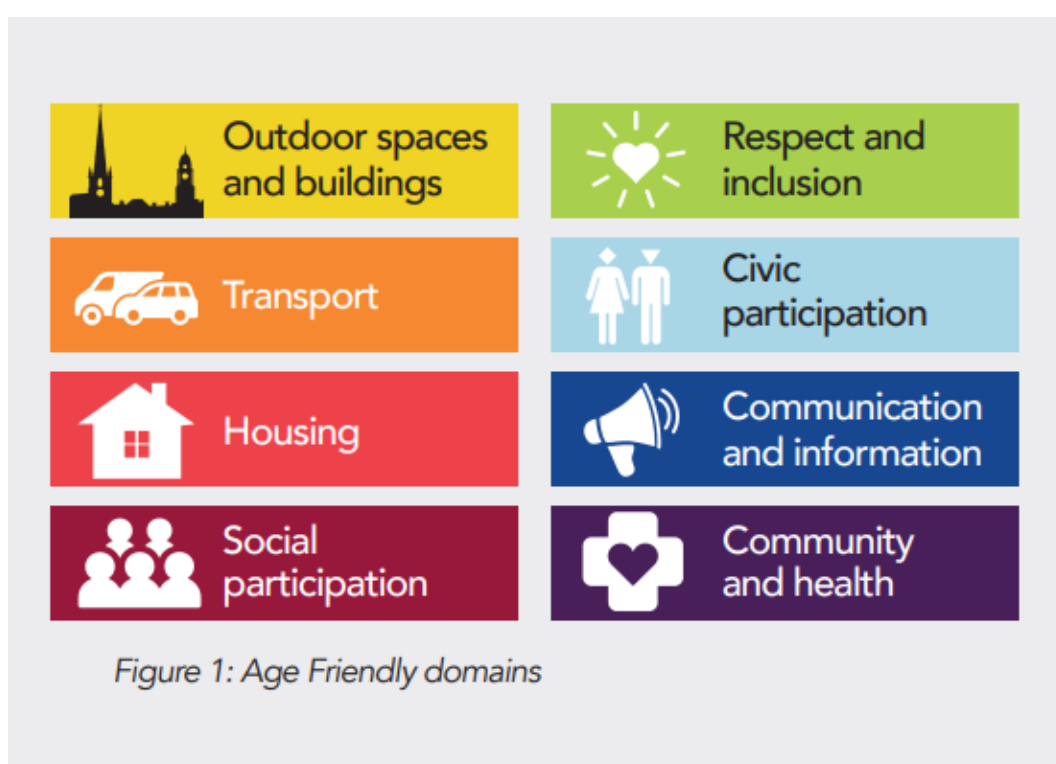


Figure 1: <http://www.who.int/ageing/age-friendly-world/en/>

An Age Friendly world enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities. It is a place where everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their age. It is a place that makes it easy to stay connected to those around you and those you love. It is a place that helps people stay healthy and active even at the oldest ages. And it is a place that helps those who can no longer look after themselves to live with dignity and enjoyment. Many cities and communities are already taking active steps towards becoming more Age Friendly and signing up to the Age Friendly Global Network.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has established the global network of Age Friendly cities and communities that encourage active ageing by optimising opportunities for health, participation, and security to enhance the quality of life as people grow older. The WHO has proposed eight domains that can help identify and address barriers to the wellbeing and participation of older people.

In Northern Ireland, the Active Ageing Strategy is one of the Northern Ireland Executive's key strategies to address the ageing of our population. Its vision is 'one of Northern Ireland being an Age Friendly region in which people, as they get older, are valued and supported to live actively to their fullest potential; with their rights respected and their dignity protected'. The Department of Communities Active Ageing Strategy outlines that people here are living longer than ever. Our older citizens make a significant contribution to society; by volunteering, continuing to work or providing childcare. <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/active-ageing-strategy-2016-2021>

Age Friendly is also an outcome within the Programme for Government (PfG) Delivery Plan for 2018/19 under Outcome 4: To Make each council area "Age Friendly" – a place where organisations work together to enhance the quality of life for people as they age.

Promoting the wellbeing of older people and ensuring they can enjoy later life to the fullest must remain a priority, especially overcoming the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and looking forward to the future. Our longer lives are an opportunity for the economy, for society and for us as individuals. We all need support at different times across our lives, and we all want to live in communities where we look out for each other.

## Vision

**The Mid Ulster District Council is an age-friendly region in which people, as they grow older, are valued and supported to live actively to their fullest potential, with their rights respected and dignity protected.**



## 2. AGE FRIENDLY LINKS - COMMUNITY PLAN

Mid Ulster District Council has developed a Community Plan for the District, launched in 2017, it highlights that an ageing population is an important issue to address. The ethos of community planning is to help improve how public agencies progress together alongside local people, to plan and deliver better services. It is essential that public services and infrastructure, designed and implemented today, will still be relevant to the Council's future population. We liaised with key partners represented on the Strategic Partnership Board and their Thematic Working Groups.

This Community plan, alongside the Age Friendly plan will build on the solid foundation of the existing relationships, partnerships, programmes already in place. The Age Friendly plan will link to the community plans outcomes as it highlights that an ageing population is an important issue to address. With the purpose of community planning being to improve how public services work together, with local people, to plan and deliver better services– Age Friendly will be a relevant way of working to gain positive outcomes for the Council's population in future years, linking to the current eight Age Friendly themes ensuring that everyone will benefit.

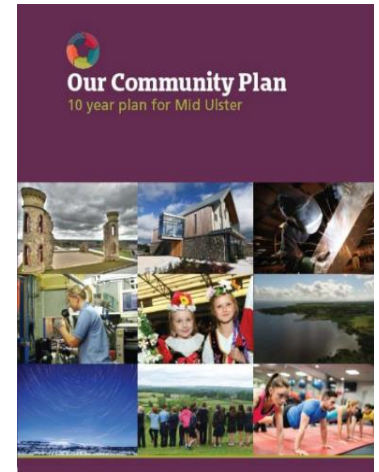
We envisage improved relationships with key stakeholders: Statutory Partners, as well as representatives from community, voluntary, business, colleges, NI Government Departments, Mid Ulster District Council and other sectors. Partners are represented on the Strategic Partnership Board and Thematic Working Groups with five thematic groups to include:

- **Economic Growth**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Education & Skills**
- **Health & Wellbeing**
- **Vibrant & Safe Communities**

This Age Friendly Strategy provides a framework to help make our council area a great place to grow older and an area in which everyone, regardless of age, is valued and respected. It will provide the structure and new ways of working for cross-sectoral co-operation, which is essential to improving our older population's quality of life. This Age Friendly Strategy and its associated Action Plan have been influenced by the Community Plan. It has been further supplemented by direct engagement with older people, other stakeholders and service providers. This Age Friendly plan will address challenges local people face and ensure that everyone will benefit.

The multiagency partnership group will work collaboratively to meet the outcomes of the community plan in relation to Age Friendly and promote the best possible health and wellbeing, safety and quality of life outcomes for older adults living in the Mid Ulster District Council area.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, improving productivity and co-production across the Council will harness local knowledge, expertise and new ways of working, bringing Age Friendly a higher profile with partners. Investing in Age Friendly at a local level can help provide support older people and communities to achieve higher levels of productivity and tackle disadvantages and better outcomes. Building back stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic will support renewal of activity within communities, supporting their recovery and increasing resilience.



### 3. AGE FRIENDLY PROFILE - MID ULSTER

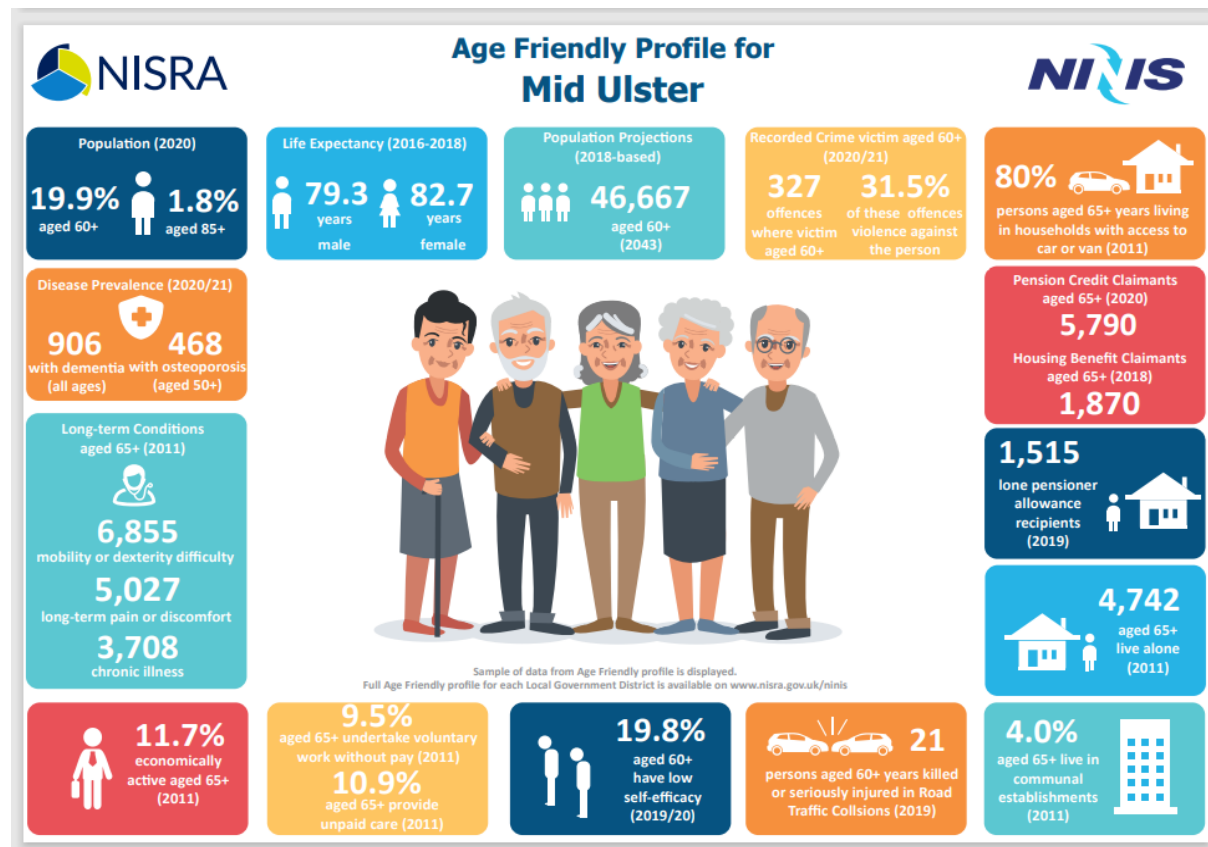


Figure 2: Age Friendly Profile [www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/ninis)

[https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/download/Infographics/AFP\\_All.pdf](https://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/download/Infographics/AFP_All.pdf)

#### Population Profile

- In 2020, the estimated population of Mid Ulster was 148,528, accounting for 7.8% of the Northern Ireland total.
- 19.9% of the population of Mid Ulster were aged 60+ years (29,557). 1.8% were aged 85+ (2,673). With the total population over 60 is 32,230.
- Of those aged 60+ in Mid Ulster 74,851 (50.3%) were male and 74,102 (49.7%) were female. Of those aged 85+, 35.5% were male and 64.5% were female.
- Life expectancy for males is 79.3 years and 82.7 years for females.
- The population of Mid Ulster aged 60+ is expected to rise to 46,667 by 2043.



## 4. STEPS TAKEN BY COUNCIL TO DATE 2017-2022

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Over the past 5 years Mid Ulster Council have been working hard to support older people with care, connections and wellbeing.

### **Age Friendly development steps taken by Council between 2017-2022:**

**2017:** Age Well Partnership Tender supporting Age Sector services in Mid Ulster

**2018:** WHO Age Friendly declaration signed

**2019:** Joined member of Age Friendly Network NI – attend quarterly meetings

**2020:** Funding from Public Health Ageing for Age Friendly development

**2020:** Age Friendly Co-ordinator in post

**2020- 2022:** Age Friendly Network NI Peer Group meetings attended, reviewing Age Friendly best practice locally, regionally & globally

**2022:** Baseline work – mapping Age Friendly services in Mid Ulster District Council

**January 2022:** Successful application to the UK Age Friendly Network – Centre for Ageing Better

**March 2022:** Recruitment of external Consultant

**March 2022:** Council Internal Planning Meetings

**March 2022:** WHO Application sent

**April-Dec 2022:** Engagement process with 394 people an online baseline survey, consultation and engagement including 4 workshops with stakeholders, focus groups and guide conversations.

**December 2022:** Draft Age Friendly Charter & Action Plan – further consultations

**March 2023:** Launch of Age Friendly Charter and Action Plan

### **Other achievements:**

Positive Ageing Month (October) Delivery; Launch of Chatty cafés, Chatty benches and Chatty libraries alongside Mid Ulster Loneliness Network. Kindness postbox project delivered to local primary schools community groups & nursing homes. Working with the Centre For Better Ageing Better. Access Audit Training and walkability audits alongside Mid Ulster Disability Forum. Worked with Age NI pensioners' parliament 2021 working group to produce Lived experienced Report and help shape Qsuestions to Parliament Ministers. Participation in the consultation process for DfC Active Ageing Strategy.

The Age Friendly co-ordinator continues working alongside Mid Ulster Loneliness Network, Mid Ulster Disability Forum, Mid Ulster Seniors Network, AFNNI, Mid Ulster Age Well and other partners. Along with other local community groups, older people to promote and embed Age Friendly.

## 5. AGE FRIENDLY CHARTER

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*“When you plan for young, you plan just for the young – when you plan for the older population you plan for everyone”.*

An Age Friendly Charter will accompany the Age Friendly Strategic Plan outlining commitment to Age Friendly Action Plan. We will ensure that older people in the district have:

- Access to safe outdoor spaces and buildings with suitable facilities.
- Access to suitable forms of transport.
- Sufficient access to affordable home maintenance services to improve home efficiency and safety.
- Feel part of their local community and not isolated.
- Feel heard and have a say in decision making on things that affect their lives.
- Access to work and volunteering opportunities that they want.
- Opportunities to stay connected via an effective communication system.
- Opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing and have access to appropriate health, social care and wellbeing services

### **Our Values**

Our work is underpinned by a number of core values which will inform what we do and how we do it.

- *Respect and Diversity:* We value all older people, respect their diversity, and promote positive messages about age and older people.
- *Person focused:* We believe in a person focused approach that creates energy and fun, and supports individuals to connect with each other and their communities.
- *Open and Transparent:* We will be open and transparent in all our work.
- *Challenge and Change:* We are committed to giving a voice to older people to challenge, and to bring about the changes they seek.
- *Fairness and Justice:* We will challenge inequalities that older people experience and promotes fairness and justice.
- *Equality and Inclusion:* We will address inequalities with urban and rural residents, people with disabilities or mobility issues. We will promote their inclusion in and contribution to all areas of community life.
- *Co-design:* We will build on assets and partnership structures, working with experienced community and voluntary sector and meaningfully engaging with older people.

## 6. WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT & ACTION PLANS

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This extensive consultation with older people focused on the 8 key themes identified by WHO and we identified a number of key priorities about the lives of older people. One of the most significant findings being that older people are keen to be consulted with and provided with follow up information.

All those involved in this consultation process stated that this community is a great place to grow older. The majority liked living in their homes and if they had the choice to live elsewhere would choose to remain where they are. It was also found that there was a positive correlation between being associated with a group or community association and feeling involved and leading active lives in communities.

Older people that took part in the consultation clearly take seriously their safety and health and wellbeing, taking the necessary provisions to protect themselves and their homes. They appreciate healthcare professionals and others visiting them in their communities to talk to them about health, safety and scam prevention.

The information gathered provided a baseline for future development, it outlined the positive aspects of residing within the Mid Ulster area, and highlighted the priorities we needed to address within the Mid Ulster District, helping shape a better Age Friendly Community.

As part of the consultation process, a facilitator was appointed to carry out workshops to enable the general public and key stakeholders to put forward their suggestions for improving the experience of growing older. We asked for thoughts and opinions on issues such as transport, housing, access to information and how to meet the older people's needs now and in the future.

### **We carried out engagement with 394 people through:**

- 4 Workshops
- 10 Focus Groups – in-depth conversations
- Guided Conversations
- Postcards
- Online survey
- Hardcopy surveys
- Local, regional and national consultations

### **The Action Plan**

This is a people-led process where local people and organisations told us what it is like to live in their area. Their views informed this three year action plan for delivery. People offered invaluable insights to key challenges, solutions and further engagement. The action plan contain actions that will enable the Age Friendly Alliance members to work towards their aspirations set out within the strategy. Actions will be continually reviewed each year.

## 1. Outside spaces and buildings

The outside environment and public buildings have a major impact on the mobility, independence and the quality of life of older people and affect their ability to “age in place”. The recurring themes are quality of life, access and safety.

### What is working well



- 93% said shops/ businesses were accessible and welcoming.
- 79% reported they felt safe in their local area.
- 65% reported that public spaces were clean and pleasant to visit.
- 59% able to access public toilets outdoors, saying they were clean and well maintained.
- 50% stated there is good street lightening, police patrols and community education.
- Public realm work, Shopmobility, PSNI Active Listening, Ballyronan marina, Dungannon Park and Hill of O'Neill and the Burnavon (free parking), bus station, wide-open spaces in the countryside, and Mid Ulster's welcoming places.

### Key Issues – What the community told us

- Older people need more opportunities to come out of the house and access welcoming outdoor spaces. A meeting place for older people – outside and inside coffee gardens, picnic tables and places for walkers. More seating inside and outside shops with more lifts.
- Better parking, wider carpark spaces, lower kerbs and address parking on footpaths. 64% said car parking on footpaths a problem.
- 58% stated there was not enough accessible public seating in local areas and 49% said there was not enough access to toilets and they need to cleaner.
- Better disabled access to shops. More disability friendly premises inside and out, i.e. handrails in local cinemas.
- Safer footpaths between the towns and villages, road crossing and ramps/signs to slow traffic down – too much speeding.
- Public spaces need cleaned from weeds, overgrown hedges, dogfouling and litter.

***“Outdoor spaces need more connection areas with chatty benches and information notice boards promoting local hidden gems, walks and clear accessible parking.”***

### What needs improved

#### Quality Of Life – Access - Health & Safety - Road Safety

- Needs of ageing population considered in the planning future public infrastructure and services.
- More encouragement to access outdoor spaces (outside gyms and explore gardening).
- More signage, walkability audits and amenities such as toilets, seating in public spaces.
- More access to leisure, museums and libraries and promote their facilities widely.
- Standards improved: public toilets, footpaths, lightening, roads, safety, litter and dog fouling.

## Outdoor Spaces and Buildings Action Plan

To maintain and grow the valuable input of older people, Mid Ulster needs an infrastructure of age-friendly communities with good public transport links with free travel, accessible parking, locally available cash and banking services. We will collaborate with tourist offices, museums, shops and businesses and look at promoting accessible nature parks, community areas paying attention to roads, paving, toilets, crossing, lighting, footpaths and seating.

### Outdoor spaces and buildings

Encourage and promote more access to outdoor spaces – recreation, leisure, parks, chatty benches and chatty cafes.

Develop a set of age-friendly design guidelines and business charters for our district that will evolve over time.

Promote Accessibility apps and websites and recognition of Age Friendly awards to places to promote accessibility.

Promote anti-littering programmes of education, awareness raising and enforcement.

Explore options to improve accessibility along pavements and roads e.g. Awareness raising and signage.

### List Support Partners:

**Outcome:** Enhanced infrastructure to support and age-friendly community, with increased accessibility to Mid Ulster community areas and green spaces, both town and rural that they are enjoyed by the public.

## 2. Transport

Transportation, including accessibility and affordable public transport, is a key factor influencing active ageing. Being able to move about an area (urban, rural and connections) determines social and civic participation and access to community and health services.

### What works well

- 80% of those aged 65+ have access to a car or van. (NISRA 2011)
- Community Transport, Comfort of buses, Mid Ulster Shopmobility and Gobility programmes, Park and Rides.

### Key issues – What the community told us

- Although older people are generally happy with transport services, there are still concerns about the accessibility of buses, in particular for those who use mobility aids, safety or need to get to health appointments.
- 87% in the survey said they have their own car, 9% rely on public transport, 17% rely on family and friends, 7% rely on community transport.
- Inequality exists in accessing services, bus timetables hard to read.
- 65% say that public transport is not convenient, 63% say public transport doesn't get them where they want to go, 33% not enough seating for older people, 33% report that public transport drivers are patient, 51% feel safe, 48% say there is not enough information on timetables and routes, 40% say that taxi's are not affordable.
- 21 reported road traffic collision casualties for persons aged 60+ who were killed/ seriously injured (NISRA).

***“I don't drive and live in a village with poor to no public transport. Totally rely on family and friends to bring me to essential and very important appointments”.***

### What needs improved

- Provide better public and community transport for essential services, Dr's and hospitals.
- Improve bus services in rural areas and better links to Belfast/Derry/Dublin.
- Age friendly training for bus drivers and transport providers.
- Public transport timetables to be larger and more accessible.
- Support local community group services with volunteer expenses.
- Provide more community transport in the area, encouraging seniors to come out of their homes with trips, church and shopping.
- *Improve the reliability* and affordability of the transport within town and rural areas.
- Promote smart passes and community transport, with good news stories promoting services.
- Address funding to continue community transport.
- To promote Shopmobility Mid Ulster as a key provider of wheelchairs / Scooters to the public
- To connect Shopmobility & its Gobility service to healthcare professionals across Mid Ulster including NHSCT and SHSCT.
- Transport to hospitals – integrated transport with NHSCT/ SHSCT services
- Increase TransLink accessible buses – identify funding opportunities
- Deliver Older People Awareness Training to all transport providers





## Transport Action Plan

Older people need additional transport support especially in rural areas. People living outside town centres who rely on public transport have less access to services for health and recreation. Transport provision needs to be mapped to services available improving access, equality and safety.

Transport
Action
Engage with decision makers to maintain community transport services; improving the reliability, accessibility and affordability of transport within town, rural areas and hospital settings.
Promote smart passes and community transport, volunteer driver schemes with good news stories promoting services and easy to read timetables.
Promote Shopmobility and Gomobility services and increase referrals from healthcare professionals across Mid Ulster, including NHSCT and SHSCT.
Promote Age Friendly Awareness Training to all transport providers.

### Support Partners:

**Outcome:** Increased collaborative to ensure better transport options and better infrastructure that are integrated and cohesive for increased accessibility, equality and safety.

### 3. Housing

Housing is essential to safety and wellbeing. There is a link between appropriate housing and access to community and social services in influencing the independence and quality of life of older people. Housing, maintenance, heating and support that allow older people to age comfortably and safely within their community are universally valued. Housing can significantly impact quality of life and feedback tells us older people want to remain independent at home for longer.



#### Mid Ulster Profile

- 2011 people aged 65+ years 96% lived in a household and 4% lived in communal establishments. 82% lived in households that were owner occupied, 8% in households that were social rented, 5% in households that were private rented and 5% were living rent free. 4,742 aged 65 are living alone (2011 NISRA). In 2019/20, there were 1,515 lone pensioner allowance recipients in Mid Ulster. These are ratepayers aged 70 or over who are living alone and entitled to a 20% reduction in their rates. 1,810 are in receipt of housing benefits (2018 NISRA).

#### What works well:

- Residential Homes, sheltered dwellings, compassionate communities, Supporting Communities and warm home schemes. 73% felt safe at home and had housing to meet their needs.
- Energy Efficiency Workshops, Boiler replacement schemes, Warm Home Grants, Agewell Partnership Handyperson scheme, Home Safety Scheme and Falls Prevention work.

#### Key Issues – What the community told us

- Worries about the cost of living, fuel poverty, the rise in home energy costs, the rise in rented properties and profit-led homes, anti-social behaviour loneliness and scams.
- Not sufficient and affordable housing - 63% said there wasn't affordable housing.
- Safety in the home an issue with fear falls. 58% said they didn't know where to go to get information on home adaption, 39% said they didn't know who to contact for home maintenance, 57% didn't know who to contact for home safety, home warm/ energy efficiency.

***“Good social housing would improve the health and lives of older people”.***

#### What needs improved

##### **Choice – Availability- Housing Maintenance - Health & Safety**

- Accessible and affordable housing, with support if required for independent living.
- Homes need to be a place of well-being with home activities, care and compassionate communities, with better designs, shared living options explored.
- Better design and maintenance of homes for better health and wellness and housing standards should include maximum insulation.

## Housing Action Plan

We want to ensure older people stay in their home if they wish and more consideration given to building home for life; more information and advice on services and housing issues; dementia friendly housing; more social housing; and retirement villages for those over 60 who don't require nursing home or fold setting.

### Housing

#### Action

Scope and promote the opportunities for people to remain independently at home in a safe, warm and affordable environment as they age well in their own homes.

Lobby government to support home grant schemes that enable people to live independently in a safe, warm and affordable home.

Maintain a home maintenance service for those in need.

Promote Dementia Friendly assisted technology and safety measures with Herbert Protocol and PSNI.

#### List Support Partners:

#### Outcome:

More accessible and affordable housing to give older people more choice to live independently and safe in their homes.

## 4. Social Participation

Social participation and social support are strongly connected to good health and wellbeing throughout life, giving people a sense of belonging. Participating in leisure, social, cultural and spiritual activities in the community, as well as with the family, allows older people to continue to exercise their independence, develop friendships and feel part of their community.



### Mid Ulster Profile (NISRA)

Continuous Household Survey on engagement in culture, arts and sport (2015/16) shows that of those age 60 and over: 28% participated in sport; 29% participated in arts activities; 59% attended arts events; 20% used the public library service; and 35% visited a museum or science centres.

### What works well

- 53% said there was a wide variety of activities to attend and take part in the community prior to COVID with 56% taking part regularly. 86% interact with family and friends on a daily basis.
- 36% lacked companionship prior to COVID and only 15% felt lonely and 30% felt isolated.
- The range of community group's facilities and activities.
- Ezines: Mid Ulster Community Newsletter, NICH, Age NI and Carers Matters.
- Networks: Mid Ulster Loneliness Network, Mid Ulster Intergenerational Network, COSTA, CWSAN and Compassionate communities were very appreciated for co-design and co-delivery.
- Websites: NHSCT and SHSCT directory of services and Mid Ulster Agewell Partnership.

### Key issues – What the community told us

- Lack of information, activities, befriending, signposting, face-to-face interactions and alternative promotions. Not enough opportunities (trips and outings).
- 45% say activities are not accessible, promoted or have transport options available.
- Barriers include disability, transport, cost of living, lack of funds, confidence, unsuitable times, lack of community halls, mobility, being housebound, digital access and mental health.
- Too many activities become closed clubs and new people find them hard to access.
- Groups closed because of pandemic, rising costs, high paperwork, lack of funding and Charity commission governance, volunteer burnout and no succession planning.
- Social workers are sending older people to activities not suitable to their abilities.
- Cutbacks and lack of long-term sustainable resources gives uncertainty and inconsistency of services and activities.

***"We need Wellness Checks at age 50/60 with a welcome pack with range of services available."***

### What needs improved

#### Opportunities - Choice- Group Support - Awareness

- Access to affordable services and activities with discounts in hospitality, hairdressing and gyms.
- More community initiatives that would attract residents of various demographics.
- Promote project ideas: gardening clubs, history, book clubs, day trips and hobby classes.
- More intergenerational work, changing attitudes and culture with Age friendly schools.

## Social Participation Action Plan

Supporting social wellbeing for both individuals and communities will be key to addressing loneliness and isolation and in the long term supports preventive approaches to wellness and good health. The community and voluntary age sector are essential in keeping older people connected to services and their local communities. We must commit to maintain and develop much-needed community connection and support.

### Social Participation

#### Action

Develop more Chatty places – Warm, friendly chat areas, promoting libraries providing services for older people such as reading newspapers aloud, a cup of tea etc.

Increase Age Friendly Promotion, i.e: social media/ newsletter to highlight current activities, organisations, and good news stories.

Encourage the development of buddy schemes to support involvement in local activities and community groups.

Promote training for staff who work in the community, the voluntary and educational sectors.

Ensure better access to affordable services and activities that are age appropriate with convenient times and locations.

#### List support partners:

**Outcome:** Increased social participation to reduce the likelihood for complex needs developing.

## 5. Respect and Inclusion

The respect and inclusion of older people can depend on culture, gender, health status and economic status. The extent to which older people participate in the social, civic and economic life of where they live is closely linked to their experiences of inclusion. With the right policies, environments and support, people can age well. Older people's diverse life experiences, skills and resilience mean they have much to contribute to life and be respected for. Everyone has a right to influence what happens to them as individuals and within wider society.



### Mid Ulster Profile

- 71% agreed that society doesn't recognise the contribution that many older people are still able to make (Northern Ireland Life and Times (NILT) Survey 2017).
- 19.8% of respondents aged 60+ living in Mid Ulster reported low self-efficacy. People with low self-efficacy often doubt their capabilities, are less ambitious and give up when challenged (Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey (CHS) 2020).

### What works well

- 69% feel respected and included within their community.
- Older people are represented on many local groups and strategic partnerships.
- The Age Friendly co-ordinator encourages engagement and codesign.
- Neighbours are always ready to help if needed and look out for each other.

### Key Issues – What the community told

- 21% agreed they are consulted, 50% disagreed not consulted, 41% not portrayed in a positive manner without stereotypes.
- Older people feel invisible and not seen as a priority. Isolation, loneliness and transport issues are significant factors that affect inclusion. Covid has killed some community spirit because older people are afraid to go out.
- Older people have great assets to bring to society, appreciate culture and diversity.
- Listen to us regarding our care, fears & anxieties – 86% said there is a need for a forum.
- Only 50% agreed that facilities shops, businesses and Council had courteous staff trained to understand the needs of older people. "Some people could be more friendly".
- 41% said there are not enough activities for young and older people.
- "Improve transport issues – you will improve inclusion".

***"Don't put older people in a box – we have all different needs, some are healthy and then others need more attention. There can be many negative stories on the media of older people – share more good news about older people"***

### What needs improved

#### Policy-Engagement-Training-Valued

- Value older people and challenge ageism and discrimination in everyday conversations, work and media. Need growth of equality and diversity legislation and policies.
- Older people to engage with policy makers, media and community action.
- Promote and support intersectoral, intergenerational approaches to policy development, planning and provision across each and every sector and department.
- More consultations and engagement opportunities to value older people's contribution.



## Respect and Inclusion Action Plan

There needs to be more opportunities to support and promote active ageing, removing barriers to older people to ensure they are more respected, valued and included.

### Respect and Inclusion

#### Action

Develop an Age Friendly Older People's Forum to consult on policies and inclusion.

Connect and support people to participate in digital training and digital inclusion programmes.

Promote a positive image of people ageing well, appreciating diversity, and having recognition awards/ events to inspire others.

Promote Positive Ageing Month each October with District-wide engagement opportunities online and face-to-face with positive ageing grants.

#### List of support partners:

**Outcome:** Increased involvement, respect and inclusion with older people feeling more valued.

## 6. Civic Participation

Older people do not stop contributing to their communities on retirement. Many continue to provide unpaid and voluntary work for their families and communities, and they are a lead contributor to the economy. An Age Friendly community should provide options for older people to continue to contribute to their communities through paid employment or voluntary work, if they so choose, and be engaged in the political process. It's possible for us all to live meaningful and purposeful lives, participating in and contributing to the workplace, community and society at large.



### Mid Ulster Profile (NISRA)

- In 2020, 20,410 people living in Mid Ulster were receiving state pension. In the same year 5,790 living in Mid Ulster received pension credit.
- In 2016, 9.5% aged 65 + take part in voluntary work without pay. The corresponding figure for those aged 65+ years in Northern Ireland was 10.7%.
- On Census Day 2011, 11.7% of those aged 65+ years in Mid Ulster were economically active and 88.3% economically inactive. Of those who were economically active, 490 work full-time, 414 work part-time, 1,100 were self-employed and 31 were unemployed, and 73.4% had no qualifications. In Northern Ireland, 63.7% of people aged 65+ years had no qualifications.

### What works well:

- Community assets: numerous halls, meeting venues and welcoming places. Mid Ulster Volunteer Centre, Compassionate communities, Shopmobility, Carers Matters and Carers NI, Mid Ulster Agewell Partnership, The Burnavon and Community Transport.
- Positive Ageing Month - involvement and promotion by Age Friendly officer.
- 39% stated there were good opportunities for older people to take on volunteering.

### What the community told us

- Longer working lives and pension age rising. Some older people not looking forward to retirement. 46% don't know about work and retraining opportunities for older people, 47% said if there was better transport available, they would work.
- Older people don't feel valued in the workforce, but they have high experience and skills. 64% agreed that older people would work longer if employers were more flexible.
- 59% didn't know who to contact for volunteering. 51% would do voluntary work if they felt supported.
- 58% don't know who to contact about benefit entitlements and difficulty accessing. Stigma associated with asking for help.

Age Inclusion at work needs addressed. Top issues raised by older employees: confidence, caring responsibilities, health, discrimination, tech, menopause, ageism, fatigue, stigma, undervalued, staying relevant, getting left behind, security fears (Age NI Age at Work conference 2022).

### What needs improved

#### Working Life – Volunteering – Benefits & Financial Management

- New ways of engagement addressed with older people through networks and forums.
- Age Friendly audits needed in workplaces and consider reasons for economic inactivity.
- Need to promote volunteering opportunities.
- Promote benefit uptake campaign locally and local discount schemes.

## Civic Participation Action Plan

Older people need to lead and play vital roles in their communities. Whether through work, volunteering, civic action or family support, the added value of older people's time, expertise and experience is significant. Communities, connection and inclusion are key.

### Civic Participation

#### Action

Support people to plan for a better later, i.e. Produce Retirement packs for 50+, and promote volunteering opportunities.

Encourage businesses to prioritise Age Friendly planning and retain an older workforce, i.e. Age NI Age @ Work Mid-Career reviews, age friendly training and policies to support roles.

Promote cost-of-living, benefit uptake and financial well-being workshops i.e. Make the Call pop-up clinics.

**List support partners:**

#### Outcome:

Increased support services to encourage opportunities to train, acquire skills, support employment, volunteering and interviews skills.

## 7. Communication and Information

Staying connected with events and people and getting timely, practical information to manage life and meet personal needs is vital for active aging. Age Friendly communities have relevant information that is readily accessible to older people with varying capacities and resources. Newspapers, radio, tv, social media, internet, community notices and community navigator roles are all important in supporting effective communication.



### Mid Ulster Profile (NISRA)

- 7 libraries are located in Mid Ulster LGD2014.
- In 2016, 71% aged 65 + people in Mid Ulster have never accessed the internet. 46% of people aged 65+ living in Northern Ireland have never accessed the Internet (Labour Force Survey from January-March 2019)
- In 2019/20, 40% of respondents to the Northern Ireland Continuous Household Survey (CHS) aged 65+ reported using online channels to access public services.

### What works well:

- Ezines: Council Community Newsletter, Health Alliance NI newsletter, Age NI Community Navigator Snapshot and Carers Matters. Networks: Mid Ulster Loneliness Network, MUSN, COSTA, and CWSAN. Websites: NHSCT directory of services, Mid Ulster Agewell Partnership.
- Survey respondents: 44% read newspapers, 82% listen to the radio and 96% watch tv to gain information. 34% use a local community facility (church, community hall) for information and 10% used community navigator scheme. 61% information from the Council is easy to understand. 60% didn't know who to contact to get information on older people's issues.

### What the community told us...

- 71% over 65 are not able to use the internet. Technology is a barrier.  
– not everyone on social media and the IT world is moving too fast- slow broadband speeds in certain areas.
- 24% wanted support on how to use internet.
- Most older people rely on word of mouth to find out about opportunities.
- Lack of awareness of services and opportunities- one stop HUB for older people.
- Duplication of messages and support via trusts, PHA, Councils and Community groups.



***“Older people can face difficulties when searching for clear, accessible information. We need trustworthy sources of information and advice to support older people make informed decisions about all aspects of later life.”***

### What needs improved

#### Digital Support – Access – Advice & Information – Co-Design

- Council social media could be significantly improved with weekly messages.
- Digital inclusion training and access to devices.
- More positive messaging and link in with welcoming places.
- Information & advice portal for staff and professionals – co-design approach.
- Access to libraries need improved, mobile reading/ information rooms in villages.

## Communication and Information Action Plan

Personal interaction with service providers is important and we cannot just rely on digital communication, information leaflets to get information out. We need to utilise a mix communication methods. Service providers in Mid Ulster need to work together to share how they provide public information, ensuring people feel motivated by what they read. We will ensure older people have the information, advice and support they need to claim their rights and entitlements and access services.

Communication and Information
Action
Provide online sessions such as Pension advice, and TV Licensing Scam Awareness talks.
Develop an Age Friendly newsletter with essential contacts, linking to Mid Ulster District Council website.
Develop one-stop shops for people to access information i.e. Rural areas information roadshows.
Connect and support people to access information, including digital training, digital inclusion programmes and promoting digital champions.
Encourage organisations to produce Age Friendly documents, including funding applications.

### List of Support Partners:

**Outcome:** A good effective communication system that enhances wellbeing, so that as we age, we can continue to be informed and engage in our community with confidence of support.

## 8. Community Support and Health

Community support and health services are vital to maintaining health and independence in the community. Civil society can provide a role in supporting the health of a community with programmes, services and activities such as fitness, wellness, diet, supporting health conditions, GP, dentist, hospital, home help, befriending, carers, sitting, day care and care homes which all play an essential role in supporting better health and wellness.



### Mid Ulster Profile NISRA

- In 2019/20 there were 47,429 people aged 50+ in Mid Ulster registered with a GP practice.
- There were 875 deaths registered for persons aged 65+ years in Mid Ulster in 2018.
- There were 918 people on the Dementia Register (all ages) living in Mid Ulster.
- 1,990 are in receipt of carer's allowance. 5,790 are in receipt of pension credits (2020)
- From those surveyed: 50% rated their health and quality of life good; 37% have day to day activities limited a little because of their health with 10% say they are limited a lot by their health.

### What works well

- 87% eat well and have a varied diet and 92% cook for themselves.
- 52% said health & social services in their area provide a good service.
- 64% didn't know of good home care services in the area: home helps, carers and sitting service.
- 45% stated there were good residential facilities in the area: care homes, day centres etc.
- Compassionate communities, carers matters, a variety of day care, home helps, nursing care, carers and community activities, hearing clinics and safety talks.
- Council: Recycling, waste management, sports and leisure facilities, warm home schemes, Chatty Walks, Make a Change Programme and Agewell Partnership

### What the community told us

- Accessing GP and dental services, long waiting lists for hospital appointments and age discrimination still exists. 80% didn't know who to contact in an emergency. The fear of becoming ill and long A&E triage times and complex systems.
- Care at home not available when discharged from hospital, no control over decisions going to bed or getting up, carers only time on microwave meals, carer low paid, inadequate care.
- Living with long term pain, ill health, hard of hearing/ disabilities, visual impairment and mobility.
- 52% don't know of affordable health and wellness programmes and classes in their local area i.e. nutrition, smoking cessation and weight control. 69% don't know of affordable fitness activities for older people. 79% don't know of support for chronic health conditions.
- Mental health issues, loneliness on the rise and insecurity of the future.

***"We need health and well-being hubs to incorporate pharmacy, dentist, doctor, nurse led services, physiotherapist, nutritionist etc."***

### What needs improved

- Physical activities, keep active programmes online and offline – creative involvement.
- Provide better leisure centre facilities for groups of older adults to use.
- Better access to care and support to help people and their families live well.
- Dying matters need talked about – more talks about leaving behind digital footprints, funeral planning and wills.



## Community Support and Health Action Plan:

Activities, services and relationships help us all to live independent and healthy lives. As we age our needs change and people require assistance due to disability, vulnerability, illness, incapacity or old age. We need to pay attention to promoting independence, social inclusion, safeguarding, mobility and wellbeing. Delivering effective support and helping people age with dignity helps prevent and address pressures elsewhere in the health system. To respond positively to an ageing population, we need action to help people stay well and feel good for longer, and deliver positive outcomes for older people now and in the future.

Community Support and Health	
Action	
Build and maintain relationships with all service providers to share support and increase referrals, i.e., meals on wheels, luncheon clubs and food banks.	
Identify and promote good mental health and well-being programmes and support. Mental Health Community Ambassadors, Take 5 Programme, Safer U App, Scam Wise and Action Mental Health workshops.	
Share information on health issues, relevant services, development opportunities regarding nutrition, diabetes, sleep routines and public health messages.	
Raise awareness and promoting Better Connected Fitness sessions and walking groups online and at leisure centres.	
Support and raise awareness around End-of-Life Care.	

### List Support Partners:

**Outcome:** A system that enhances wellbeing and independence with a focus on early intervention and prevention, so that as we age, we can continue to engage with professionals and community maintaining our dignity and with care.

## 7. IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

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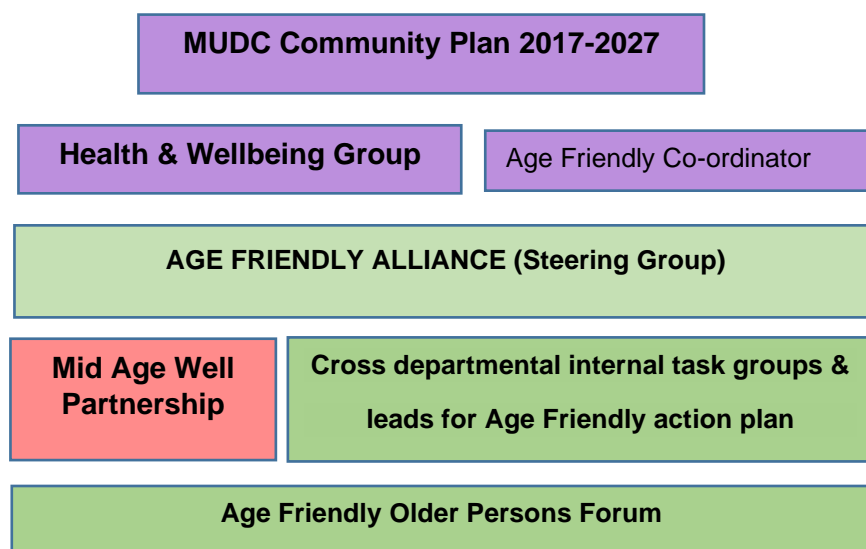
We are delighted that the implementation of an Age Friendly Strategy that places a good quality of life for older people, has been placed high on the Council's agenda. By working collectively with all stakeholders and interested parties we can all do our part to ensure that this the Mid Ulster District is a great place to grow older.

As a Council we are very supportive of this initiative and our combined efforts to make the Council area a place where you can grow older without any barriers to living a healthy and fulfilling life and where you feel you are a valued member of society. In order to make our Age Friendly Strategy work, we need the support of all stakeholders to ensure that they deliver what is needed to have a thriving Age Friendly community.

We have a responsibility to nurture older people's contribution to society to capture older people's knowledge and share their pride and love for where they come from by doing all we can to reduce loneliness and social isolation and get them more involved in the community.

Through this Strategy and action plan we hope to look at ways in which older people can have access to meaningful support, information and training and that we look at ways to eliminate the causes of inequality so that older people can have access to an environment that they feel part of. By working together I truly believe we can achieve great things to make Mid Ulster Council area a place where older people feel engaged and valued.

*Figure 3: Age Friendly Implementation Structure*



## 8. MEASURING THE IMPACT

Becoming Age Friendly is not something that happens overnight and there are several steps, set out by the WHO, that need to be taken. The planning, implementation, evaluation and improvement aspects of Age Friendly is a continuous process as shown in the figure 3 below.

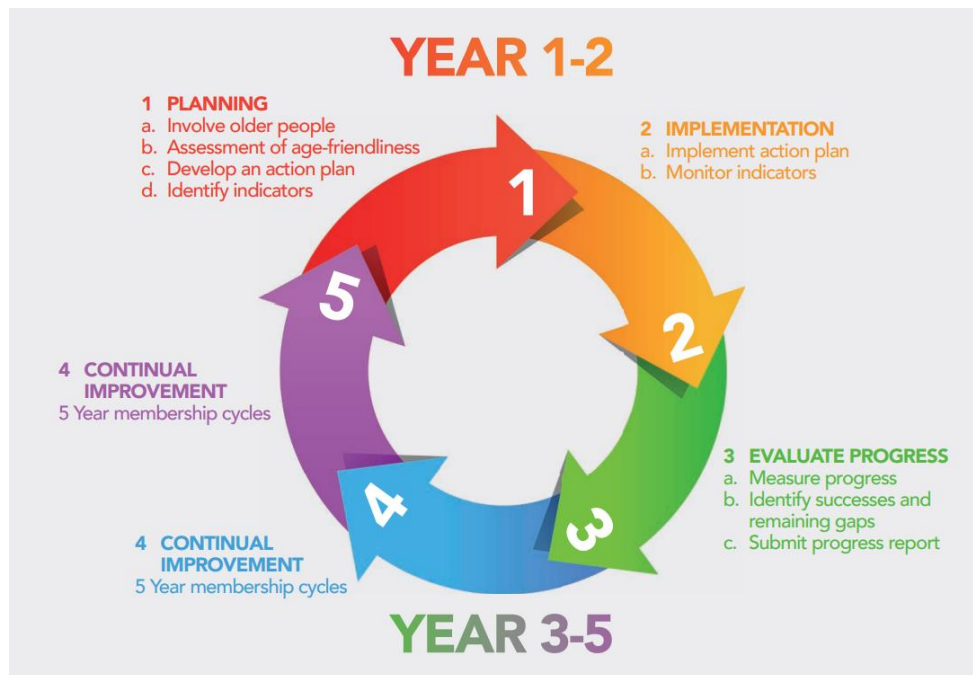


Figure 4: Age Friendly Management Cycle

We will adopt an outcomes-based approach to show what difference the actions have made. This will provide a manageable performance framework through which Council can monitor and measure progress against objectives and outcomes. This also ensures the management framework will be focused on agreed outcomes and timeframes, which Council can monitor and review progress.

Progress will be monitored and evaluated, allowing for contingency planning, if and when required. This performance management framework will require the Age Friendly Alliance to work collaboratively with a wide range of partners involved in the process.

### To be included in the performance management framework:

- Action leads on each theme agreed
- Purpose of Measurement of Strategic Plan – Ensure Action is completed, Address gaps and challenges
- Key performance indicators (KPI's) used to measure impact
- Formal reporting score cards agreed
- Communication to Age Friendly Alliance / Community Planning structures

## 9. STAKEHOLDERS

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Stakeholders will be involved from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. They will inform issues, identify actions, priorities, long-term outcomes and key performance indicators of the strategic plan. Age Friendly stakeholders will have a vested interest in the needs and aspirations of Older People. By working with a wide range of people the Age Friendly steering group will form the Age Friendly Alliance will be able to collectively pool knowledge and expertise to identify needs and what they want to achieve together.

**Age Friendly Subgroup/ Steering Group:** Chair of Age Well Strategic Partnership, Chair of Mid Ulster Seniors Network, Council Strategic Leads, Age Friendly Officer, Age Friendly Facilitator.

**Older People's Service Providers:** Agewell Partnership (Good Morning Schemes/ Handyperson scheme), Age NI, Alzheimer's Society, BME Communities, Business – Chamber of Commerce, Care Homes staff, CWSAN, COSTA, Carers NI, Carer's Trust, Churches Forum, Disability Action, Disability Forum, Deafblind, Dementia NI, First Steps Community Centre, Guide Dogs NI, Giboney Court, Linking Generations NI, Libraries NI, Older people's groups, Men's sheds, MUSN, WI, Rural Transport, STEP- Advice Services, Sport NI, Shop Mobility, Supporting Communities, Sperrin Court, Translink, Mid Ulster Volunteer Centre.

**Statutory Partners:** Council Community Planning CVS Forum, Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT), Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT), Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), Public Health Agency (PHA), Education Authority (EA), Clanmill Housing, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), DfC, DfI, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), NIFRS, Integrated Care Partnership, Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), PCSP, Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI), Sports Council for Northern Ireland (Sport NI), Sports NI, Northern Ireland Library Authority (Libraries NI), Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS).

This is a people-led process where stakeholders told us what it is like to live in the Mid Ulster area. Wide engagement was carried through guided conversations, indepth interviews, Age Friendly Alliance members – postcards/ conversations, four facilitated workshops, focus groups, online surveys, hard copies surveys. Their views informed the new action plan for delivery over the next three years. They all offered invaluable insights to key challenges, solutions and further engagement.

## 10. POLICY CONTEXT

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**Regional policies, strategies and supporting documents relating to the Age Sector to support this strategic plan.** During consultations Mid Ulster stakeholders analysed the external environment with a PESTLE Analysis. The following public documents, policy and research were taken into consideration when making the action plans.

- Anti-Poverty Strategy
- Active Ageing Strategy (Department for Communities)
- Access to Cash
- Advance Care Planning Policy (Department of Health)
- Age NI Strategy – Making Later Life Better “Love Later Life”
- Age NI Election Manifesto 2022
- Adult Protection Bill for Northern Ireland
- Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland with NIA
- Cancer Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022 -2032
- COPNI Priorities
- Consumer Council
- Domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Department of Health’s Urgent and Emergency Care Services
- Digital Inclusion
- Disability Strategy
- Housing Supply
- Inconsiderate Pavement Parking with IMTAC
- Gender Inequality
- Gender strategy and Sexual Orientation strategy
- European Union Settlement Scheme
- Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031
- NISRA Census data
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive’s Older People’s Housing Strategy 2021/22 - 2025/26
- Organ donation – PHA statutory opt-out system for Northern Ireland
- PHA – Making Life Better
- Programme for Government Outcomes Framework
- Pension Credit Uptake
- Post Office Card Account POCA
- Public Transport Survey
- Sport & Physical Activity Strategy
- Safe access for older people with Museums NI
- Victims of Crime Commissioner
- Violence against Women and Girls

There needs an integrated approach to all of these strategies and action planning. They need to be aligned in terms of its delivery, in order to ensure that they are all implemented effectively and that older people, are not excluded or adversely affected. This Age Friendly strategy and its full implementation provide a unique chance to do things differently.

This is the opportunity to plan and improve structures and services so that older people and others have access to the care and support they need, when they need it, and in a way that helps them and their families to live well.

- Attitudes changed towards older people
- Ageism challenged
- Awareness of assets and needs
- Accessibility
- Able to make informed decisions – not told what to do
- Advocacy – everyone needs a voice
- Better services including health services
- Choice and options
- Confidence building
- Collaboration
- Connection - more connected age sector
- Communication
- Dignity at all ages of life
- Dialogue
- Diversity of older people with diverse needs
- Empowerment
- Flexibility
- Friendship
- Funding applications simplified for groups
- Honour life experiences
- Inclusive for all
- Informed
- More communication – and communication not all online, hard copies please
- Not to feel a burden on society
- No Assumptions, No Barriers, No Discrimination,
- Listened too
- Respect
- Review, evaluate and plan
- Resources invested and funding for service providers
- Support communities and groups
- Value older people more



We would like to acknowledge the contributions to the people who worked tirelessly to make this Age Friendly Strategic Plan and the external consultant Elaine Curry.



## Contact details

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