

‘A Better Life for Older People in Sligo’

An Action Plan and Report on the Seminar held on 14th September, 2007 in the Glasshouse Hotel, Sligo



This report was commissioned by the Social Inclusion Measures group of the County Sligo Development Board.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introduction	3
Section 1 – Report on Seminar Speakers	4
Section 2 – Working Group Feedback	6
<i>Group 1: Lifelong Learning</i>	
<i>Group 2: Getting Involved in Your Community</i>	
<i>Group 3: Health & Wellbeing</i>	
<i>Group 4: Access to Services & Information</i>	
Section 4 – Action Plan	12
Appendices	15

Introduction

This seminar arises as part of Action 7.5 of the **County Sligo Development Boards' Action Plan 2006-2009**. Action 7.5 intends to *organise/ support a high profile seminar on an annual basis with keynote speakers to raise awareness of social inclusion and equality issues within the county*. The SIM group have decided to focus on Older People in the first seminar exploring social inclusion issues within the county. The seminar aims to both raise awareness of social inclusion and equality issues for Older People within the county and develop a series of actions to improve services and address information gaps based on the needs identified by conference participants. The following report and action plan has been drafted outlining recommendations arising from the seminar and workshop participation.

It is interesting to note that older people are included in the CDB Strategy 2002-2012. In the vision set out for Social Inclusion 3.5.5, older people are included in a list of 14 groups recognised as being at risk of social exclusion by the Sligo LEADER Partnership Co. Sligo CDB outlines, "its concern with ensuring all citizens have a chance to contribute towards and benefit from the economic growth of the County". The CDB's vision for Sligo is a society where there is social inclusion, equality of opportunity, and the sustainable development of local communities. ¹

The recent County Sligo, Profile of Poverty & Social Exclusion Report² highlights that in, "2002, 7,673 people or just over 13% of Sligo's population were aged over 65 years and that 2,120 people over 65 years (27.6% of all people over 65) are living alone in County Sligo. The gender breakdown of this group is; 802 Males and 1,328 females. This represents 10.8% of all households in the county. While this rate is similar to rates in the Border Region and in the Border Midlands and West Region as a whole., it is significantly higher than the rate for the South and East Region and the National average of 8.8%."

The Report concludes that, "older people living alone are most at risk in terms of poverty and social exclusion. The EU-SILC reported that in 2005 the 'at risk of poverty rate' among households with 'one adult with no children' was 28.8%. This category of household is predominantly composed of the elderly. This risk rate had declined from 35.7% in 2004."

¹ An Integrated Economic, Social & Cultural Strategy for County Sligo 2002-2012, Sligo CDB

² County Sligo, Profile of Poverty & Social Exclusion Report by Tom Hobson Consulting Ltd. for Sligo Social Inclusion Measures Group, June 2007

The seminar's aims are to:

1. *Provide a forum for older people to highlight key challenges they face and identify key areas of need.*
2. *Allow representatives of agencies to communicate information about existing services and policies targeting older people.*
3. *To provide an opportunity for older people in Sligo to participate in the development of an action plan by the Social Inclusion Measures group targeting their identified needs.*

The seminar achieved its aims through a combination of speakers presenting information of interest to older people in Sligo. These included a presentation from Gerry Mangan, Director of the Office of Social Inclusion and John Quinn, retired Broadcaster. The seminar also incorporated four working groups to identify key challenges facing older people and to make suggestions for positive change.

These were:

1. *Lifelong Learning*
2. *Getting Involved in your Community*
3. *Health/ Wellbeing*
4. *Access to Services & Information*

The working group were given two key areas to discuss a) identify the key challenges that face older people in Sligo today and b) identify key activities that could be implemented as part of an action plan by SIM to target identified needs of older people in Sligo today. Discussions during the workshops have been compiled within this report, under the separate working groups, in section three. There may be areas of overlap which will be highlighted in the final action plan.

There are three sections to this report. **Section One** outlines the seminar input about the lives of older people today from two key speakers, Gerry Mangan, Director of the Office of Social Inclusion and John Quinn, retired Broadcaster.

Section Two details the individual responses to questions within the working groups. This forms an in-depth account of points raised as part of the discussion within the working groups.

Section Three outlines an agreed Action Plan arising from the needs identified within the workshops. These needs were wide ranging in their nature. The working group have focussed on responding to those challenges which can be addressed at a local level while mindful of their role in supporting change at a wider, national level.

Section One – Seminar Speakers

This section outlines the main points from the speakers' presentations. *Gerry Mangan, Director of the Office of Social Inclusion* highlighted the key policy areas that the government are pursuing at a national level to improve the quality of life of older people. This presentation outlined the overall statistical situation of older people in Ireland today, changing lifecycles, the impact of poverty and social exclusion and government policy and goal in this regard.

Statistics presented highlighted the following key areas:

There is an overall increase in population levels in Ireland, particularly in comparison to the EU average. Currently 11% of the population are over 65. In the coming 20 years this will increase to at least double. Average life expectancy has increased to 75 and 80 for men and women respectively.

To aid policy making, four different categories of lifecycles have been developed to describe the needs within a population as their lifecycle changes. These were categorised as the fun phase 18-30, the rush hour 30-55, the active seniors 55-75, and the 75+. The needs of these groups are very different. We have an ageing population and by 2050 will have the highest proportion of older people in the EU. At present, poverty measures indicate consistent poverty in the 65+ age group is lower than other age groups at 3.7%. However, the at risk of poverty measure indicates just over 20% of people in the 65+ age group fall into this category. In summary the statistics show the challenges for older people in Ireland as the need to activate older people and maximise human capital, provide adequate incomes through pensions and supplementary benefits, ensure good accommodation for those active and living in the community and care for dependent older people in the community and in residential care.

To deal with these challenges the government has established a range of policy measures to ensure co-ordinated and effective implementation measures at local and national level. These include the NAPS Inc., NDP and Social Partnership Towards 2016. They all emphasis a Lifecycle Approach to older people with co-ordination, joined up thinking, consultation & communication and evaluation emphasised.

The overarching goal within the governments' social policy is to reduce the number of people experiencing 'consistent poverty' to between 2% and 4% by 2012. This is supported by a range of goals including increase of basic pension and focus on enabling older people to remain living in their community. To implement these goals, investment has been increased in services for older people in the NDP. These will focus on providing Home Care programmes, respite day care

services, increasing housing, improve number of primary health teams and develop community and voluntary supports. These goals will be implemented at a national and local level, with agencies working in co-operation. Inherent in the implementation of these goals is ongoing consultation and communication with older people themselves.

John Quinn, broadcaster spoke at length of the rich contribution that older people bring to their communities. He highlighted the difficulties for older people in a time of changing social values, in particular, the focus on getting ahead, being competitive, being busy all the time, running on life's treadmill without stopping for any reflection. He noted that there were many ways to know the world and many perspectives on living. He advocated that older people must contribute their differing sets of values to society to help redress the current imbalance. He stressed their acquired wisdom and how that needed to be channelled as social capital to recreate and regenerate our communities. He spoke of the tacit knowledge and exceptional range of skills that older people have acquired through their lives. He advocated that this knowledge be tapped and the skills harnessed by older people to mentor the rest of society. He spoke of the key role older people must play in rebuilding our sense of community, in adjusting the imbalance between our perceptions of success and failure and promoting inter-generational learning as a route to transfer the skills and learning.



Section Two - Working Group Feedback

The following tables collate the individual responses given by participants within the workshop.

They provide a more detailed commentary on the main points as outlined in the previous section.

Group I: Lifelong Learning

Challenges Faced	Activities proposed
<p>Transport & Travel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of county wide free transport service • Physical access issues to transport • Lack of free/ cheap parking 	<p>Education courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability of more education courses in the following subjects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dancing ○ Active retirement computer classes ○ photography, reminiscence, drama ○ Arranging trips away ○ Training – loneliness in counselling, bereavement, separation, health & safety, counselling skills • courses to be organised at appropriate times for elderly i.e. in the day • offer courses through existing facilities e.g. FRC's
<p>Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of local based, suitable facilities • Lack of high standard education focussed facilities with regular access to computers/ internet • Free refreshments 	<p>Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Join active retirement/ ICA other local groups • Provide a home visitation service in winter months/ befriending purposes • Visiting schools and liaising on inter-generational level.
<p>Costs & Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs of transportation • Cost of facilitators, meeting rooms etc 	
<p>Soft piece/ relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of variety of courses or activities within groups • Diversity of older person needs pending activity levels • Need for social networks 	

- Special approach & skills for those offering services to older people: friendly, patient, good listening skills, encouraging

Loman Conway – Reporting on the Lifelong Learning Workshop



(L-R): Loman Conway, Cllr Seamus Kilgannon, Cathaoirleach Sligo County Council, Cllr. Jonathan Mc Goldrick, Mayor of Sligo, Hugh Mc Conville (Chairperson SIM group), Aisling Smyth (Community and Enterprise, Sligo County Council), and Mr John Quinn, Key Note Speaker.



Group of delegates pictured in the “Participating in Your Community” workshop

Group 2: Getting Involved in your Community

Challenges Faced	Activities proposed
<p>Training & Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted training specifically for older people at a content & participant level: topics to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ training management committees roles ○ funding – how to access • more information on services available to older people in an accessible format 	<p>Facilities/ Resource provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of existing successful programmes/ services to all areas within county e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CLASP ○ RTI (Rural Transport Initiative). • Increase funding to community groups to increase programmes in county • Integration of services within specific agencies i.e. CWO, PHN, Chiropody, Eye i.e. one trip several appointments • Regular Information outreach clinics to community, health centres, where older people are gathered • Modern all purpose community centres throughout the county • Ongoing consultation/ communication process between agencies & older people e.g. older people representation
<p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not the same provision in all communities, consistency required • Essential day care services should be offered everywhere e.g. chiropody, hairdresser, nurses, shower • Lack of integration of services provision within community • Limited meeting space • need a network of group support • Lack of basic service to help with shopping, gardening, cleaning windows, curtains. 	<p>Traffic/ Roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information/ training on understanding new road layout • need the provision of footpaths to allow safe entry and exit to homes • parking • Expansion of RTI (Rural Transport Initiative). • Media campaign on Road Safety highlighting new road crossings, roadabouts etc

<p>Soft area/ relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to be invited and encouraged to join in community activity • need to be pro-active and get out there & avail of services 	<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Grant aid
<p>Transport & roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road enhancement, roundabout/ road changes causing confusion • RTI needs to be extended county wide 	<p>Social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The following initiatives were proposed to develop the social life of older people: more outings available, / theatre/ physical activities/ walking golf/ craft/ arts/ computers/ book club/ pottery/ inter-church activities/ curling/ Flower arranging/ Croquet/ Whist/ Quiz/ golf/ interpersonal & communication skills/ go for life/ walking/ befriending • develop friendship network & groups to help & share skills with each other and encouragement to be active • register as a volunteer with Sligo volunteer centre • Ongoing consultation with older people: Need to know agencies will be here to support us/ Make ourselves heard • Community development projects • Suitably equipped community centres
<p>Community Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • volunteers organise outings/ active age • organise for volunteers to do odd jobs for people who are unable to do it for themselves • funding • tireless voluntary effort appreciated & support of agencies 	<p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extension of programmes like PEPPA (Pathways to Employment for People Parenting Alone) to older people • targeted training around management committee roles & responsibilities, legal obligations of groups

Group 3: Health & Wellbeing

Activities Proposed

<p>Interagency working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better information sharing between relevant services – single patient record (for & against)
<p>Person Centred Approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home help (Care plan & review) : ID, training, account books, specific needs identified
<p>Increased Service/ funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiotherapy – efficiency of service, community rehab, home physio, promotion of physio aid • Transport – free transport for active retirement groups to & from weekly meetings. Develop greater links with the RTI • Security alarm systems – more information on grants
<p>Admin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person friendly Form filling: provide assistance, use plain English, add colour to forms • Greater information and more pro-active approach from service user around Right to complain, proper standards, HIQA inspection team
<p>Greater efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital appointments (all at the same time), car parking, transparent and fair method of dealing with appointments • Car parking – flexible use of disabled parking spaces



Health & Wellbeing Workshop



Lifelong Learning Workshop

Group 4: Access to Services & Information

Challenges Faced	Activities proposed
Transport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not enough car parking spaces available • very few disabled parking spots • must park out of town and use taxi to get around centre. 	Parking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more disabled driver parking spaces. • Create more parking spaces. • Reduce cost of parking for older people.
Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of efficient GP after hours service 	Transport & Roads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of hours for RTI – use of pass for rural taxis is needed • Improving footpaths
	Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on grants for security – through senior help line
	Resources/ Facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Space for older people to meet/ drop-in facilities – independent & cheap • Increase funding to older group so they can increase their programmes
	Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better & more frequent ways of getting information from agency to groups working with older people • Increase grants to make information friendly for older people • An inter-agency information pack on all allowances/ schemes for older people

Section Three – Action Plan

Outcome	Action	Lead Agency	Timeframe
LIFELONG LEARNING			
Increased relevance, range and accessibility of older people's education courses.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider older peoples needs in designing courses including range of courses, time and venues. 2. To use existing Community facilities to deliver training courses countywide. 3. To liaise with existing transport services to support accessibility for older people 	VEC supported by SLPC	2008 - ongoing
Increased knowledge & skills around governance.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. To deliver training around management committee roles & responsibilities in locations spread throughout the county 	Community Forum/ SLPC	Autumn 2007 & ongoing
Enhanced active citizen ship through greater inter-generational activity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. An Arts Programme Co-ordinator for older people and children will work with relevant agencies including SLPC to deliver a 2 year Intergenerational Programme in 8 schools/communities on a phased basis between 2008-2012.³ 	Sligo Arts & Health Partnership: (Sligo Arts Service, Sligo Co. Co., HSE Health Promotion Dept. & Services for Older People).	2008 - 2012

³ * HE + ART – A 5 Year Participatory Arts & Health Strategy for Sligo 2007 – 2012 which provides for cross sector co-operation and greatly enhanced access to Arts & Health projects for those in our community who are older, unwell, vulnerable or marginalized. Available from Sligo Arts Service, Sligo County Council.

Outcome	Action	Lead Agency	Timeframe
INCREASED SERVICES			
Extension of Rural Transport Initiative countywide and to those most marginalised.	<p>6. Promote information on Rural Transport Programme within the county.</p> <p>7. Support development of voluntary transport hubs to drive the local growth of service.</p>	SLPC/CLASP	2008
Co-ordinated home visitation service & social network for older people.	<p>8. Conduct audit of existing home visitation & social network services within county to identify gaps in current provision.</p> <p>9. Co-ordinate a response to identified gaps.</p> <p>10. Monitor ongoing impact of Rural Social Scheme & Social Inclusion Programme on provision of these services,</p>	SLPC/CLASP	2008
Establishment of 'Care & Repair' programme	11. Explore through agency Partnership how a "Care and Repair Programme" can be planned and delivered locally with Age Action Ireland.	HSE – Health Promotion Unit	2008
Greater number of applications for funding from Active Age groups.	12. Hold a Funding Seminar targeting community groups focussing on the needs of Active Age groups. Incorporate a practical workshop on completion of application for funding.	Community Forum/ SLPC	Autumn 2007

Outcome	Action	Lead Agency	Timeframe
More accessibility of new road layouts to older people.	<p>13. Compile a map highlighting changes in road layouts and car parking facilities.</p> <p>14. Disseminate this information through active age groups within county.</p>	Sligo County Council	Autumn 2007
Improved Pedestrian Road Safety on Rural Roads.	15. To raise awareness of the "Be safe, Be seen" promotion campaign through Active Age Groups by the distribution of complimentary high visibility vests and information leaflets.	Sligo County Council with support from relevant agencies including H.S.E	Autumn 2007/Winter 2008
REPRESENTATION			
Increased representation for older people on policy-making structures with county to ensure ongoing communication & consultation.	16. Select a representative from the Active Age organisations within the county to join the Community Forum.	Community Forum	Spring 2008
	17. Establish an Active Age working group within the Social Inclusion Programme.	SLPC	Autumn 2007 and ongoing.
INFORMATION PROVISION			
An information strategy to communicate relevant information to older people.	18. A Working Group of the Social Inclusion Measures Group (SIM) has been set up to look at putting together an Information Strategy for Older People. The Sub Committee will issue its recommendations to the SIM Group .	SIM group	Winter 2007

Outcome	Action	Lead Agency	Timeframe
VOLUNTEERISM			
Increased use of volunteerism among members of active age groups.	19. Volunteer Centre to visit Active Age Groups to explain its service and promote and encourage volunteerism	Volunteer Centre	2008
OTHER			
Enhanced 'Older Person' friendly approaches adopted by agencies offering services.	20. Identify relevant agencies who would benefit from increased knowledge and skills around working with older people. 21. In co-operation with Age & Opportunity, develop and deliver 'Age Wise workshop' to identified agencies.	HSE Health Promotion Unit.	2008
Greater Awareness of falls risk and prevention and the creation of safer environments for older people.	22. To raise awareness of falls risk, to encourage safe behaviour in Older people and to create safer environments. 23. To develop partnerships with agencies providing community based services and raise awareness about risk conditions 24. Develop and deliver community based fall prevention education programmes. 25. Provide opportunities for older people to participate in regular & life long exercise programme.	HSE- Health Promotion Unit (with support from relevant agencies).	2008 – ongoing

Outcome	Action	Lead Agency	Timeframe
Continued:	26. Advocate for and collaborate with relevant agencies to improve safety and accessibility of public environments for older people to address existing environmental hazards.	HSE- Health Promotion Unit (with support from relevant agencies).	2008 – ongoing

Monitoring Structure:

The implementation of the Actions outlined in this Action Plan will be monitored by the Social Inclusion Measures Group (SIM) twice yearly at the July and end of year meetings to review progress and update the participants of the Seminar on progress made. Lead Agencies will prepare Progress Reports for presentation to the SIM Group and submit to the Office of Community, Enterprise and Arts prior to relevant monitoring meeting.

Volunteer Facilitators receiving “Active Citizenship” Presentations



**Lowan Conway receiving his presentation
From Cllr. Jonathan Mc Goldrick., Mayor of Sligo**



**Martin Whyte receiving his presentation from Cllr.
Seamus Kilgannon, Cathaoireach, Sligo Co. Council**



**Sr. Teresa Kilcourse receiving her presentation
from John Quinn, guest speaker**

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Individuals in Attendance at Seminar, 14th September, 2007

Life Long Learning. Work shop 1 Mezzanine 1	Getting Involved in your Community. Workshop 2 Mezzanine 2	Health & Wellbeing. Work shop 3 Conference Room	Access to Services & Information. Work shop 4 Conference Room
Facilitator: Loman Conway (Volunteer Facilitator)	Sr Teresa Kilcourse (Volunteer Facilitator)	Geraldine Timlin (Sligo County Council)	Martin Whyte (Volunteer Facilitator)
Co-support Camilla Smyth (SLPC)	Sue Mahon (Sligo County Council)	Martina De Lucia (SLPC)	Sarah Weatherald (SLPC)
Francis Byrne (FAS)	Hugh McConville (SIM Chair)	Mary Lyons - Comm Welfare Officer (HSE)	Connor Corduff (CIB)
Sarah Bronkhurst CLASP	Lorraine Boyd (HSE) – Social Work	Gordon Barrett - Social Work (HSE)	Carmel Taheny (HSE)
Trina Gordon Easkey FRC	Martina Clarke Easkey FRC	Kathleen Kieilty (Ballymote FRC)	Claire Dineen (Ballymote FRC)
Connor Fitzgerald Tubbercurry FRC	Paula Naughton (Volunteer Centre)	Majella O' Donnell (Alzheimers Day Centre)	Brian Holland (Alzheimers Day Care Centre)
Martina Kilgallon (Citizens Info Board)	Suzanne Collery (St Annes Community Centre)	John Deasy (Sligo Social Services)	Mairead McLoughlin (SCC)
Teresa Keegan – Social Work (HSE)	Vanessa Clarke (Community Alert)	Caroline Feeney (SBC)	Margaret Mooney DSFA
	Mary Brodie (VEC)	Geraldine Delory (HSE – Health Promotion Unit)	Michael Quigley SLPC
	Marcus Hufsky (DFI)	Geraldine Mullarkey (HSE)	Michael Burke (VEC)
		Rhona McGrath Arts Office, Sligo Co Council	Christy McDonagh (DSFA)
		Pat Dolan HSE	

List of Individuals in Attendance at Seminar, 14th September, 2007 contd.

Life Long Learning. Work shop 1	Getting Involved in your Community. Workshop 2	Health & Wellbeing. Work shop 3	Access to Services & Information. Work shop 4
Mezzanine 1	Mezzanine 2	Conference Room	Conference Room
Bernadette Gilbride	John Pat Rooney	Terese Johnston	Patrick Feeney
Geraldine Healy	Alfie Acheson	Dympna McKeon	Patricia Nicholson
Sadie Gill	Annie Mulligan	John Gill	Mary McGarry
Josie Cunningham	MaryMcConnell	Clare Duffy	Vera Conboy
Michael Wheelan	Lorrie Dykes	Keelan Johnston	Pat Branley
Elizabeth Rooney	Maureen Barlow	Chris Davis	Kitty Younds
Mary McCarthy	Laurie Crawford	Oliver Durkin	Danny Garvey
Noel Barlow	Helen Wallace	Angela Giblin	Brian Crummy
Dougie Colvin	Wilie Gillespie	Aileen Bright	Mary Lynch
John Conlon	Helen Kerins	Cathy Golden	Mary James
Ann Wimsey	Tess Lynch	Lally Loftus	Nora McCloat
Phyllis Barber		Mae Cahill	Martina Clarke
Pat Harte		Maureen Culkin	
Patricia Curran			
Tim Curran			
Maura Conway			



Lowan Conway

Appendix 2: List of Members of SIM Group

Hugh Mac Conville	Trade Unions – Chair of SIM Group
Rita McNulty	Director of Services - Sligo County Council.
Bernadette C. Maughan	Sligo Traveller Support Group
Bridie Conway	Housing Officer Sligo Borough Council
Camilla Smyth	Sligo Leader Partnership Co
Catherine Devaney	Social Inclusion Officer - HSE
Christy McDonagh	DSFA
Conor Corduff	Citizens Information Board
Darragh Severs	Dept. Education & Science
Francis Byrne	FAS
Helena Murrin	Probation Services
Lorna Gault	Sligo Education Centre
Marcus Hufsky	Disability Federation of Ireland
Margaret Mooney	RAPID AIT
Martin Henry	Teagasc
Michael Burke	VEC
Michael Quigley	Sligo Leader Partnership Co
Pamela Andison	Rapid Coordinator
Paula O'Connor Sherlock	Community Forum
Sarah Bronkhurst	Community of Lough Arrow Social Project
Sean O Connor	NW Regional Drugs Taskforce
Sgt Noel Casey	Garda Siochana
Sharon Boles	Sligo County Childcare Committee
Aisling Smyth	Community & Enterprise, Sligo County Council