

New Resources Launched to Future Proof Housing for Population Ageing

National Launch of Age Friendly Ireland's Suite of Age Friendly Housing Resources & the agefriendlyhomes.ie website

Media Release Embargo: 6am, Tuesday, June 22, 2021

Population ageing is a major demographic trend facing Ireland. Life expectancy is increasing, which means that people will spend a larger proportion of their lives as older people. In future, our homes will need to be more Universally Designed so that we can live comfortably at home into our later years.

Streaming live from the Custom House and in the presence of both Minister Peter Burke and Minister Mary Butler, Age Friendly Ireland is today launching a new suite of resources to support the preparation of housing for the ageing population and a brand-new website called agefriendlyhomes.ie.

The Agefriendlyhomes website contains an array of information to support the development of Age Friendly Housing, such as case studies, research, funding information and design templates. This website was developed in collaboration with The Housing Agency and Age Friendly Ireland, the Department of Health and Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This is a very unique web portal in an Irish context and will provide a one stop shop for all resources to support Age Friendly Housing. **Chief Executive Officer of The Housing Agency, John O'Connor**, said:

"The launch of Agefriendlyhomes.ie marks a significant milestone in The Housing Agency's work in housing for our ageing population. We have been delighted to collaborate with all of the different stakeholders in its creation."

He went on to say: *"The website provides a central hub for resources, guidance and information on housing. We hope that everyone involved in the provision of homes for older people – from local authorities and approved housing bodies to architects, other construction professionals and the general public – will find the website useful and be encouraged to think more closely about the needs of our citizens as we grow older."*

The Age Friendly suite of resources being launched today include guidance of features to include in a lifetime adaptable and age friendly home including how to make it more accessible and a checklist to use in your own home. Also included is research on older people's perceptions and experiences of going through a rightsizing process to future proof their home and an information booklet for older people to explain their options regarding future proofing their homes, ranging from adapting the home, Homeshare or moving to more suitable accommodation. Another key resources being launched today is the 'Age Friendly Primary Care Centre Guidelines', which provides guidance material on the inclusion of Age Friendly features in the development of new Primary Care Centres to meet the needs of the ageing population.

All of these actions are directly related to the implementation of the 2019 policy statement 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population', a joint policy from the Department of Health and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.



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Speaking about the new resources, **Minister Peter Burke** said:

“Providing a range of housing options that respond to needs across the community is a priority of government and of my Department. The Programme for Government outlines a vision of an Age Friendly Ireland and contains a commitment to Housing for All. Having a safe home is a cornerstone of a decent quality of life. It commits to providing affordable public and social homes and increasing housing stock by over 50,000 over the next five years, the majority of which is to be built by local authorities. The government will ensure that an appropriate mix of housing design types is provided, including universally designed units, and accommodation for older people and people with disabilities.”

Also welcoming the launch of these resources, **Minister Mary Butler** commented:

“I welcome the launch of this suite of Age Friendly resources on housing and the Age Friendly Homes website today, which will be a huge support to the work of my Department and other key stakeholders in promoting the overall health and wellbeing of older people.

When we think about later life, most of us would prefer to stay as long as possible in our own homes, surrounded by friends, loved ones, and the familiar setting of our community. Our ambition as a government is to do everything we can to support older people to continue living at home with dignity and independence.

These resources and website will make a valuable contribution in enabling older people to lead healthy lives at home for longer. They will contribute to a greater awareness of standards for Age-Friendly Housing, and the options people have as they grow older with regard to housing adaptations and other choices. Older people must have choice when it comes to housing, and their voice must be placed at the centre of all Age Friendly Housing developments”.

The ethos of Ireland’s national Age Friendly Programme is to support the development of our whole society as Age Friendly. This programme uses a World Health Organization framework that defines housing and the built environment as a critical component of Age Friendly Communities. The voice of the older person is at the heart of the programme in designing services for the future. **Rosaleen Smart from Westmeath Older People’s Council** sits on the national implementation group for the Housing Options for our Ageing policy. She says:

“I am delighted to see this suite of documents and website being launched today. These resources provide older people with the information they need to future proof their home or to right size, and most importantly it gives us the independence to make our own informed decisions.”

Age Friendly Communities support the participation of older people and accommodate changing needs across the lifecycle. The materials being launched today by Age Friendly Ireland help to shape an understanding of Age Friendly Homes. **Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive of Meath County Council** said:

“Housing, Planning and the Built Environment/Public realm are among the core functions of local government, and the resources being launched today provide us with an opportunity to strengthen our own systems in the delivery of our functions”.

Improving the Age Friendliness of our homes will have wide benefits for individuals, including health and safety issues such as reducing falls, and increasing quality of life. It will also contribute towards Sustainable Development Goals and climate action. The new resources from Age Friendly Ireland complement their existing guidance documents on Age Friendly



Towns, Age Friendly Public Realm, Age Friendly Hospitals, walkability audit tools and their unique Housing and Public Realm Training Programme.

Partners in the development of these resources include such bodies as the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design and The Housing Agency.

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Notes to the Editor

About Age Friendly Ireland

Ireland's National Age Friendly Programme is a statutory cross departmental programme, supported by the Department of Housing Planning and Local Government, the Department of Health, the HSE and all Local Authorities.

Age Friendly Ireland is an appointed shared service of local government, hosted by Meath County Council on behalf of the wider local government sector. The national Age Friendly Programme office brings together, supports and provides technical guidance to the 31 local authority led, multi-agency, Age Friendly City and County Programmes across Ireland.

The overarching goal of Ireland's Age Friendly Programme is that every local authority area in Ireland will be a great place in which to grow old. Underpinning the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme is the core principle that older people are a most valuable resource to their communities and to our society in general. For this reason, the voice of the older person is at the very heart of the Programme.

The suite of Age Friendly publications being launched are:

- Brochure on 'Ten Universal Design Features to Include in a Lifetime Adaptable and Age Friendly Home' which synopsis the most critical features that make homes Age friendly
- Age Friendly Homes Rating Tool – a user-friendly checklist of features to include in your home to make it more accessible and Age Friendly
- Age Friendly Primary Care Centre Guidelines – guidance material on the inclusion of Age Friendly features in the development of new Primary Care Centres to meet the needs of the ageing population
- Age Friendly Car Parking Template – schematic for developing Age Friendly car parking bays
- Age Friendly Seating Template - guidance on making public seating more Age Friendly using Universal Design features
- Research on Rightsizing – research on older people's perceptions and experiences of going through a rightsizing process to future proof their home environment and living arrangements



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- Rightsizing Guide – information booklet for older people to explain their options regarding future proofing their homes, ranging from adapting the home, Homeshare or moving to more suitable accommodation
- Age Friendly Planning Guidelines – guidance for planning authorities on preparing development plans that consider all aspects of demands that will be generated by population ageing
- Pre-planning guidance for planning authorities on long-term residential care facilities.



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