

Public Libraries Pilot Project

**European Year for
Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations
2012**

The Age Friendly Public Library Serving the Older Population

**Libraries Development
Local Government Management Agency**

August 2013

Steering Committee

Ms. Annette Kelly, Libraries Development (LGMA) (Chair)

Ms. Eva McEneaney, Libraries Development (LGMA)

Ms. Joan Ward, Libraries Development (LGMA)

Ms. Brigid Butler, Dublin Mid-Leinster Age Friendly County Program

Ms. Aisling Costello, Ageing Well Network

Ms. Georgina Byrne, County Librarian, South Dublin Public Libraries

Ms. Marian Higgins, Acting County Librarian, Kildare County Library & Arts Service

Ms. Bernadette Fennell, County Librarian, Louth County Public Libraries

Professor Michael Casey, Project Manager/Researcher

Funding

Department of Health

Ageing Well Network

Published by

Libraries Development

Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)

Local Government House

35-39 Ushers Quay

Dublin 8

Ireland

Telephone: +353 1 633 2200

Email: info@lgma.ie

Website: <http://www.lgcsb.ie/>

Foreword

I am delighted to welcome this research report on the Age Friendly Public Library which has examined the role of public libraries in serving the needs of the older population. This report was undertaken as part of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012.

The Census 2011 statistics revealed that the population of people aged 65 or older had increased by 14.4% in the previous five years. Older people are living longer, healthier, active lives. In recognition of this, local government, in line with national policy, is working to develop improved services to older people through the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme, aimed at developing an 'age friendly city and county programme' in all local authority areas by the end of 2015.

We welcome the partnership with the Department of Health and the Ageing Well Network in this research project for public libraries which is a national initiative associated with the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme. Public libraries have a mission to serve all individuals and communities through all the life stages and provide a wide range of services including access to information, learning, knowledge, leisure and community and cultural programmes. Public libraries have a key role to play in supporting and enhancing the quality of life of the growing population of older people in Ireland and need to work in conjunction with the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme in achieving this.

Emphasis must now be placed on the continued development of services to older people in public libraries. The recommendations in this report will serve as building blocks to support libraries in this ongoing process. I am confident that the public library service will continue serving the needs of older people and work towards developing new and improved library services to meet these needs.

Michael Malone

Chairman, Libraries Development
Local Government Management Agency

Acknowledgements

The Local Government Management Agency gratefully acknowledges all those who worked together to deliver the 'Age Friendly Public Library' report.

In particular we would like to thank the Department of Health and the Ageing Well Network for funding this research project.

We would like to thank the Chair and members of the Steering Committee for their direction and guidance from the beginning and for their dedication throughout.

We also wish to thank South Dublin County Libraries and Kildare County Library and Arts Service for participating as research partners in the project and organising and facilitating focus groups in their libraries.

Members of the general public participated enthusiastically in the focus groups and provided valuable feedback and we appreciate their contribution.

The submissions by representative bodies working with older people provided effective and important recommendations and feedback and we appreciate the contribution from these organisations.

Finally, we wish to record special appreciation of the contribution made by Professor Michael Casey who conducted the research and prepared this comprehensive report.

Management Summary

This is a report on a public libraries pilot project undertaken during December 2012 – June 2013 by Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) as part of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012.

The project was co-funded by the Department of Health and Ageing Well Network.

The focus of the study was to examine how public libraries in Ireland are currently serving the older population (60+) and to prepare policy recommendations and an Age Friendly Library guide to assist public libraries in providing and promoting relevant services to this section of the community.

The project was undertaken by means of an international literature review, a survey of public library authorities in Ireland, by convening representative focus groups of library users and non-users in the catchment areas of two participating library authorities (Kildare and South Dublin) and via a consultation process with organisations representing the interests of older people in Ireland.

The study has found that there is unprecedented growth worldwide in the 60+ demographic and rather than becoming frail and elderly, this segment of the population is generally becoming increasingly active and energetic and looks forward in a positive mindset to a new and exciting life phase. These social and demographic changes are posing challenges for public libraries in terms of policy making, programming, service design and development and operational structures and procedures.

Consultation with focus groups revealed that the public library is seen by older people mainly in the context of housing books and other materials and providing loans to the public. This is despite the fact that most public libraries actively engage in a wide range of activities of relevance to older people such as book clubs, reading sessions, Bealtaine events, ICT and other training courses, lifelong learning, intergenerational programmes and outreach services aimed at people who are homebound or resident in nursing homes and hospitals or attending day care centres.

While all library authorities cater for older people within their general policies and programmes for service provision, one in three has a specific age friendly policy in place and this is generally on the back of a wider local authority age friendly county policy.

This report proposes **a policy for public libraries to better serve older people** (Section 10) by adopting age friendly policies, introducing appropriate internal structures to service older people e.g. allocation of staff responsibilities and provision of age friendly staff training, making provision for the needs of older people within their core collections and services, by actively promoting their services to the public, by building relationships with other agencies serving older people and serving as local community hubs.

The report also includes recommendations for **a national policy for the provision of public library services to older people** (Section 11) and it is recommended that this policy be acknowledged in the implementation of relevant national strategies that are already in place or about to be adopted –

specifically, the *National Strategy for Public Libraries* (2013-2017), the *National Positive Ageing Strategy* (published April 2013) and the Action Plan on effective local governance – *Putting People First* (2012). Other measures recommended at national level include the need for a national campaign to promote public libraries.

An **Age Friendly Library guide** for the provision of library and information services to older people will be produced as a separate project outcome in the near future.

Contents

1.	Background to the Study	1
	1.1 The WHO Age-friendly Environments Programme	
	1.2 The Irish National Age Friendly Counties (AFC) Programme	
	1.3 The National Positive Ageing Strategy	
	1.4 The Public Libraries Research Project	
2.	Project Aims and Objectives	5
3.	Methodology.	7
	3.1 Project Management	
	3.2 Literature Review	
	3.3 Survey of Library Authorities	
	3.4 Focus Group Survey	
	3.5 Consultation with Representative Agencies	
4.	An Overview of Recent Age Friendly Related Studies in Ireland	11
	4.1 National Studies	
	4.2 Studies at County Level	
	4.2.1 Louth AFC Programme	
	4.2.2 Kildare AFC Programme	
	4.2.3 South Dublin AFC Programme	
	4.2.4 Other AFC Programmes	
5.	Some Examples of Overseas Age Friendly Library Policies, Programmes and Guidelines	16
	5.1 North America	
	5.2 The United Kingdom	
	5.3 Developments in Other Countries	
6.	Research Findings: A Survey of Public Library Authorities in Ireland	26
	6.1 Introduction	
	6.2 Age Friendly County Strategies	
	6.3 Library Policies/Programmes aimed at Older People	
	6.4 Library Provision for Older People	
	6.5 Research by Library Authorities	
	6.6 Perception of Public Libraries	
	6.7 Gaps in Service Provision to Older People	
	6.8 The Physical Environment	
	6.9 Offsite/Outreach Services	
	6.10 Promoting the Library to Older People	
	6.11 Education and Lifelong Learning aimed at older People	
	6.12 Library Links/Partnerships with Other Agencies	
	6.13 Proposed New and/or Improved Services to Older People	
	6.14 Constraints on Age Friendly Library Policies	
	6.15 General Comments	

7.	Research Findings: A Focus Group Survey	39
	7.1 Introduction	
	7.2 Information Needs of Older People	
	7.3 Awareness of Library Services	
	7.4 Library Technologies	
	7.5 Gaps in Library Services	
	7.6 Barriers to Library Use	
	7.7 The Physical Environment	
	7.8 Provision of New/Improved Services	
8.	Consultation with Representative Agencies	48
	8.1 Age Action Ireland	
	8.2 Age and Opportunity	
	8.3 Alzheimer Society of Ireland	
	8.4 Carers Association	
	8.5 Disability Federation of Ireland	
	8.6 Dublin City University	
	8.7 Irish Senior Citizens Parliament	
	8.8 Irish Sports Council	
	8.9 Meath Accessible Transport Project t/a Flexibus	
	8.10 National Youth Council of Ireland	
9.	Conclusions	57
	9.1 What are the Issues?	
	9.2 What are the Everyday Information Needs and Sources used by Older People?	
	9.3 How is the Public Library perceived by Older People?	
	9.4 What has been the Response by Public Libraries?	
	9.5 What Service Models Exist?	
	9.6 What are the Problems and/or Gaps in the Service?	
10.	Serving Older People Better: A Policy for Public Library Authorities.	52
11.	A National Policy for the Provision of Public Library Services to Older People	64

Appendix 1

American Library Association, (1999), American Library Association Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults.

Appendix 2

Sloan, M. and Vincent, J., (2009), Library services for older people – good practice guide.

Appendix 3

Summary of Recommendations received in the Consultation Process

1. Background to the Study

1.1 The WHO Age-friendly Environments Programme

The 21st century is witnessing a major growth in urbanisation - more people are residing in cities and, at the same time, people are living longer. The proportion of the global population aged 60 is expected to double from 11% in 2006 to 22% by 2050.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Age-friendly Environments Programme¹ is an international initiative designed to address the environmental and social factors that contribute to active and healthy ageing.

The Programme helps cities and communities to become more supportive of older people and in 2007, based on pilot studies in cities across the world, the WHO produced a guide² to assist city authorities to create and maintain age-friendly environments. Pilot cities that served as a basis for the guide were located in the Americas, Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, South-east Asia and the Western Pacific. Ireland was represented by Dundalk.

In 2011 the WHO launched the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities³ as part of a broader response to the rapid ageing of populations. The network represents part of an international initiative by the WHO to “*address the twin global challenges of demographic ageing and urbanisation by focusing on the environmental, economic and social factors that contribute to active and healthy ageing in societies*”.

Scores of cities and communities have now signed up to the project and in June 2012 Dublin hosted the *First International Conference on Age-friendly Cities: Building the WHO Global Network*⁴. The conference brought together a broad range of senior managers from municipal authorities across the world, including those not yet involved with the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities. The conference programme was built around three main themes: *Social and Cultural Connectivity, Built Environment and Building Momentum for the WHO Global Age-friendly Cities initiative*.

1.2 The Irish National Age Friendly Counties (AFC) Programme

The Age-friendly Counties (AFC) Programme in Ireland⁵ is a national initiative of the Ageing Well Network (AWN) “*aimed at developing an 'age friendly county programme' in all Local Authority areas in the country*”. According to AWN, sixteen such programmes were fully operational in April 2013, including those of Carlow, Cavan, Clare, Dublin City, Fingal, Galway (City & County), Kildare,

¹WHO Age Friendly Environments Programme, http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities/en/

² WHO, 2007, Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide, http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2007/9789241547307_eng.pdf

³ WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities, http://www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities_network/en/

⁴ The new agenda on ageing: to make Ireland the best country to grow old in: Conference, 14 June 2012, Burlington Hotel, Dublin <http://www.ageingwellnetwork.com/awn-joint-initiatives/International-Conference-Age-friendly-Cities>

⁵ National Age Friendly Counties Programme Ireland, <http://www.ageingwellnetwork.com/AWN-joint-initiatives/age-friendly-counties>

Kilkenny, Leitrim, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, South County Dublin Waterford City and Westmeath. AWN has also reported that a further four county authorities intend to launch AFC programmes in 2013/2014 i.e. Limerick (City & County), Mayo and Offaly.

The Irish national AFC programme is affiliated to the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and, according to the AWN, involves a three stage process:

1. *Formation of a strong Alliance of senior managers across the local authority, health service, police, business community, voluntary organisations and academic institutions, with representatives from the Older People's Forum, chaired by the County/City Manager;*
2. *Extensive consultation with older people and their organisations, the formation of an Older Person's Forum, and the development of a draft Strategy reflecting the priorities articulated by older people and key stakeholders*
3. *Finalisation of the strategy and a process for reviewing and supporting implementation as well as affiliation to the WHO Global Network of Age Friendly Cities and Communities.*

The Irish AFC programme has adopted the WHO guidelines for cities interested in becoming age friendly and the WHO framework, consisting of eight interrelated domains with associated desired outcomes, for assessing and developing age friendly communities – see table below.

WHO Domain	Desired Outcome
Outdoor public spaces and public buildings	Be enabled by the built and social environment
Transport.	Get to where we want to go, when we want
Health services and community support.	Lead healthier and active lives for longer
Communication and Information.	Have the information we need to lead full lives
Respect and social inclusion, including safety.	Be truly valued and respected Feel safe at home and out and about
Housing	Stay living in our own homes and communities
Social participation	Participate in social, economic and public life
Civic participation and employment.	Continue to learn, develop and work

The programme is supported at national level by a National Implementation Group, comprising Assistant Secretaries from four government departments, Assistant Police Commissioner, Head of Older People's Services in the Health Service, County Managers and the Director of the Ageing Well Network, the national promotion body for the programme.

1.3 The National Positive Ageing Strategy

In April 2013 the Minister for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People, Ms. Kathleen Lynch T.D. launched a report on a National Positive Ageing Strategy⁶.

The Strategy was developed by a Cross-Departmental Group (CDG) comprised of representatives of the Departments of Health; Social Protection; Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation; Education and Skills;

⁶ Department of Health, Patient Safety First, Healthy Ireland (2013), Positive Ageing Starts Now! The National Positive Ageing Strategy, Dublin, Department of Health.

http://www.dohc.ie/publications/National_Positive_Ageing_Strategy.html

Environment, Community and Local Government; Communications, Energy and Natural Resources; Taoiseach; Transport, Tourism and Sport; Justice and Equality as well as the Central Statistics Office and An Garda Síochána.

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) Liaison Group which included representatives of twelve national-level NGOs representing the interests of older people was also established to facilitate the exchange of information and views between these organisations and the CDG during the development of the National Positive Ageing Strategy. The organisations represented on this Group were;

- Age and Opportunity.
- The Carer's Association.
- Age Action Ireland.
- The Disability Federation of Ireland.
- Society of Vincent de Paul.
- Third Age Foundation.
- Alzheimer Society of Ireland.
- Irish Hospice Foundation.
- Irish Senior Citizens Parliament.
- Active Retirement Ireland.
- Older and Bolder.
- The Older Women's Network.

The report was also compiled on the basis of wide consultation process which resulted in almost 200 submissions⁷

Four national goals were defined as a basis for a national positive ageing strategy i.e.

- Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities.
- Support people as they age to maintain, improve or manage their physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- Enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.
- Support and use research about people as they age to better inform policy responses to population ageing in Ireland.

During the consultation process it was reported that accessing information on services and supports was the most frequently mentioned problem. According to the report *"older people still find it difficult to access information due to physical, visual or hearing impairments or as a result of literacy*

⁷ Department of Health and Children, 2010, In Our Own Words: Report of the Consultation Process on the National Positive Ageing Strategy, Dublin, Department of Health and Children.
http://www.dohc.ie/publications/in_our_own_words.html

difficulties. For some people there may be an element of embarrassment about certain information needs, or a fear of appearing uneducated. Others may lack social skills or experience social or geographical isolation. A lack of access to transport and underdeveloped IT skills also constitute a significant barrier to accessing information for some people as they age”.

Under the heading of ‘Cross-cutting Objectives’ the need to improve information provision is noted with the specific aim of ensuring *“that older people can exercise choice and control over their own lives by being able to access user-friendly, up-to-date, comprehensive and coordinated information and advice in relation to entitlements, services, support and activities”* (p.22). It is also recommended that advocacy services be developed to assist older people to access the services, supports and activities that they may require. **However, no specific reference is made to the actual or potential role of public libraries in this regard or indeed, in any context throughout the report other than as an example of a local public facility within the built environment.**

1.4 The Public Libraries Pilot Research Project

It is within the context of the AFC programme in Ireland that the role of the national public library network in addressing the needs of older people is explored in this project. Funding has been provided by the Department of Health and the Ageing Well Network (AWN) and the research project is being coordinated by Libraries Development, Local Government Management Agency (LGMA).

2. Project Aims and Objectives

The public libraries service acts as a communications and information centre for the community in a network of 348 branches across the country. Public libraries are strategically located, in order to make them as accessible as possible to their users and to maximise their value to the community as a whole. Libraries typically enjoy high footfall, and espouse and promote a culture of free and open access to all. Levels of usage among the population of older people would be expected to be among the highest for the service. However from the research conducted as part of the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012, it is apparent that there is a proportion of this population with whom the service is not connecting. A process of research, investigation and consultation is necessary to determine the factors influencing the users and non-users of the service and to look towards the development of age friendly libraries.

The primary aim of this project is to establish a policy for public libraries to provide and promote relevant services for older people (those aged 60 and above), ensuring their interaction with all services and library user groups.

Two public library authorities, Kildare Library & Arts Service and South Dublin Public Libraries participated as research partners in the project. Kildare Library & Arts Service is a busy rural authority, serving a county population of 210,312 (Census, 2011). There are 15 branches and one mobile unit in the library service and an active membership of 39,600 users. South Dublin Public Libraries serve an urban population of 265,205 (Census, 2011). The service has a total of seven branches and four mobiles and an active membership of 80,327.

The principal research objectives of the study were to identify:

- the nature of information requirements of the older population and to identify the sources used to meet those needs.
- levels of awareness of library services among older people.
- barriers to usage among the older population.
- usage of library websites/library technologies among older people.
- components for a core service offer for older people common to library services.
- reasons why some older people do not view the public library as an information source.
- gaps and constraints in relation to the provision of public library services to older people.
- potential new and/or improved services of relevance to older people.

A policy for public libraries will be developed, outlining a clear direction for libraries in the provision, development and promotion of services relevant to older people at local and national levels for the foreseeable future. It will incorporate an outline implementation plan and an Age Friendly Library guide taking into account any models and initiatives of good practice identified in the pilot project.

It is envisaged that public libraries will work with the Ageing Well Network and the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme in the Local Services Recognition Scheme. Libraries conforming to age friendly guidelines recommended in this report will be eligible to apply for registration on an Age Friendly Libraries Recognition Scheme administered by the Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme.

The Age Friendly Public Library: Serving the Older Population

Kildare Library & Arts Service and South Dublin Public Libraries will pilot the scheme and a staff member in each authority will be appointed to act as a 'champion' for age-friendliness and older users.

3. Methodology.

3.1 Project Management

The project was managed by a Steering Committee with representation by LGMA (Library Development), the Dublin Mid-Leinster Age Friendly County Programme, the Ageing Well Network, Kildare, South Dublin and Louth Library authorities and a project manager/researcher.

3.2 Literature Review

A review of the international literature over the last 5-10 years was undertaken to identify current practice, research and innovative initiatives in regard to public library policies and programmes for the provision of services to older people. Google Web and Google Scholar were the main resources used to assess recent published research and practice in this area.

3.3 Survey of Library Authorities

An email survey of all 32 public library authorities in the Republic of Ireland was undertaken using the Survey Monkey platform. This was intended to gather information on the services currently provided by the nationwide public library network and to identify any services specifically aimed at the older community. The following topics were addressed in the questionnaire that was circulated to City and County Librarians in all 32 library authorities:

- a) Participation by the Library Authority in the Age Friendly County (AFC) Programme - i.e. does the County have an AFC Strategy and, if so, to what extent, if any, is the library authority involved in the formulation of the Age Friendly Strategy at county level?
- b) Current Library policy/programme (if any) on services to older people – i.e. does the library authority have a library policy/programme aimed at older people; has it undertaken any studies/research projects on age friendly topics/services to older people over the last decade; is there a Library coordinator for services to older people; does the library collect age related information from members; and does the library management system supply information related to library use by age?
- c) Are any special provisions made for older people in the library's core services i.e. in the library collection, book clubs, accommodation, information services, loans, mobile library, community and other outreach services, information, communications and assistive technologies and events such as exhibitions, lectures etc.
- d) Has the library authority collected any research data on the information needs of older people and their awareness of the library's services and on any barriers that might hinder the use of the library service?
- e) Why, in the opinion of respondents, are public libraries not perceived as an information source by older people?
- f) What gaps and/or inadequacies exist in relation to the physical environment of the library and the library authority's general and outreach services to older people?
- g) Does the library engage in promotional activities aimed at older people?

- h) What, if any, education, training and lifelong learning courses and/or events are provided by the library for seniors and is it intended to offer any new courses/events in 2013?
- i) Are library staff trained to deal with older people and are staff made aware of the library's services specifically intended for older people?
- j) Does the library have links/partnerships with other agencies, including those representing older people?
- k) What, if any, new or improved services will be provided for older people in 2013?
- l) What are the main constraints on implementing an age friendly library policy?

Twenty six were received from the public library authorities.

3.4 Focus Group Survey

During February 2013 **Kildare Library & Arts Service** convened three focus groups (38 participants in total) and **South Dublin Library Service** also held three focus group meetings (62 participants in total).

The Kildare focus group sessions were facilitated by Honor Griffin (Integrated Services Programme) with assistance from Brigid Butler (Age Friendly County Programme) and Marian Higgins (Kildare Library & Arts Services). William Edmonds, Managing Consultant at CPD Ireland, facilitated the three South Dublin sessions and was assisted by staff at the three South Dublin libraries.

An effort was made to provide an appropriate blend of older users and non-users of library services among focus group attendees and it was hoped that useful feedback would be obtained from non-users, as well as users, on their perceptions of the library service. An appropriate gender mix, representing actual, observed usage of the library services (females accounting for a considerable majority of users) is also reflected in the composition of the focus groups.

The Kildare focus groups were held in **Kildare** Library, **Kilcock** Library and **Clocha Rince** Library. Kildare was selected as a moderate growth town, Kilcock as a small, moderate growth town and Clocha Rince as a representative rural node. All three areas have experienced population shifts and changes in socio economic factors, particularly in unemployment. Clocha Rince would be considered an isolated community.

The Kildare focus groups were made up as shown in Table 3.A below:

Table 3.A

Library	Library Users	Non-Users	Total Sample	Male	Female
Kildare	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	14	3 (21%)	11 (79%)
Kilcock	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	13	3 (23%)	10 (77%)
Clocha Rince	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	11	3 (27%)	8 (73%)

In the case of South Dublin, the 2011 Census showed an 18% increase in the number of people aged 55 and over in the County since the last Census. A data mapping exercise using the 2011 census returns for the County indicated large pockets of older people living in the Clondalkin, Rathfarnham and Rathcoole/Saggart areas in stark contrast to a much younger cohort living in newly developed areas of the County such as Lucan, Adamstown and West Tallaght. In order to target the demographic needed for the Age Friendly Project focus group work in South Dublin, three library locations were selected close to the areas with the largest concentrations of people aged 55 and over. These were **Clondalkin** Library, **Ballyroan** Library in Rathfarnham and The County Library in **Tallaght**. The County Library was selected as it is the service point closest to the Rathcoole and Saggart catchment areas, it offers the widest range of services of any library in the County and could showcase a 21st century library to the focus group attendees.

The composition of the South Dublin Focus Groups is presented in Table 3.B below.

Table 3.B

Library	Library Users	Non-Users	Total Sample	Male	Female
Ballyroan	15 (56%)	12 (44%)	27	6 (22%)	21 (78%)
Clondalkin	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	13	4 (31%)	9 (69%)
Tallaght	12 (55%)	10 (45%)	22	6 (27%)	16 (73%)

Some of the participants in the Tallaght session were mobile library users and non-users from the Rathcoole, Saggart and Newcastle areas.

The following main themes were addressed by during each focus group session:

- a) Information needs of older people.
- b) Awareness of library services.
- c) Library technologies.
- d) Gaps in library services.
- e) Barriers to library use.
- f) Physical environment.
- g) Provision of new/improved services.

3.5 Consultation with Representative Agencies

A Consultation Day was originally scheduled to be held in South Dublin Library Services Headquarters in Tallaght on Friday 19th April 2013 and invitations to attend were sent by email to over 100 organisations representing, or with an interest in older people. However, because of the poor response the Consultation Day was cancelled and the same organisations were invited to submit written proposals for improving public library services to older people.

Papers were received from the following organisations:

- Age Action Ireland.
- Age and Opportunity.
- Alzheimer Society of Ireland.
- Carers Association.
- Disability Federation of Ireland.

The Age Friendly Public Library: Serving the Older Population

- Dublin City University.
- Irish Senior Citizens Parliament.
- Irish Sports Council.
- Meath Accessible Transport Project t/a Flexibus.
- National Youth Council of Ireland.

4. An Overview of Recent Age Friendly Related Studies in Ireland

Several studies, at both national and county levels, have recently been undertaken in Ireland on age friendly related issues.

4.1 National Studies

The 2006 census revealed that there were 468,000 people aged 65 and over (11% of the population) resident in the Republic of Ireland. By 2041 it is predicted that this figure will rise to 1.4 million representing 22% of the population⁸.

Trinity College Dublin (TCD) recently completed the first phase of TILDA⁹ (The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing), a ten year study on the health and social and economic circumstances of a representative sample of over 8500 people in Ireland aged 50+. The second phase began in 2012. The study is claimed to be unique amongst longitudinal studies internationally in the breadth of physical, mental health and cognitive measures collected.

A recent study^{10,11} on long term care of the elderly in Ireland predicted that an additional 59,440 people over 65 in the Republic of Ireland will require various forms of long term care, including residential, formal and informal daily home care by 2021, representing an overall increase of 57% on the 2006 census baseline.

A comprehensive new agenda on ageing in Ireland was recently published (2012) by the AWN¹². The report addresses all aspects of ageing in terms of defining the issues, identifying existing and likely future problems and proposing policies and programmes designed to provide solutions to the anticipated rise in an ageing population.

A 2003 report¹³ on healthy ageing in Ireland examined a wide range of issues impacting on the lives of older people in Ireland. Reference was made to Wexford Libraries reading projects such as '*Stories from the Hearth*', '*About Books*', the '*Thursday Club*' and '*Reading down the Ages*'.

⁸ Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI), Ageing in Ireland North and South: Key statistics, <http://www.cardi.ie/userfiles/Ageing%20in%20Ireland%20key%20stats.pdf>

⁹ Fifty Plus in Ireland 2011: First Results from TILDA (The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing), <http://www.tcd.ie/tilda/publications/reports/>

¹⁰ Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland (CARDI), (2012), Research Brief: Future demand for long term care in Ireland, CARDI Grants Programme, <http://www.cardi.ie/publications/cardiresearchbrieffuturedemandforlongtermcareinireland>

¹¹ Wren, M.A. et al., (Oct 2012), Towards the Development of a Predictive Model of Long-Term Care Demand for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, Trinity College Dublin (CARDI funded), <http://www.cardi.ie/publications/towardsthedevelopmentofapredictivemodeloflongtermcaredemandfornorthernirelandandtherepu>

¹² Ageing Well Network (AWN), (2012), The new agenda on ageing: To make Ireland the best country to grow old in, <http://www.mediafire.com/view/?ec3i5p3a8fcbfyf>

¹³ O'Shea, E., (2003), Healthy Ageing in Ireland: Policy, Practice and Evaluation, National Council on Ageing and Older People, http://www.dohc.ie/publications/healthy_ageing_in_ireland.html

According to the report (p.123) *“the (Wexford Library reading) projects value the experience of older people and support the continuing contribution of older people to community development. They also acknowledge the entitlement of older people to personal development opportunities and encourage self-realisation. In addition, they seek to challenge community attitudes to ageing”.*

Wherever possible, library initiatives for group work with older people *“were marked by intergenerational capacity, routes to self-sustainable learning, and reflective and echoing elements for participants”.*

The Wexford Library reading project claimed to have created social networks among older people, promoted their personal and creative development and imparted computer literacy and information handling skills. Older people within established groups were found to be managing their projects to a significant degree, with the library gradually offering a less visible information support role.

Quoting from the report, the following observations are relevant to the current project:

“The reading projects originated from the access level and interests of the participants and are increasingly driven by older people themselves. This makes the projects more sustainable and empowering. Partnerships with the local VEC, FÁS, the local newspaper, Age and Opportunity and the South Eastern Health Board have proven fruitful. The projects have acted as safe gateways into more extensive community involvement for some older people. The projects have also been cost-effective in their delivery by utilising existing resources available in all modern public libraries e.g. multiple audience books and other learning materials, computer facilities, staff expertise and free accommodation. Similar infrastructure exists and could be exploited countrywide”.

“Careful planning, heavy investment at the pilot stage and flexibility have been the essential ingredients to the success of the projects. The projects benefited from introductory experimental periods, which was particularly important given the informal learning models utilised. In the absence of a visible outcome, the power of literature and reading can be difficult to sell to sectors not traditionally involved in formal education. Participating staff can feel vulnerable initially, and reassurances in relation to roles and expectations are essential”.

“The delivery of services to dispersed populations can challenge budgets and projects require significantly reduced but essential maintenance budgets beyond the establishment phase. The peripheral nature of this work to the many agencies involved poses difficulties for mainstreaming and sustainability”

4.2 Studies at County Level

4.2.1 Louth Age Friendly County Programme

Louth claims to be the first county to launch an AFC programme¹⁴ when it was initiated as a pilot in November 2008. This followed a study by the Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT), undertaken as part of the WHO Age Friendly Cities Network global research. The DkIT report recommended that an action plan be adopted to make Dundalk an age friendly town. Following the Dundalk study, Louth

¹⁴ Louth Age Friendly County Strategy (at)
http://www.agefriendlycounties.com/resource_library/afc_strategies

volunteered to be the first AFC project in Ireland and produced a report intended to serve as a template for other counties introducing an AFC programme¹⁵.

The Louth project involved setting up an organisational and operational infrastructure for the design, development and implementation of an AFC programme. This included laying the groundwork for the project, a baseline study in which 1200 older people throughout the county were consulted. One of the key issues raised by older people was communication and information on services for older people and social events. As a result of a discussion on this issue, the Dundalk Citizen's Information Services Centre collated a directory of services for older people and a booklet was published and distributed at a conference in November 2009. This information was later hosted on a website which was launched by the Louth Older People's Forum in March 2011.

The two counties, whose library authorities are participating in this project, Kildare and South Dublin County Council, have each undertaken preparatory studies in advance of launching their AFC programmes.

4.2.2 Kildare Age Friendly County Programme

A Baseline Study¹⁶, sponsored by AWN, was undertaken in Kildare in November 2011 to elicit the views of 500 people over 50 years of age on how they experienced life in the county. The WHO methodological guidelines were adopted in the study and under the 'Communication and Information' criterion it was noted from the field survey and the published literature that:-

- *Technology can play a vital role in the lives of older people e.g. in monitoring their health, creating social networks and increasing engagement in society.*
- *Technology can also facilitate social inclusion of older people, improve their professional engagement and quality of life and ultimately enhance independent living.*
- *There is general acceptance that the use of IT and the internet is of benefit to all people but has the potential to be of particular benefit to older people. For example, internet-based communication with other people is convenient and affordable; access to medical or health information can relieve anxiety; online shopping, banking, or training and learning are effective ways to overcome physical handicaps and also offer the advantage of facilitating shopping around to purchase cheaper and more conveniently available goods and services online.*
- *Published literature confirmed the benefits of IT to those experiencing increased vulnerability as they age. In residential care situations, for instance, computer-learning programmes were found to be positively linked with skills and confidence in spite of older adults own health perceptions.*
- *Barriers to learning about IT were found to be similar to those associated with learning in general, such as attitudinal barriers, irregular access to computers, health issues such as memory loss, declining manual dexterity and visual problems.*
- *Situational factors such as distance from IT venues, transport difficulties, particularly in rural areas, also presented barriers to IT.*

¹⁵ Deery, Mary, Louth County Council, Sharing the journey: A resource to Counties rolling out age friendly county projects,
<http://www.louthagefriendlycounty.ie/images/linda/appendix%201%20the%20resource%20pack.pdf>

¹⁶ AWN, Kildare Baseline Study, 2012,
http://agefriendlycounties.com/images/uploads/downloads/For_Printing_Kilkenny_Baseline_Report_Final.pdf

Although between 55% and 77% of respondents claimed to reside within walking distance of a library, no reference appears to have been made to the public library network as a source of information under the *Communication and Information* element of the survey. However, libraries are cited under '*Outdoor Public Spaces and Public Buildings*' where it was noted that one in three respondents (34%) stated that they had used a public library in the last year.

Kildare's AFC Strategy (2011-2014) report¹⁷ reveals that the Kildare & Arts service was a partner in the AFC Alliance and through consultation played a role in shaping AFC Strategy. The report noted that:

- *Staying connected with people and events and getting timely practical information to manage life and meet personal needs is vital for active ageing.*
- *Rapidly evolving information and communication techniques are both welcomed as useful tools and criticised as instruments of social exclusion.*
- *The central concern for older people is to have relevant information that is easily accessible to older people with varying capacities and resources.*

Participants in the consultation process were of the view that the following are working well in Kildare

- *Parish newsletters, parish and local radio and the local printed media.*
- *The availability of computer skills training.*
- *Citizens Advice centres and outreach.*

The following were identified as key issues arising:

- *Automated systems, particularly relating to government departments and state bodies.*
- *Accessibility of government information.*
- *People with poor literacy skills not catered for.*
- *Difficulty in accessing relevant local information in one place.*
- *The need for telephone supports during emergencies.*
- *Residents lack of knowledge of local events.*

Among other initiatives, the AFC plan states that the Kildare AFC Alliance will support **EngAGE** Kildare¹⁸ to create an information hub which will have a number of strands including the development of an age friendly website and brochure/newsletter which addresses the information needs as highlighted.

4.2.3 South Dublin Age Friendly County Programme

The South Dublin Age Friendly County (AFC) Strategy 2012-2017¹⁹ was launched in February 2012 and was followed by a first consultation session with over 140 representatives of older people in the County taking part.

Feedback indicated that older people sometimes felt excluded as more services are being moved online. Some respondents wanted more opportunities to learn about new technology and wished to

¹⁷ Kildare Age Friendly County Strategy (at) http://www.agefriendlycounties.com/resource_library/afc_strategies

¹⁸ EngAGE Kildare http://www.countykildarelp.ie/?page_id=760

¹⁹ South Dublin Age Friendly County Strategy (at) http://www.agefriendlycounties.com/resource_library/afc_strategies

see activities and events being advertised using posters and leaflets. Libraries and community centres were viewed as a great source of information. The report outlines what is currently happening by way of age friendly activities and programmes in South Dublin and outlines plans for the future.

A wide variety of services, events and courses hosted by South Dublin Libraries (SDL) is described in the report. These are designed to encourage older people and younger people to come together to share intergenerational experiences and skills. These include the following SDL programmes; - *'Getting Started'* (with computers), *'Keeping up with the Kids'*, *'Reminiscence Therapy'*, *'The Poetry Shed'* and many other activities.

4.2.4 Other AFC Programmes

All other counties with an age friendly county programme in operation, or about to be launched in the near future, have undertaken preparatory studies as part of the design and implementation process – see section 1.2 above.

5. Some Examples of Overseas Age Friendly Library Policies, Programmes and Guidelines

5.1 North America

Considerable progress has been made in North America in the area of library policy relating to older adults. **The American Library Association (ALA)** has published detailed guidelines for the provision of library and information services to older adults²⁰ (full copy provided in Appendix 1). These fall into seven main categories –

1. Acquire current data about the older population and incorporate it into planning and budgeting.
2. Ensure that the special needs and interests of older adults in your community are reflected in the library's collections, programmes and services.
3. Make the library's collections and physical facilities safe, comfortable and inviting for all older adults.
4. Make the library a focal point for information services to older adults.
5. Target the older population in library planning.
6. Reach out to older adults in the community who are unable to travel to the library.
7. Train the library's staff to serve older adults with courtesy and respect.

The ALA has also produced a toolkit offering tips on how to engage older adults at the library²¹. The toolkit builds on the ALA guidelines and advances further by highlighting key issues such as accessibility (auditory, visual, mobility and homebound considerations), assistive technology, civic engagement, elder law, hospice and respite care, nutrition, and independent and assisted living. The toolkit also covers engagement and implementation, finding funding and measuring success and draws attention to model innovative programmes and services developed by some American libraries for older adults.

The **Canadian Library Association (CLA)** has also published guidelines²² which closely resemble, but are not identical to those of the ALA.

Diantha Schull²³ suggests that the period 2005-2011 was a turning point when librarians started to respond to the ageing of America and *“they became aware of new research on ageing and older adults, indicating new possibilities for learning, creativity and community engagement and they became aware of a new life stage, a period between full-time work and parenthood and the onset of frailty and dependency towards the end of life. Adults in this life stage, including baby boomers, did not seem to fit the profession's traditional definitions of seniors. Many librarians started to re-examine the profession's traditional definitions of seniors and to rethink approaches for organising*

²⁰ Library Services to an Aging Population Committee, Reference Services Section, Reference and User Services Association of the American Library Association (1987, revised 1999, Approved in 2008), Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults, <http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/libraryservices>

²¹ American Library Association, (2010), Keys to engaging older adults at your library (Toolkit – Tips and tools for assisting older adults), <http://seniorspaces.pbworks.com/f/OlderAdultToolkitOLOSWebsite.pdf>

²² Canadian Library Association, (2009), Canadian Guidelines for Library & Information Services to Older Adults <http://www.cla.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/Resources/PositionStatements/OlderAdultsrevsept09.pdf>

²³ Schull, D.D., (2013), 50+ Library Services: Innovation in Action, ALA editions, American Library Association, ISBN 978-0-8389-1119-8, 368 pp. (softcover). <http://www.ala.org/news/pr?id=12550>

and delivering services to baby boomers and other active older adults. Some even started to coin a new term for a new midlife stage – 50+ services” (pvii).

Schull provides a comprehensive, up to date overview of developments in library service provision to midlife (55+) and older adults in the USA. She makes the point at the outset that *“because new service models are so varied there is no one model for what works best”* and *“as yet there are no templates for projects or blueprints for institutional change”* (p.xviii). Most of the projects described in the book are works in progress rather than models of best practice. However, she defines a spectrum of five different approaches being adopted by libraries to accommodate the growing population of older people, ranging from targeted marketing initiatives to a fully dedicated library programme for seniors. These are described as follows:

1. Increased marketing to attract older adults to current programmes

This does not involve any change in current institutional structures but it reflects a recognition that more and varied services and collections are needed for older people.

2. Participation in a national initiative to address specific issues relevant to older adults

This is where national initiatives in areas of relevance to older people e.g. health information, creative arts, financial planning etc. influence librarians’ understanding of demographic changes and prompt reassessment of current practices. Examples include *Creative Ageing at the Library*, a model for instructional arts programmes for older adults and *Get Involved!*, a partnership between California Libraries and VolunteerMatch to stimulate increased local volunteering.

3. Development of experimental initiatives to test approaches and community response

These may be short term pilot/test projects seeded by grant funds that may or may not develop as sustained initiatives supported by local resources. These can range from lifelong learning programmes to re-careering, civic engagement or intergenerational initiatives.

4. A deliberate combination of general adult services and specific services for older people

Some libraries have both inclusive and specific programmes. Rather than changing current services, they are adding new services which attract older people, such as community cinema and live performances at the library, and at the same time they provide targeted programmes specifically for older people e.g. the Art of Ageing, memoir writing etc.

5. Systemic Older adult programmes with visibility, resources and library support

In these cases there is full commitment and support by the library to serving older adults as reflected in dedicated staff, targeted programming, a clear identity including branding on the library’s website and other means of communication and promotion.

Schull observes that *“a few key state libraries have used their influence and resources to encourage librarians in their states to reconsider both adult and senior services. Furthermore, these state libraries have recognised the importance of responding quickly to the demographics of ageing. They recognise that the population changes taking place across the country are accelerating and do not allow the profession the luxury of shifting practices over several decades. Their words, actions and investments combined have been responsible for bringing about change”*. (p.3)

She identifies Arizona, California, Connecticut and Massachusetts as four leading edge states in addressing the needs of seniors. These are states with relatively high proportions of ageing residents with an *“expanding number of workers over 65, more and more grandparents raising children and*

many midlife and older adults seeking opportunities for learning, service and creative expression". (p. 3).

The programmes and initiatives in all four states vary widely in content and focus, but all acknowledge the following:

- *"The need to recognise midlife (55+) as a new life stage that merits focussed attention from librarians similar to other life stages.*
- *The importance of exposing librarians to current research on brain development and positive ageing.*
- *The need to build librarians' capacities to work with midlife adults through training, technical support and exposure to practical examples of change.*
- *The value of grant funds in helping to catalyze change.*
- *The value of leadership buy-in, peer-to-peer support and professional networking.*
- *The importance of collaborations with other professionals serving active older adults". (p.4)*

In a scan of the American national landscape, eleven "beacon libraries" are identified by Schull. These have changed at institutional level and demonstrate high and sustained commitment to 50+ services. They are ensuring that services are responsive to seniors' needs and are integrated into the library in terms of planning priorities, staffing, resource allocation and sustainability and are "harbingers of a transformation in adult and senior services to focus on midlife adults" (p.22). All eleven libraries have the following in common i.e. they :-

- *"Understand that traditional models for senior services are no longer adequate for today's diverse ageing population.*
- *Seek input about library services and programs from midlife adults, including non-users.*
- *See midlife patrons as library and community assets and engage them in designing and implementing programs.*
- *Demonstrate awareness of new research on positive ageing through activities that emphasise participation, engagement and expression rather than passive consumption of information.*
- *Integrate 50+ services and programmes across the library.*
- *Respond to diverse midlife patrons, including those with varied linguistic, economic and cultural backgrounds.*
- *Offer activities and programs that cross generations and promote social, intellectual and cultural exchange.*
- *Collaborate with other institutions and agencies concerned with positive ageing.*
- *Experiment with new structural or staffing approaches for 50+ services.*
- *Reflect commitment to ongoing, sustained programming rather than one-time events.*
- *Assess and refine 50+ services on a continuing basis".*

The Eleven "beacon libraries" and some examples of their diverse range of seniors' programmes are summarised in Table 5.A.

The Age Friendly Public Library: Serving the Older Population

Table 5.A

Library	Location	Initiative/Programme
Allgheny County Library Association	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania	Conversation Salons PALS book clubs One Book, One Community Create Together: An Intergenerational Art Program Osher Lifelong Learning Institute collaboration
Brooklyn Public Library	New York	Young at Heart ; Events for the Active Adult Words and Memories Creative Writing
Chandler Public Library	Chandler, Arizona	Boomerang Project Experience Bank Library's Job Resource Centre
Free Library of Philadelphia	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Central Seniors Services & dedicated 50+ space Part-time CSS coordinator & Reference Librarian World at your door You're always a son or daughter: Experts discuss One Book, One Philadelphia Arts Program - panel discussion
Hartford Public Library	Hartford, Connecticut	Intergenerational Age programme Arts and Archives Cooking it Up: Hartford Health and History
Metropolitan Library Services Agency (MELSA)	Minneapolis, Minnesota	Art for Life Residencies Brain Fitness Project Club Book, Community Cinema Creativity and Ageing Forums Hennepin County: Art of Ageing
Multnomah County Library	Portland, Oregon	Life by Design @ your Library Kaboom! Project
New Haven Free Public Library / 50+ Transition Center	New Haven, Connecticut	50+ Transition Centre (dedicated 50+ space) Finances @ Fifty and Smart Investing Head to Toe: A Healthcare Series for Older Adults Technology across generations
New York Public Library / Next Chapter	New York	Local library / Senior Center partnerships Stay Well health promotion workshops Purpose Prize (for 50+ social entrepreneurs) Fitness Fairs, Financial Literacy sessions etc Creative Ageing in Our Community Enhancing Technology Services to Older Adults
Reading Public Library	Reading, Massachusetts	Live Wires Workshops on Ageing
Tempe Public Library / Tempe Connections	Tempe, Arizona	Academic Connections: Learn for Love of Learning Health and Wellness Tempe Connections Café Transition Talks: Prepare for the Next Chapter of Life

An analysis of the programme offerings of these libraries reveals that there are consistent key elements needed for a successful, sustainable programme of services to older people. These include the following

- Know your community – what it needs and who can help.
- Continuous assessment of the needs and interests of older people.
- Support by library leadership and key library colleagues.
- Buy-in by all library staff.
- Sustained programming with three goals i.e. to increase
 - awareness of productive ageing issues.
 - knowledge of resources on ageing.
 - opportunities to discuss productive ageing with others.
- A system-wide library approach enabling flexibility and engaging multiple local librarians in rethinking their work with active older adults.
- Dedicated library posts with responsibility for services to older people.
- Paid staff with authority to organise programmes and partnerships.
- Training of library staff to combat ageism, make them aware of older people's needs and enable them to provide appropriate services.
- Involvement of library staff in the design and implementation of programmes.
- Involvement of older people in the design and implementation of programmes.
- Collaboration, partnerships with relevant local, regional and national bodies having complementary goals.
- Consider seniors as assets to the library and the community and design programmes to attract them to the library and to exploit their experience and skills.
- Engage volunteers and arrange for them to work within flexible schedules – the talents and abilities of volunteers can be used to drive programmes of direct benefit to older people.
- In arranging events programmes ensure that sessions are interactive with audience participation rather than a lecture format.
- Regular programming – e.g. arrange sessions at the same time each week for a specific programme.
- Review and document programmes – especially in the final session.
- Availability of grants / finance.

The main areas of service to older people highlighted by Schull are work and career, reflections and transitions, health and wellness, information technology and social media, creativity, information and community connections, lifelong learning, intergenerational programmes and financial planning and business development. All of these are issues facing older people who are ending their careers and lifestyles and facing retirement. Increasingly, this life stage is seen as an opportunity to explore a new, active phase and involves reflection on identity and purpose and decision making as to how the transition is to be made. It may represent an opportunity to explore one's creativity, to face new challenges, or to pursue new hobbies and artistic, cultural and intellectual interests. The public library, in association with a host of other agencies, has a vital role to play in serving this newly emerging clientele.

5.2 The United Kingdom

In the UK, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), has produced guidelines on public library services²⁴, including the provision of "*a fulfilling life for older people*" but no specific guidelines dedicated to serving the needs of older people appears to have been

²⁴ Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), What makes a good library service?

Guidelines on public library services in England for portfolio holders in local councils,

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/public->

[libraries/Documents/What_makes_a_good_library_service_CILIP_guidelines.pdf](http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/advocacy/public-libraries/Documents/What_makes_a_good_library_service_CILIP_guidelines.pdf)

published. No reference to older people is included in the UK's Department for Culture, Media and Sport's document on public library standards²⁵.

A 2003 study by Selwyn and colleagues of Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences, Wales examined the use of information and communications technologies by older adults in their everyday lives²⁶. Information was collected from a sub-sample of 352 adults aged 60 and over taken from a large household survey of ICT use in England and Wales among 1,001 people. The study revealed that *"using a computer is not only a minority activity amongst older adults but also highly stratified by gender, age, marital status and educational background (and) conversely, non-use of computers can be attributed to their low relevance and 'relative advantage' to older people"*. The authors suggested that political and academic assumptions about older people and ICTs might be refocused, away from trying to change older adults, and towards involving them in changing ICT.

The Network is a major player in combating ageism in the UK and in promoting library and other services to older people²⁷. It consists of a network of approximately 114 public, professional, academic and voluntary bodies including the following:

- Local authorities (public libraries, archives and museums) in (currently) England, Wales and Scotland.
- National museums, archives and libraries (including the House of Lords Record Office; the British Library; the National Library of Wales).
- University Departments (including the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries).
- Professional bodies (such as CILIP).
- Heritage organisations (including English Heritage; the Heritage Lottery Fund).
- Charities, voluntary sector organisations (including the National Literacy Trust).
- Literacy agencies such as The Reading Agency²⁸.
- Individuals committed to tackling social exclusion.

The Network was set up in 1999 as an outcome of a seminar that was arranged as part of the publicity for the then Library and Information Commission-funded research project, *"Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion"*²⁹. It arranges courses, seminars and conferences, publishes a monthly

²⁵ Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) UK, (2008), Public library service standards, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/PulbicLibraryServicesApril08.pdf>

²⁶ Selwyn, N., Gorard, S., Furlong, J., Madden, L., (2003), Older Adults' use of information and communications technology in everyday life, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University, Wales, <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract;jsessionid=74D818EFD0D890B1056954B1B4BE5483.journals?fromPage=online&aid=175239>

²⁷ The Network: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries, Who we are and what we do. <http://www.seapn.org.uk/whoweare/>

²⁸ The Reading Agency, <http://readingagency.org.uk/>

²⁹ Muddiman, D. et al, (2000), Open to All? The Public Library and Social Exclusion, Library and Information Commission Research Report 84, <http://eprints.rclis.org/6283/>

Newsletter³⁰ and in the past has undertaken library related projects such as the “Welcome to your Library” project³¹ in 2008.

The Network also maintains an “Information Resources” database covering a wide range of social inclusion topics, including “Older People – Good Practice Guide and Updates”³². The database identifies a UK Department of Health (DOH) funded good practice guide for the provision of library services to older people produced by Margaret Sloan and John Vincent in 2009³³ (Appendix 2).

According to Sloan and Vincent, public libraries should support the four key areas of the wellbeing agenda i.e. stimulation, bringing older people together, reducing isolation and socialisation. To do this effectively libraries should focus on equality of access and provide information that supports major life events and issues, such as leaving work, bereavement, health, active ageing, learning, safety, transport and mobility, housing, finance/benefits and leisure.

The good practice guide includes a useful checklist for library authorities intending to audit their existing service provision to older adults with a view to improving their service and/or introducing new services. The format consists of four columns for a range of activities and issues i.e.

- What we know and do.
- Where we are now.
- Where we plan to be in one year.
- Where we are after one year.

Topics for consideration and evaluation include the following:

- The Map – do we know the number of older people in our area and the extent to which they use or do not use the library?
- Networking – do we maintain contact with relevant organisations such as council services and organisations for older people as well as care establishments, day care centres etc.?
- Communications and marketing – do we market our services to older peoples’ organisations, provide information on our website, use local media etc.?
- Activity audit – do we offer an appropriate range of activities and support measures for older people? Do we cater for older people at home, in care institutions, nursing homes etc offer computer training and other courses, train volunteers etc.?
- Collections – is the content/format of the library collection suited to the needs and wishes of older people?
- Staff – are staff trained to deal with older people and is there a post assigned for the provision of services to seniors?
- Physical environment – physical access and mobility issues, guiding and notices, friendly, comfortable, welcoming environment?
- Availability of support equipment and assistive technologies.
- Facilities – cloakrooms, toilets etc.

³⁰ The Network, Monthly Newsletters and eBulletins, http://www.seapn.org.uk/listDocuments.asp?page_id=20

³¹ Welcome to your Library, <http://www.welcometoyourlibrary.org.uk/>

³² The Network, Older people – good practice guide and updates, http://www.seapn.org.uk/informationResources.asp?cat_id=131&cSort=titleAsc&page=1

³³ Sloan, M. and Vincent, J., (2009), Library services for older people – good practice guide, http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/library_services_good_practice_guide_1336795.pdf

The good practice guide also describes some interesting case studies underway in public libraries throughout the UK.

Various developments have taken place in the UK since the Sloan guide was published in 2009 and these are documented in *The Network's Information Resources* database³⁴. Examples include the following activities in areas such as Birmingham, Cambridgeshire, Devon, Dudley, Edinburgh, Hillingdon, Kent, Kirklees, Lambeth, Lancashire, Leeds, Norfolk, Poole, Redbridge, Southend, Suffolk, Sussex and Tyneside³⁵.

- Library groups (some supported by library staff, and/or volunteers; others are self-running).
- Book groups.
- Events such as music sessions, film shows, and Read Aloud sessions.
- Older people's day.
- Intergenerational initiatives e.g. computer sessions with school pupils, grandparents reading to grandchildren.
- Work with care homes – e.g. Read Aloud, reminiscence packs.
- Health e.g. "Mature and Active", "Healthy Walks".
- Access to benefits advice.
- IT sessions.
- Lifelong learning.
- Promotion of library services by innovative means.
- Volunteering e.g. programmes such as "Time2Give".

5.3 Developments in Other Countries

A seminar in Genoa, Italy in the autumn of 2011, entitled "*60+ and the Library*", included papers on developments in Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK and has been reported on by Sloan³⁶. The theme of the seminar was the development of library services for older people and the contribution which older people can make to library programmes.

An initiative by Roskilde Libraries in Denmark, in consultation with Citizens 50+, has led to a nationwide project named AgeForce. The project originated with a meeting at the library of over 100 senior citizens who were interested in forming a virtual and real community. This led to workshops to test network ideas and the development of a website which is an inherent part of the project and community. Sloan describes it as "*a simple and secure kind of facebook which responds to the wishes of the seniors in that no email-adress is shown, there are no fees, no advertising, it is only for 50+, and it has facilities of groups, blogs, news, bulletin board etc. Groups of individuals can get together through the network and can meet at local library premises, in their local area, or wherever they*

³⁴ The Network, Information Resources, Older people – good practice guide and updates, http://www.seapn.org.uk/informationResources.asp?cat_id=131&cSort=dateDesc

³⁵ Recent initiatives in library services to older people in the UK, http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/recent_initiatives_in_library_services_to_older_people_table.pdf

³⁶ Sloan, M. (2012), Goethe Institut Conference: The 60+ Generation in the Library - Libraries involving older people and volunteers - moving forward: Report of the seminar in Genoa, with contributors from Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK. [Libraries involving older people and volunteers "moving forward \(.doc - 48kb\)](#)

choose. Groups have developed for many activities, not all library associated, for example cycling or walking. But it is the library service that has facilitated and enabled the growth of this network for older people, and made the connections between people easy. An item on Danish national television news led overnight to 2000 new members". She concludes that AgeForce has resulted in "a framework which 50+ people can use according to their interests and needs, and where the users decide for themselves the content and activities on the website. In addition the AgeForce site gives the library the opportunity to promote municipal and government information and information about society in general, to offer seniors a democratic, neutral drop-in café, and to brand the library facilities and services"

Duisburg Library in Germany has worked with a university research group to examine how it could attract more older people to avail of its services after it had discovered that in 2005 it was being used by as little as 5% of those aged 60+ in its catchment area. A telephone survey of 300 users and 340 non-users of the library revealed specific needs and preferences within this segment of the population and the fact that new marketing techniques were needed to attract new seniors to the library. On the basis of the survey findings the library improved the physical environment of the library and customised service offerings and managed to double the number of 60+ users from 5% to 10%.

Other programmes described at the seminar included a service by Hamburg libraries where volunteer seniors (media messengers) deliver books to seniors at home and the delivery of media services by older volunteers to older library patrons in Cologno Monzese in Italy.

A report³⁷ by Mylee Joseph identified trends, current research and stakeholders in the provision of services to older people in **New South Wales (NSW)**, Australia and made recommendations to support strategic planning within the NSW public library network. Libraries were characterised as multi-role agencies and were advised to position themselves for the age wave of baby boomers and silver surfers. Positioning strategies were identified under the following headings:

- Libraries as lifelong learning agencies.
- Technology and maintaining a place in the wired world (access and equity, website design for seniors, multilingual issues, adaptive technologies).
- Ageing well (community, health and legal information).
- Volunteering.
- Home library services (innovation and best practice).
- Inclusive and age-aware staffing.
- Trans-generational library building design.

The report concludes with the following remarks:

"Rather than wait for the inevitable age wave to reach communities throughout NSW, public libraries have the opportunity to position themselves as focal points for older people providing;

- *a community meeting place.*
- *information for life matters and leisure.*
- *recreational reading.*
- *Internet access and skill development.*
- *stimulating and appealing programs.*

³⁷ Joseph, Mylee, (2006), Active, Engaged, Valued: Older People and NSW Public Library
http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/services/public_libraries/docs/active_engaged_valued.pdf

Libraries also fulfil a vital role in building social capital in communities by providing meaningful volunteer roles, opportunities to engage in community consultation and breaking down some of the barriers of social exclusion. As a vital link enabling people to maintain their place in the wired world and a social hub, the future holds many opportunities for local government authorities to develop public libraries as avenues for meeting the needs of the age wave in their communities”.

6. Research Findings: A Survey of Public Library Authorities in Ireland

6.1 Introduction

All thirty two library authorities in the Republic of Ireland were surveyed by email in February 2013 using the Survey Monkey platform and twenty six responses were received.

6.2 Age Friendly County Strategies

At County level, 13/26 respondents (50%) reported that the County had an Age Friendly County (AFC) Strategy in operation or in progress and 13/26 (50%) indicated that their County had not yet established an AFC strategic plan.

Eight respondents reported that the County AFC strategic plan had been completed by the end of 2012 and the remainder are expected to be finalised in 2013 (see Table 6.A).

Table 6.A: Status of Age Friendly County Strategies (February 2013)

County	AFC Strategy Launch Date
Louth	2009
Kildare	2011
Kilkenny	2011
Fingal	2012
Meath	2012
Monaghan	2012
South Dublin	2012
Westmeath	2012
Carlow	2013
Cavan	2013
Clare	2013
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	2013
Leitrim	2013

It is difficult to assess the degree to which library authorities were, or are currently, represented in the formulation of AFC strategies. Only 10 of the 29 respondents provided information on this topic, but of these, 8 were represented on the AFC Alliance – the body responsible for formulating strategy at County level. Only 6 responses related to library representation on the core areas of the WHO guidelines for age friendly strategies and these indicated that libraries were represented to various degrees in all areas of the guidelines, especially ‘Communication and Information’ (6/6), ‘Respect

and Social Inclusion' (5/6), 'Social Participation' (5/6) and 'Health Services and Community Support' (5/6).

6.3 Library Policies/Programmes aimed at Older People

Of 26 respondents, ten (39%) claimed that the library authority has a library policy/programme aimed at older people i.e. Clare, Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Kerry, Kildare, Longford, Meath, Roscommon, Tipperary and Wexford. The remaining 16 (61%) do not have a specific policy/programme for older people but generally appear to include them as part of the library's clientele when planning and delivering services.

The majority of library authorities collect information related to age from library members (16/25 = 64%) and have library management systems that supply information related to library use by age (15/25 = 60%).

Many library authorities cater for older people by engaging in the Bealtaine festival, held nationwide during the month of May. Each year, Age and Opportunity invites local authorities, libraries, arts centres, Active Retirement groups, care centres and community groups and clubs from every part of the country to run Bealtaine events that celebrate creativity among older people. According to Age and Opportunity over 120,000 people now take part in Bealtaine and events include dance, cinema, painting, theatre and a wide range of other arts. The intergenerational element of the festival offers an opportunity to communicate traditions between generations.

Other library initiatives aimed at older people include services to nursing homes, free or reduced membership subscriptions for seniors, Aged Action IT classes, e-services workshops, social networking workshops, silver surfer film clubs, social inclusion programmes, intergenerational choirs, memory and oral history programmes, older persons networks, library guides for older borrowers, help with Internet access e.g. booking airline tickets, emailing, downloading forms etc., highlighting services for older people on the library website, organising events programmes of relevance to older people, provision of hearing aid devices and wheelchairs in library branches etc.

Four library authorities- Carlow, Laois, South Dublin County Council and Westmeath, stated that they propose to introduce a library policy/programme aimed at older people as part of their development planning. Other respondents such as Cork City, Fingal and Kilkenny noted that although they did not have a dedicated plan for older people, they were included as a demographic segment in their day to day services and development plans. Cavan, although not having a formal programme aimed at older people, has a policy of working closely with the local Over 50 Network and, like most authorities, actively engages in the annual Bealtaine festival.

Of 26 respondents, 7 (27%) reported that they had appointed a Staff Coordinator for services to older people i.e. Clare, Dublin City, Fingal, Longford, Meath, South Dublin and Tipperary.

One in three library authorities (8/24) stated that their staff are trained to deal with older people e.g. sensitivity training to alert staff to difficulties facing older people in using the library, recognising and addressing ageism and stereotyping of older adults as well as staff awareness of any special services made available to older people. Authorities providing staff training include Cavan, Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Longford, Louth, Meath, South Dublin and Westmeath. However,

closer examination of respondents' comments revealed that some staff had received customer care and universal access training aimed at all users, some had received social inclusion training and others had completed age friendly training with Age and Opportunity tutors. It is possible that some respondents did not consider customer care courses to represent training specifically aimed at older people.

6.4 Library Provision for Older People

6.4.1 Physical Environment

All libraries (25/25) claimed to provide reading space and a welcoming comfortable environment and most (23/25) have public toilet facilities available. Less than half of libraries (11/25) offer refreshment facilities such as drinking water, tea, coffee etc.

Over half of libraries (14/24) make special provision for older people, mainly in the form of access to buildings, ramps, automatic doors, lifts, wheelchairs for accessibility and transit, arrangement of library space to accommodate mobility, special seating (orthopaedic, high back, chair arms etc), toilets for the disabled/mobility challenged, quiet reading areas, dedicated seniors' reading areas etc. However, there is a school of thought (among both librarians and many seniors) that accommodation should meet universal needs and older people should not be segregated to a separate space in the library.

6.4.2 Library Collections

Virtually all library authorities indicated that they make special provision for older people in the library collection (23/26 = 89%). However, two of the remaining three authorities stated that they provide large print and audio books but do not categorise adult stock in the library by age – all members may use them. The main provisions made include large print and audio/talking books, ebooks stocked for older people, guides to entitlements, home deliveries and block loans and deliveries to nursing homes and hospitals, sometimes via a mobile library service.

The majority of libraries (15/25) make special provision for book loans to older people in the form of free or reduced membership fees, extended loan periods, housebound services and block loan services to nursing homes, hospitals and care centres.

6.4.3 Library Websites

Approximately one third of library authorities (9/25 = 36%) make special provision on their website for older people – Cavan, Clare, Cork County, Kildare, Kilkenny, South Dublin, Tipperary, Westmeath and Wexford. This involves measures such as a dedicated section on the site for older people (Tipperary), provision of Browse Aloud, a facility which highlights and reads text aloud, screen magnification, a healthy reading scheme and useful links to relevant sites such as community and government agencies.

6.4.4 Information Services

Most library authorities reported that they provide information services (22/26 = 85%) but only 6/24 (25%) make special provision for older people. These included rights and entitlements coffee

mornings (Fingal), displaying leaflets, brochures, guides from other organisations, visually impaired reader hearing loops and lists of links to relevant bodies.

6.4.5 Mobile Services

Mobile services are provided by 17/24 libraries (71%) and 12/19 respondents (63%) indicated that they make special arrangements for older people. As expected, these include housebound services, visits to nursing homes, hospitals and day care centres. Several respondents remarked that their mobile vehicles are fitted with lift ramps to improve access for older and physically impaired patrons. Kildare noted that a separate transport system is in place in conjunction with Kildare County Council Community Section for older members in the Clocha Rince district and this allows residents of local nursing homes to avail of the library service. The library in Cloche Rince houses a Wisdom Club whereby older people share their skills and knowledge with younger people.

6.4.6 Assistive Technologies

As indicated in Table 6.B below, there is widespread provision of assistive technologies in public libraries. PCs with large type and/or audio facilities, as well as keyboards with large keys, tracker balls and mouse feature prominently. Typical systems in place include MAGIC and/or AFFINITY screen magnification, JAWS screen reading software and Kurzweil text to speech software. Low tech magnification devices are also to be found in most libraries.

Table 6.B Assistive Technologies and Service: Please indicate if any assistive technologies are provided by the Library for older people.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
PCs with large type software for those with low vision	92.00%	23
PCs with audio enabled and earphones	88.00%	22
Low tech magnification devices	88.00%	22
Speech synthesizers and related software	40.00%	10
Stand alone reading machines which speak a book's text	32.00%	8
<i>answered question</i>		25
<i>skipped question</i>		4

Other assistive technologies identified included hearing loop systems for people with hearing difficulties and digitised local history texts.

6.4.7 ICT Support and Training

Assistance in using PCs is provided to patrons by library staff in 24/26 libraries (92%) and the same numbers apply in offering users assistance in accessing the Internet. ICT training for users was provided in the previous twelve months by 25/26 libraries (96%) on a wide range of topics including the following:

- Coffee and computers - Informal classes by library staff.
- Computer gaming.
- Digital literacy training for over 50s.
- Digital photography.
- Downloading eBooks and eAudio books.
- FÁS training programmes featured prominently on topics such as e-learning, Know IT etc.
- Intergenerational computer classes held in the library - students from local schools showing silver surfers how to use computers.
- Introductory and follow-on computer courses – basic skills using Microsoft suite, Internet, email, SMS texting, Wi-Fi access, using Skype etc.
- Library/VEC courses on computer literacy.
- Social networking awareness, social media, blogging.
- Using smart phones.
- Websmart programme tuition.

ICT training courses and/or events specifically aimed at older people are offered by 20/25 library authorities (80%). Although the Bealtaine festival features prominently as a service delivery platform for this demographic group, a wide range of courses and events was reported on in the survey e.g.

- Aged Action IT courses.
- Basic introduction to computers for the older person, run by the VEC.
- Computers for the Terrified: The Grey Guide to Social Media.
- FÁS e-learning courses are suitable for older people.
- Silver Surfers, Coffee and Computers.
- Skype Your Granny: Intergenerational computer course.
- Social Media for Older Users.
- The Grey Guide to Social Media.
- University of the Third Age classes.

6.4.8 Events, Exhibitions, Community and Other Services

The question asking respondents to list any events exhibitions, book clubs, reading sessions community and outreach services that the library had organised for older people in the previous twelve months elicited a huge response – reflecting the fact that even in the current climate of austerity and cut-backs, libraries are continuing to serve as enthusiastic, creative and dynamic providers to their communities. Again, Bealtaine featured as a significant channel for services to older people and reflected the extensive variety of events on offer. Examples included the following:

- Annual Reading festival.
- Arranging visits by authors to nursing homes and hospitals.
- Art exhibitions by nursing home residents.
- Courses on transition from work to retirement.
- Creative writing workshops.
- Culture nights targeted at older age groups and active retirees.
- Dancing.
- Exhibitions on a wide variety of topics e.g. Irish drama, Japanese art and culture etc.
- Flower arranging.
- Genealogy classes.
- Knitting sessions, including intergenerational groups.

- Lectures and readings by book clubs and writers' circles.
- Lectures on photography, cookery, knitting, crafts etc.
- Library tours, local history talks for older people.
- Meetings of memoir writing groups.
- Memory Lane sessions using photographs to trigger memories encouraging older people to tell stories and cherish memories.
- Men's poetry shed.
- Poetry reading in nursing homes.
- Positive ageing week sessions in which the U3A Group (average age is 80) mixed with Transition Year students in a very successful social event.
- Probus Art Exhibition.
- Quizzes, board games.
- Reminiscence therapy – using local studies material during visits to day care centres.
- Sessions on health and well being, reflexology.
- Silver surfer film clubs, cinema screenings.
- Storytelling sessions.
- Talks by An Garda Síochána on security awareness.
- Theatre groups offering a 'Circus' interactive theatre themed show which included reminiscences, drama and song. Older people from nursing homes, Golden Years Clubs etc. were encouraged to participate in the performance.
- Wii training classes.

Other services notified by library authorities included intergenerational programmes (11/14 libraries), volunteer programmes (3/14 libraries) and mentor/buddy programmes (3/14 libraries). The intergenerational programmes involved students teaching computers skills to older people, grandparent storytelling, intergenerational choirs and projects between retirement groups and schools facilitated by the library. Volunteer programmes include a pilot project using volunteers to run two community libraries. Mentor/buddy programmes included a 'Wisdom Club' with the aim of transferring knowledge from older to younger generations, 'Revisiting Old habits' i.e. encouraging parents and grandparents to revisit their reading habits in the home, thereby creating a reading culture among their children at home.

6.5 Research by Library Authorities

Library authorities were asked to report on any **general research projects** related to older people which they had undertaken in the last decade. Apart from Kildare and South Dublin County Council, both of which have carried out focus group studies in February 2013 as part of this project, five other library authorities reported that they had conducted studies on various topics/services relating to older people. These included Cavan, Cork City, Dublin City, Longford and Wexford. Topics specified included housebound services in Cork, the 2007 PLUS survey, two projects in 2005 by Wexford – one on marketing library services to silver learners and another on "Reading down the Ages", a community learning and bibliotherapy project with older people and, finally, baseline data studies undertaken as part of the Age Friendly Strategy programme in Cavan and Louth. Two library authorities indicated that they propose to begin projects in 2013 – Carlow will be consulting groups representing older people as part of the library development planning process and Tipperary intends to investigate methods of developing services for people with dementia.

A series of questions, designed to determine if library authorities had collected any **research data on specific topics** regarding older people, was included in the survey. These questions related to older people's information needs, their awareness of public library services and any perceived barriers hindering the use of libraries by older people. There was a very high response (26) to each question on needs, awareness and barriers

Only one library authority (Wexford) reported that it had collected data on the information needs of older people as part of a project on leisure/reading. Four libraries stated that they had collected data on awareness of library services among older people, but two of these included the focus group studies by Kildare and South Dublin as part of this Age Friendly project. Wexford reported that it had collected data on the needs of over 50s in a marketing project under the PLRP (Public Libraries Research Programme) and Longford collected data on older people as an element of the Age Friendly County programme.

Six libraries indicated that they had collected data on barriers that hinder the use of libraries by older people. Transport, proximity to the library and physical access featured as the main barriers. Longford and South Dublin examined transport and proximity issues while Cavan, Cork City and Westmeath focused on physical access to the library. Wexford covered barriers as an issue in the PLRP marketing project mentioned above.

6.6 Perception of Public Libraries

Librarians were asked why, on the basis of evidence revealed in a recent Department of Health study, public libraries are not perceived as an information source by older people. Of the 24 responses, the two main reasons identified were that public libraries do not promote their services adequately and that other agencies are perceived as being more effective – see Table 6.C.

Table 6.C		
Why, in your opinion, are public libraries not perceived as an information source by older people?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Public libraries do not promote their information services adequately	83.30%	20
Other agencies e.g. representing older people, are perceived to be effective information sources	70.80%	17
Library staff are not trained or comfortable with handling information queries	16.70%	4
Public libraries do not have the information required by older people	8.30%	2
Public libraries do not have a designated information desk/point	8.30%	2
<i>answered question</i>		24
<i>skipped question</i>		5

One respondent suggested that more pro-active work needs to be done by libraries with other agencies catering for older people and this was supported by another respondent who recommended a collaborative approach to information provision.

6.7 Gaps in Service Provision to Older People

The majority of survey respondents to this question (11/17 = 65%) were of the view that the most significant gap in making services available to older people is the lack of focus by libraries on this demographic segment (see Table 6.D below). This is reflected in the independent finding (see above) that only 7/26 library authorities have appointed a staff coordinator for older people. The next most significant gap was identified as inadequate publishing/promotion/information made available for events and services for older people (6/17 responses) followed by a lack of staff training for dealing with older people and inadequate or no offsite services. One respondent suggested that a coordinated approach to services for older people is needed along the same lines as library authorities have adopted for the provision of children's services. It was also noted that inadequate marketing and a lack of homebound services were problematic gaps in the national library network.

Table 6.D		
In your opinion, in the case of your Library Authority, what gaps, if any, exist in the provision of library services to older people?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
No focus exists for services to older people e.g. no library coordinator	64.70%	11
Inadequate publishing / promotion / information made available for events, services etc. for older people	35.30%	6
Staff training does not provide guidelines for dealing with older people	23.50%	4
Inadequate or no offsite services	17.60%	3
Physical environment not suited to older people	5.90%	1
Library collection is not geared to older people	0.00%	0
Lack of special formats - e.g. large print books	0.00%	0
Library is not a welcoming, friendly, sociable space	0.00%	0
Lack of assistive technologies e.g. talking books, large type devices, magnification devices etc.	0.00%	0
<i>answered question</i>		17
<i>skipped question</i>		12

6.8 The Physical Environment

There was a low response (7/29) to a question on the unsuitability of the physical environment of the library for older people. Signage was the most cited problem (4/7) followed by furniture, shelves and access (3/7) and location and internal layout/design of the library (2/7). General comments on the physical environment included references to transport problems to and from the library, a lack of parking adjacent to the library and the need to compromise in order to provide an environment suited to all library patrons.

6.9 Offsite/Outreach Services

Most respondents reported that their library services to the homebound and to those in hospital are inadequate or non-existent. Services to nursing homes and day care centres were also cited as being deficient (see Table 6.E).

Table 6.E		
Please indicate if there are any inadequate or no offsite services to the following.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The homebound	75.00%	12
Hospitals	62.50%	10
Nursing homes	37.50%	6
Day care centres	37.50%	6
<i>answered question</i>		16
<i>skipped question</i>		13

Several respondents made reference to the negative impact of reduced financial and staff resources on their ability to develop and sustain offsite and other outreach services. Nevertheless, some interesting innovative initiatives are under way between library authorities, hospitals and nursing homes. For example, South Dublin is involved with Tallaght Hospital (AMNCH – The Adelaide and Meath Hospital Dublin) in an eReading Accessibility Pilot Project with patients from the Age Related Health Care Unit.

In the case of nursing homes, one respondent noted that many of the residents are in their 90s and are unable to use conventional books and other information resources and this creates problems in meeting their needs. Some nursing homes are not interested in taking block loans because they have no space for library materials and no staff able or willing to manage an in-house library service to residents. Although some nursing homes are often interested in supporting events organised by the library they are no longer able to offer a contribution to costs because of increasing financial constraints. A special effort is needed on the part of the library to establish and maintain continuous, meaningful links with these outside agencies and this is difficult in the current climate. Although many library development plans have aspirations in this regard, little progress is likely to be made in the near future.

6.10 Promoting the Library to Older People

Three in every four library authorities (17/22) reported that they engage in promotional activities aimed at older people, mainly by organising events such as lectures and exhibitions, posting notices in locations outside the library, supporting book clubs, publishing newsletters, newspaper and radio advertising and posting information on library websites (see Table 6.F).

Table 6.F		
Does the library engage in promotional activities aimed at older people?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Events such as lectures, exhibitions etc.	94.10%	16
Printed notices in other locations e.g. community centres, nursing homes, GP surgeries etc.	82.40%	14
Book clubs	76.50%	13
Newspaper advertising	47.10%	8
Newsletters	47.10%	8
Website e.g. specific information aimed at older people	41.20%	7
Radio advertising	29.40%	5
TV advertising	0.00%	0
<i>answered question</i>		17
<i>skipped question</i>		12

The annual Bealtaine festival featured as a promotional platform among additional comments made by some library authorities. Parish newsletters also appear to be a strong communication medium and some respondents made the point that libraries advertise their services to all members of the community rather than on a demographically segmented basis.

6.11 Education and Lifelong Learning aimed at Older People

Almost 70% of library authorities (17/25) reported that they provide education, training and/or lifelong learning for older people. In addition to the extensive range of ICT support and training courses noted above, library authorities also offer a wide variety of educational, cultural and skills based activities and events:

- Arts and crafts classes.
- Coffee mornings.
- Creative writing.
- Grow it yourself classes.
- Guided heritage walks online.
- Language learning.
- Library facilitates courses/events organised by other agencies e.g. Aged Action, Active Retirement groups, FÁS, VEC etc.
- Music classes.
- Painting and drawing.
- Photography.
- Yoga classes.

6.12 Library Links/Partnerships with Other Agencies

Virtually all library authorities (24/25) have links with other agencies – 21 with local community agencies, 16 with organisations representing older people and 9 with other bodies. An extensive range of agencies is cited in the survey and includes the following:

- Active age groups.
- Ageing Well Network.
- Aontas – Lifelong Learning.
- Arts Office.
- Bealtaine Festival.
- Caring for Carers.
- Community Section, Community Housing Officers, Integrated Service Programme (ISP) Coordinators of local authorities.
- FÁS.
- Citizens' Information Service of An Garda Síochána.
- HSE – Health Services Executive.
- ICA – Irish Countrywomen's Association.
- LEADER Partnership.
- NCBI – National Council for the Blind.
- Retired people's network.
- Third Age.
- VEC.

6.13 Proposed New and/or Improved Services to Older People

Over half of respondents (12/22) indicated that they intend to offer new and/or improved services to older people during 2013, the top three being promotion of local events of relevance to older people, education and lifelong learning and making the library available as a venue for social, cultural and educational events (see Table 6.G). The twelve library authorities included Carlow, Clare, Cork County, Dublin City, Fingal, Kerry, Kildare, Louth, Offaly, South Dublin, Tipperary and Westmeath.

The newly opened library by South Dublin at Ballyroan serves the oldest demographic in the County. The library will deliver streamlined programmes to older people next autumn - business, ICT, etc. Plans are also underway to link with Maynooth and UCD to deliver joint programmes to older people across a range of topics.

Kilkenny Library Authority noted that improved services will be facilitated by the new library in Ferrybank with Wi-Fi and RFID technology and a dedicated community/meeting room with Interactive whiteboard.

Table 6.G		
Does the Library intend to offer new or improved services of relevance to older people in 2013?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Promotion of local events of relevance to older people	85.70%	12
Education and lifelong learning	78.60%	11
Library as a venue for social, cultural and educational events	78.60%	11
New or improved ICT services	71.40%	10
Library liaison with other agencies serving older people in the community	64.30%	9
Offsite and outreach services - to the homebound, nursing homes, hospitals etc	57.10%	8
Improved collections and information of relevance to older people	50.00%	7
More welcoming, comfortable library space	42.90%	6
Appropriate formats e.g. large print, Braille etc	35.70%	5
Assistive technologies	28.60%	4
Appointment of a library service coordinator for older people	7.10%	1
<i>answered question</i>		14
<i>skipped question</i>		15

6.14 Constraints on Age Friendly Library Policies

Library authorities were very clear in specifying the main constraints on implementing age friendly library policies. Of the 24 responses, 19 cited staff and 17 identified finance as the main issues. Other factors impacting on policy are presented in Table 6.H.

Table 6.H		
In your opinion, what are the main constraints on implementing an age friendly library policy?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Staff	79.20%	19
Finance	70.80%	17
Promotion and image building	54.20%	13
Segmentation and targeting of specific user groups	45.80%	11
Physical environment	16.70%	4
Competition by other agencies	16.70%	4
<i>answered question</i>		24
<i>skipped question</i>		5

6.15 General Comments

Very few respondents offered general comments. The main impression given was that libraries have taken age friendly library policies on board in the context of wider age friendly strategies at county and national levels. Despite the severe limitations placed on its operations by diminishing resources the public library network as a whole is providing a surprisingly comprehensive variety of high quality, relevant and much needed services to older people as part of, and in addition to, its mainstream services.

7. Research Findings: A Focus Group Survey

7.1 Introduction

During February 2013 **Kildare Library & Arts Service** convened three focus groups in Kildare, Kilcock and Clocha Rince public libraries (38 participants in total,) and **South Dublin Library Service** held focus group meetings in Ballyroan, Clondalkin and Tallaght libraries (62 participants in total) (see section on Methodology for detailed information on the composition of focus groups).

The Kildare focus group sessions were facilitated by Honor Griffin (Integrated Services Programme) with assistance from Brigid Butler (Age Friendly County Programme) and Marian Higgins (Kildare Library & Arts Services). William Edmonds, Managing Consultant at CPD Ireland, facilitated the three South Dublin sessions and was assisted by staff at the three South Dublin libraries.

The following main themes were addressed by each focus group:

1. Information needs of older people.
2. Awareness of library services.
3. Library technologies.
4. Gaps in library services.
5. Barriers to library use.
6. Physical environment.
7. Provision of new/improved services.

7.2 Information Needs of Older People

The following were the main information needs identified during open discussions with the three **Kildare focus groups** in Kildare town, Kilcock and Clocha Rince libraries.

- Social Welfare entitlements.
- Health Information e.g. Kdoc out of hours doctor services.
- Local Community news and information.
- Transport information – bus, train timetables.
- Local services (Mass times, citizens' information etc)
- Local events, group meetings.
- Recreational information.
- Sourcing tradesmen for house repairs – handymen, plumbers etc.
- Passport /driver's licence forms.
- Help in filling out forms.
- TV schedules.

Information is generally accessed using the following sources:

Top sources used

- Parish newsletters (often delivered door to door).
- Word of mouth (e.g. friends, neighbours, family including children and grandchildren).
- Local newspapers.
- Local radio.
- Internet.

Other sources included the following:

- Local notice boards (including parish office notices).
- Leaflets.
- Information obtained through membership of local community groups.
- Telephone/texts.
- Citizens' information centres.
- Community nurse and GP.
- Teletext services (Aertel).
- Library based social club (e.g. Wisdom Club in Clocha Rinca Library, County Kildare).

The general consensus was that people associated the library with books and collections and not as a source of day to day information. It was recommended that where information on upcoming events is being provided by the library, a more targeted approach is needed i.e. not too soon before the event and not after the event has taken place.

The three **South Dublin Focus groups** in Ballyroan, Clondalkin and Tallaght libraries were asked to identify sources they would normally use to obtain information on a number of specific topics and to complete a questionnaire. The results are summarised in Tables 7.A-7.C below.

Table 7.A: Use of Information Sources (Types of Info sourced from the Internet)

Type of Info/Source Used (% Respondents) (Response = 52)	Internet	Family/ Friends	Public Library	Community Centre	Citizens Advice Bureau	Phone Book	GP/ HSE	Solicitor	Other Source
Government services	74		17		43	42			
Exhibitions	46	37	41	27					
Learning courses	37	27	50	46					
Voluntary Groups	37	32	22	38					
Hobbies/Interests	33	56	44	38					
Local services	30	36	11	27					
Other services	30	20							
Legal services	29	32			42			29	
Health services	25					24	44		
Local events	24	49	37	46					23
Totals	365	289	222	222	85	66	44	29	23

The most frequently cited source used for all forms of information was the Internet, followed by family and friends, the public library and the local community centre (Table 7.A). The Internet was the main source used for information on government services and exhibitions and one in three people use it for information on courses, voluntary groups and hobbies/interests.

As indicated in Table 7.B below, family and friends are cited as sources of information on hobbies/interests and local events by half of the participants and one in three use this source for information on exhibitions, local services, legal services and voluntary groups.

Table 7.B: Use of Information Sources (Types of Info sourced from Family/Friends)

Type of Info/Source Used (% Respondents) (Response = 52)	Internet	Family/ Friends	Public Library	Community Centre	Citizens Advice Bureau	Phone Book	GP/ HSE	Solicitor	Other Source
Hobbies/Interests	33	56	44	38					
Local events	24	49	37	46					23
Exhibitions	46	37	41	27					
Local services	30	36	11	27					
Legal services	29	32			42			29	
Voluntary Groups	37	32	22	38					
Learning courses	37	27	50	46					
Other services	30	20							
Government services	74		17		43	42			
Health services	25					24	44		
Totals	365	289	222	222	85	66	44	29	23

Table 7.C shows that the library, which compares very favourably with community centres, is the main source cited for learning courses and features strongly as a source of information on hobbies/interests, exhibitions and local events.

Table 7.C: Use of Information Sources (Types of Info sourced from the Public Library)

Type of Info/Source Used (% Respondents) (Response = 52)	Internet	Family/ Friends	Public Library	Community Centre	Citizens Advice Bureau	Phone Book	GP/ HSE	Solicitor	Other Source
Learning courses	37	27	50	46					
Hobbies/Interests	33	56	44	38					
Exhibitions	46	37	41	27					
Local events	24	49	37	46					23
Voluntary Groups	37	32	22	38					
Government services	74		17		43	42			
Local services	30	36	11	27					
Health services	25					24	44		
Legal services	29	32			42			29	
Other services	30	20							
Totals	365	289	222	222	85	66	44	29	23

7.3 Awareness of Library Services

Kildare Focus Groups

Most people were aware of the range of library services from arts events to lectures on different topics. The top six services used were books/DVDs, magazines and newspapers, Internet, storytelling, book clubs and as social space. However, all three groups expressed a conservative view of the library's services i.e. a strong association with books and collections.

There was a strong perception among focus group library members of the library as a social space and a community focal point which provides a neutral, friendly environment that supports intergenerational interaction and activities of local community groups such as book clubs, knitting groups, grow your own groups, mother/toddler groups and arts events such as Bealtaine (although some did not associate the library with the Bealtaine festival). Several focus group members reported that they engage in book club and storytelling sessions in the library and avail of citizens' information facilities.

Comments from all three focus groups indicated that the library offers a consistent place for social networking. Recently retired library members and grandparents highlighted the opportunities for inter generational activities, storytelling, wisdom clubs, crafts and music workshops.

South Dublin Focus Groups

The South Dublin research team presented focus group participants with a list of 27 services and asked them to identify which services they thought were provided by the library. Their choices are listed in Table 7.D below in order of popularity. Services identified by 50% or more of the participants are included.

Table 7.D: Library Services identified by Focus Group Participants

Library Service	Respondents who identified Service
1. Book Loans	96%
2. Use of computers	90%
3. Internet access	88%
4. Reading areas/seating	88%
5. Reserve your books	84%
6. Daily newspapers to read	82%
7. Reference books for study	78%
8. Wheelchair Friendly building	75%
9. Magazines to read	64%
10. Mobile Library	59%
11. Book clubs	57%
12. Talks on different topics	57%
13. Exhibitions	56%
14. Rooms for group meetings	55%
15. Information about community	55%
16. Computer training	55%
17. News about local events	53%

The remaining 10 items on the list were selected by 40% or less of the group.

7.4 Library Technologies

Kildare Focus Groups

There was low awareness among all three focus groups of the assistive technologies available in public libraries i.e. large keyboards, text to speech software etc. The top five technologies cited were computers, Internet, photocopying, eReaders and Skype. At the end of the sessions Marian Higgins, Acting County Librarian, gave an overview of planned event programming and an e-services road show. All those present were fully engaged, wanted to know more and showed great interest in attending what was on offer. All three focus groups conveyed a strong need for training in technology.

South Dublin Focus Groups

Participants were asked if specific technologies or equipment provided by the library helped them to use the library's services. An average of one in four participants (23%) did not know what the equipment did or how it helped people to use library services (see Table 7.E).

Table 7.E: Technologies/equipment rated by Focus Group Participants

Technology/Equipment	Useful	Not Useful
Internet Access	59%	30%
Library Website	55%	28%
eMail	41%	40%
eBooks	26%	45%
Keyboards with large keys	24%	44%
Larger text/words software	22%	46%
Training in technology	20%	49%
eReaders	17%	56%
Skype	8%	56%
Text to speech software	8%	51%

Internet access, the library website and email were considered to be the top three most useful facilities made available by the library (see Table 7.E). One in every 4-5 people regarded eBooks, large key keyboards, large text/word software and technology training as useful.

7.5 Gaps in Library Services

Kildare Focus Groups

There was a strong consensus that the library could continue to promote itself as a social hub, for example, to bring people together in the library who share common interests, who wish to develop new skills and run voluntary clubs on various topics such as gardening, knitting etc. It was also recommended that the library could support community groups to use the library as their space and to showcase their activities and services.

The library could be better exploited as a signpost to local events and activities of various local and community groups. Some focus group members suggested that a permanent information corner in the library on local and county events would be helpful. It was also suggested that the library might invite people to the library and that a welcoming person be around to make people feel at ease.

Services that could be provided or improved included Wi-Fi, more eBooks and eServices and more computer training,

Targeted marketing is needed to promote the library and its extensive range of services to the local community – so much is going on and many people are unaware of the facilities on offer. Suggestions also included Library open days to showcase library facilities and services and as a means of securing a higher profile for the library among the community.

South Dublin Focus Groups

Focus groups were asked the question “*what is not provided by the library that you would like to see added?*” The following are the comments made by just over half the group. The remainder had no comments or suggestions for improvements.

- More training courses and lectures needed on age related topics, social media and local history (17%).
- Stock more books on crafts and popular books for our age group (7%).
- Provide a lift in Clondalkin Library (7%).
- Provide a community notice board (in Clondalkin) where information on all community events can be sourced in the one place (8%).
- A permanent open area/hall for exhibitions.

A small number of the participants (less than 5%) suggested there is a need for the following:

- More eReaders and eBooks.
- More book clubs should be established.
- More car parking facilities needed.
- Water/tea/coffee machines (Tallaght and Clondalkin).
- More copies of series books, not enough at the moment so have to wait to continue the series. (Tallaght).
- Small group or one to one tuition on IT.
- Historical display related to the local area.
- Larger signs would be helpful.
- Information on where to get specific information related to the needs of older people (Tallaght).
- The library should provide a dating service!

7.6 Barriers to Library Use

Kildare Focus Groups

A barrier to library use voiced by non-library members was the fact that most people associate the library with books and little else and are unaware of the wide range of resources, facilities and services available in their local library. Opening hours was another issue – some older people are still in full employment, but it was agreed that it is difficult to suit everybody.

Transport, although mentioned, did not feature as a significant issue among the majority because a visit to the library is often slotted in with other activities such as shopping and “*everyone has to shop*”.

A minority of people associated the library with ‘*silence please*’ and therefore not as a social hub, but it was acknowledged by many of the library users that ‘*libraries are buzzing*’ and the message of the library as a multi dimensional community hub needs to be promoted. One library user in Kildare town called for a campaign to ‘*break the silence*’

Some non-users of the library could see no relevance in the library because they were not ‘readers’, did not see the library in any other context and thought that one had to be invited to join the library.

Others felt that they needed guidance on book selection and suggested that the library might consider providing book recommendations, possibly with brief abstracts or reviews of books along the lines of best seller lists published in newspapers.

South Dublin Focus Groups

Dublin participants were asked to discuss what was preventing them from using the library. The question was aimed at those in the group who were non-users of the library services to ascertain the main reasons for lack of use.

More than half of the non-users (56%) admitted that they just got out of the habit. Most had used the library at one time or another, usually when their children were younger. They had become accustomed to buying rather than borrowing books. Some (11%) said that they were too busy with other things and others (11%) said that the library opening hours didn’t suit them.

A small number of the non-user group (13%), who were mainly from the Rathcoole, Saggart and Newcastle areas of South Dublin and had no physical library building, stated that they didn’t have their own transport and had poor access to public transport. Therefore, they could not easily avail of the library services as it was too far to travel.

All agreed that it would be a good idea for the library to advertise their services more to their age group in order to remind people that the service exists.

7.7 The Physical Environment

Kildare Focus Groups

Overall, participants were very happy with library accommodation in the three Kildare branches. All libraries were considered to be very comfortable with very positive comments on lighting and heating in both Kildare and Kilcock libraries, although Clocha Rince was considered to be rather cold.

Reaching down to low shelving was identified as a universal problem and reference was also made to signage – some found it rather small to read. The provision of more seating around shelving was also recommended.

Various positive suggestions were made in regard to the physical environment such as adorning the walls with pictures and artwork by local artists and holding exhibitions of local crafts.

South Dublin Focus Groups

A list of eleven aspects of the physical environment of the library was raised for comment by each group. These included location of the library, access to the building, internal layout, comfort, décor, signage, heating/room temperature, wheelchair ramps/access, seating, layout of shelves and toilet facilities.

Most people were happy with the physical environment of the library, but a small number made the following observations:

- The location of the library is too far and parking is inadequate.
- Access to the building is poor and there is no lift to the first floor.
- Layout of the library could be improved.
- Signage could be improved.
- Seating is inadequate – more comfortable seats, including armchairs and a quiet cosy corner are needed.
- The walls are very bare – more paintings and photos would be good.
- The bottom shelves are too low and make access to books difficult.
- Toilets are hidden away, not properly signed and some people don't know they are available in the library.

7.8 Provision of New/Improved Services

Kildare Focus Groups

All focus groups pointed to a clear need for a national campaign to promote public library services as a vital source of information. In addition to their perceived, traditional role of providing book collections and loans, libraries are now actively engaging in a broad spectrum of activities, providing access to, and training in a wide range of technologies and this message needs to be reinforced nationally. The library can be promoted through a variety of channels – schools, community groups, library newsletters, brochures, leaflets and other promotional materials, library tours and road shows on library services, exhibitions, lectures and the provision of meeting rooms and a focal venue for local groups.

Many participants expressed a need for assistance and training in new technologies, as well as a programme of events covering the interests and concerns of older people, for example, health, genealogy, history, crafts and age friendly computer courses.

A welcome from staff in the library was considered to be very important and a 'welcoming coordinator' or a 'library champion' to show off the library would be seen as a positive asset to the library and its patrons.

It was clear in all the Kildare focus groups that the local community library is a much loved and well used asset by those who have recognised its potential and 'connected' with the library. Not surprisingly, the more frequent visitors to the library were more likely to know about the library's services, facilities and programme of events.

Following the focus group in Kildare and Kilcock there was a tour of library facilities and services. Each of these tours generated further enthusiastic debate on the extensiveness of services on

offer and how these services would contribute to their needs and, in particular, e-services were seen as providing great opportunities.

South Dublin Focus Groups

Members of the Dublin focus groups were asked to select from a list of 12 possible improvements to the library service, indicating which they would find useful for their specific age group and interests. They were asked to rank them in order of preference (1-12) so that any improvements delivered would be targeted to the needs and wishes of the majority of older people.

The order of their choices was as follows:

1. Computer training geared to their needs.
2. Training courses on a wider range of topics of interest to older people.
3. More educational events suitable to older people.
4. Special information service for older people.
5. Talks on topics of interest to their age group.
6. Use of the library as a venue for social events.
7. Use of the library as a venue for cultural events.
8. Library liaison with other agencies serving their age group.
9. News about events of interest to older people.
10. Volunteering to help others to use the library services.
11. Volunteering to pass on your knowledge to others.
12. More books/magazines suitable for their age group.

8. Consultation with Representative Agencies

Written submissions were received from the following organisations:

- Age Action Ireland.
- Age and Opportunity.
- Alzheimer Society of Ireland.
- Carers Association.
- Disability Federation of Ireland.
- Dublin City University.
- Irish Senior Citizens Parliament.
- Irish Sports Council.
- Meath Accessible Transport Project t/a Flexibus.
- National Youth Council of Ireland.

8.1 Age Action Ireland

Age Action Ireland believes that public libraries are an essential social asset that must be maintained and developed. The submission reflected the views expressed by Age Action members throughout GLOR and TOP groups and included the following observations and recommendations:

- In the context of increasing social isolation among older people, libraries provide opportunities for social interaction and are well placed to become the first port of call for older people seeking information.
- A properly equipped public library, by allowing older people to access information technology, can help to overcome the e-exclusion experienced by older people.
- Although library staff are very helpful in general, more support is needed for people wishing to access ebooks.
- As well as libraries needing to engage in more self promotion, Libraries Development LGMA should begin to promote libraries as being more than book lenders.
- Each city/county library should consider establishing the post of 'Activities Coordinator' to work on a city/county basis coordinating and advertising activities.
- There is a need for training of library staff in the provision of information to older people.
- Age Action Ireland is actively involved in intergenerational projects, including the production of an intergenerational toolkit, and would welcome cooperation with public libraries that are active in this area.

8.2 Age and Opportunity

Age and Opportunity recommends the following:

- Public library policy should build on the experience of those public libraries with extensive experience in facilitating older people's access to arts and cultural opportunities through the Bealtaine festival. It should aim to establish public libraries as cultural hubs for older people. A first step might be to gather the experience of certain public libraries and use it to motivate others through a seminar or conference. Age and Opportunity/Bealtaine festival would be happy to work with Libraries Development LGMA to achieve this.

- The policy should include a commitment by public libraries to provide informal learning opportunities targeting older people. Any such direction should include a focus on non-traditional participants and those with the lowest levels of educational attainment, and also on harder-to-reach older people, such as those who are house-bound or who live in care settings.
- Public libraries could explore how the health promotion / healthy lifestyle information they disseminate is received by older people, and whether there is a way to enhance the role of libraries in this context. This work might be done in tandem with other providers of health information, such as the health promotion units of the HSE and providers of local physical activity opportunities, such as the local sports partnerships.
- It is recommended that AgeWise training be delivered more widely within the library service. Age and Opportunity would be happy to discuss the tailoring of this further with Libraries Development LGMA.
- The suggestions for increased engagement by public libraries with older people (through arts, education, etc) apply equally to the population using care services. It is recommended that the public library policy set specific objectives for this population and specify actions as to how public libraries can engage with this population as a social inclusion measure. A first step might be to include consultation on the project report with residents of nursing homes. Age and Opportunity has some experience (along with a partner in our Get Vocal project) of developing capacity for active citizenship by nursing home residents, and could advise if required on a process to achieve this.
- It is recommended that the library policy include becoming dementia friendly as a key objective for public libraries, and that the consultation process engage with the Alzheimer Society of Ireland in this respect.
- The capacity of public libraries to provide the diverse population of older people with accessible, inclusive services that build social capital and enhance human interaction should be highlighted as a valuable public benefit. The policy should seek to celebrate and enhance the role that libraries play in building social capital through both staff development and setting specific goals around this theme.

8.3 Alzheimer Society of Ireland

As a body representing nearly 42,000 living with dementia in Ireland, most of whom are over 65, and over 50,000 family carers affected by the condition, the Alzheimer Society of Ireland has suggested ways in which public libraries could better serve the needs of older people.

According to the Society, *“the vast majority of people with dementia (and their carers) live invisible lives in our communities. They report experiences of isolation and exclusion. They also experience the stigma, a lack of understanding of the lived experience of dementia and choose to self-exclude themselves from mainstream life of the community. People with dementia and carers indicate their difficulty in accessing information, navigating the health and social care system and the lack of suitable services and supports”*.

Their recommendations are as follows:

- Make libraries more accessible for people with dementia. Easy to read texts and audio materials are proposed as effective solutions for people at both early and moderate stages of dementia. Read aloud groups offer a very stimulating activity for sufferers and weekly sessions in the library are proposed. The work could be coordinated with Life Story work where old photos could be compiled into scrapbooks as an activity.
- Libraries should promote dementia friendly communities (DFCs). DFCs are about facilitating local communities to enable people living with dementia to live in their own community and retain their traditional networks. People with dementia connect to their local communities through local groups, local facilities such as libraries and the use of health and support services. Public libraries therefore have a key role to play in offering outreach services to people with dementia.
- Key staff in libraries across the country need to be provided with dementia awareness training and to be educated in the necessary skills for communicating with people with dementia and their loved ones.
- Access to the library could be enhanced by linking the local mobile library with the many Social Clubs operated throughout the country by the Alzheimer Society of Ireland.
- A volunteer buddy scheme to assist people with dementia to attend and use their local library would be of benefit and could be coordinated in partnership with the local Alzheimer Society of Ireland service.
- Make libraries more accessible for carers of people with dementia. Carers are often isolated and overwhelmed by their responsibilities and have difficulty in finding information about services and supports that are available to them. Local libraries should provide relevant directories, contacts and other channels to relevant sources. They should also display information about these services and supports in a prominent location in the library.
- Libraries should provide a specific section dedicated to caring, ensuring that relevant books, pamphlets and relevant special materials are available to carers.

8.4 Carers Association

The Carers Association submitted the following informal observations:

- Public libraries enable older people to access information and are often their only point of access to the internet and other electronic resources.
- The library should ensure that the special needs and interests of older adults are reflected in the library's collections, programs, and services.
- Consideration should be given as to how to facilitate difficult-to-reach library users such as those affected by dementia, physical disabilities and their carers.
- Barriers to library use for older people and their carers need to be identified - how can we make the library's physical facilities safe, comfortable and inviting for all older adults and their carers?
- How can we facilitate older people living in rural areas to access library facilities - are there ways that we can extend library services into homes, nursing homes, hospitals etc?
- How can we better promote the range of services provided by public libraries to older people?
- Appropriate training should be provided for library staff to help make them aware of difficulties older adults may have in using the library, and ensure that all staff are aware of any special

services the library offers that may be of interest to older adults, such as home delivery service, talking books collections, services to retrieve materials from shelves, access to visual aids etc.

- Promote the employment of older adults as professional and support staff members.
- By facilitating access to quality library services for older people, we will also promote a positive experience for their carers.

8.5 Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) /National Council for the Blind (NCBI) / DeafHear / The Irish Hard of Hearing Association

According to the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) the National Disability Strategy Implementation Plan makes provision for ensuring library and arts services support people to participate in mainstream activities in the community. The DFI submission sets out some of the issues they regard to be very relevant to older people with disabilities and they have also included feedback/input from representative bodies in the sensory sector, namely the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI), DeafHear and the Irish Hard of Hearing Association

DFI recommends that, in line with the National Positive Ageing Strategy, chronological age is not used as a barrier to providing services for older adults with disabilities. Where the ageing process becomes a factor in how people access services and the kinds of services they might use, measures should be designed to meet the needs of library users where they arise.

As the process of ageing is complex and can more usefully be described as a function of a particular disability, condition, education, lifestyle or economic condition it is important the measures to engage older people would need to show an understanding of this complexity and would not assume that one size fits all.

Because people with disabilities have traditionally been excluded from the workforce and education, there is a greater susceptibility to poverty, which in itself is a determinant of ageing and in addition to this, literacy may also be an issue for many cohorts of disabled people who have experienced educational disadvantage. These contextual issues give some steer as to the breath of the issue of providing a welcoming and accessible library service for older citizens with disabilities. DFI recommends that further consultation with different cohorts of people with disabilities would be required for some guidance on what initiatives would have a good chance of engaging people who have traditionally been excluded from libraries due to disability or educational disadvantage.

The issue of physical access to buildings and services is widely acknowledged and the Office of Public Works (OPW) has made considerable progress in this area. However, apart from the need for universal design in library buildings, the DFI wishes to suggest that the accessibility of mobile library services is given some consideration. Where it is not possible to make a mobile library vehicle accessible, it is important that it is parked in an accessible space and that appropriate assistance be given to library users needing additional support to make use of the service.

Libraries can offer a very useful way for older people to access internet services and improve their digital literacy in line with the strategy set out by the Department of Communications, Marine and

Natural Resources. Intergenerational projects aimed at mutual cross generational learning would be most useful in this regard and could very usefully be facilitated by library services.

NCBI feedback to Disability Federation of Ireland

Census 2011 results revealed that a total of 51,718 people (1.1% of the population) described themselves as being blind or having serious vision impairment. However, only 17,000 of these are known to NCBI and of these, just over 60% are over 65 years of age. This means that there is a significant number of people with sight loss who may not be aware of NCBI library services and are instead using public library services.

Since only 4% of what appears in print is produced in alternative accessible formats (e.g. Braille, audio CD and cassette, DVD, downloadable audio titles etc) it is recommended that a national repository of formats be created, maintained and funded as part of a national library programme. The programme should make the following resources available:

- Digital reading tools which assist readers with vision impairments to have more control over their book, including references and the ability to show parts of difficult texts with spellings and punctuation.
- Alternative formats in studios / production units or specialised equipment such as Braille machines and memory keys.

As we move to the international transfer of digital books across national boundaries through a new treaty being worked upon at the World Intellectual Property Rights Organization, it is likely that NCBI will be regarded as the “national” organisation meeting the requirements to be a national protector of publisher rights. For all of these reasons an agency like NCBI should at least receive an annual materials grant across the public library service for every person listed as a member of the NCBI’s specialist library. NCBI Library can bring efficiencies of stock management and postal distribution to maintaining and developing a specialist service for readers who are blind or vision impaired.

The NCBI is of the view that the shift to ebooks by public libraries is driving some older people away from using library services and recommends that

- In the short term, public libraries need to continue to expand their large print and CD audio book collections.
- In the long term, public libraries should encourage volunteers to teach computing skills to older people, including the use of ebooks.

It is important that public library authorities should maintain continuous liaison with organisations such as NCBI and other bodies representing older people and the disabled.

All publications, documents, leaflets and forms, produced by public libraries should be produced using clear print design principles to ensure that they are accessible to older people. Clear Print is a design approach for written documents which makes a document easier to read for everyone, including people with low vision. For more information on Clear Print visit www.ncbi.ie/services/services-for-organisations/making-written-documents-accessible-to-all.

As an element of social inclusion, public libraries have a role to play in promoting digital literacy among older people and the public library is an appropriate platform for imparting basic digital literacy skills to older people.

Public libraries should ensure that their websites meet current international accessibility criteria and should upload appropriate magnification and screen reading software for people with vision impairments who want to access information online, in consultation with representative groups such as NCBI.

It is absolutely essential that both frontline and managerial public library staff receive disability awareness training. This will promote a greater understanding of the issues around disability and lead to quality customer services that are accessible to all. Training can be provided at various levels as appropriate, ranging from showing a short video during induction training on the needs of the disabled to a full two-day interactive training course provided by professionals with both expertise and experience in the area.

Deafhear Feedback

Deafhear consulted their older members for feedback on this issue and the feedback indicated low take up on the use of library services amongst older deaf Sign Language services. This is an issue that warrants further attention and focused consultation, without which it would be impossible to speculate on how to better engage deaf users of library services. Amongst the issues mentioned was that libraries tend to stock broadsheet newspapers in preference to newspapers with greater visual appeal.

Irish Hard of Hearing Association (IHHA) Feedback

Feedback from IHHA indicated a positive experience of using libraries as quiet spaces in the main, where staff were helpful and courteous. The very fact that they are quiet spaces means that communication for hard of hearing people is made easier. Loop systems and good signage are of particular importance in assuring independent use of library services.

8.6 Dublin City University (DCU)

The DCU submission fully endorses the aim of this project to establish a policy that will provide clear direction and guidelines for public libraries to provide and promote relevant services for older adults ensuring their interaction with all services and library user groups.

DCU also recognises the high quality service provision already in existence across the public library sector to meet the needs of older adults and strongly supports the view that the public library is ideally positioned to act as a central community focal point. To achieve this it is essential that the library engages both formally and informally with local authorities, government agencies, community groups and educational institutions (including universities) on the development of initiatives for older adults.

DCU has recently developed and a set of 10 generic Age Friendly University (AFU) principles based on research evidence and consultation with older adults, representative groups and expert input. Their report captured a vibrant range of activities which are aimed at meeting the needs of older

adults - including research, 'second' careers, health and wellness, intergenerational learning, cultural and educational programmes. Other universities have now signed up to these Principles, which were launched by the Taoiseach in November 2012.

Drawing on the expertise of DCU Library staff it was suggested that guidelines for the Public Library system might include the following:

- Older adults should be identified as a key user group in all planning and strategic development activities.
- Older adults should be involved through appropriate consultation mechanisms in library service planning activities.
- A targeted marketing policy and programme of awareness is essential for the promotion of existing public library facilities, resources and services.
- Public libraries are well-positioned to build on existing links with those agencies that already support and represent older adults to develop appropriate services.
- The interests and requirements of older adults should be identified and reflected in the development of information resources policies and purchasing decisions.
- The importance of library as a physical space should be fully acknowledged and its potential realised in terms of:
 - The provision of appropriate and varied spaces for individual and collaborative activities.
 - The provision of social spaces including café facilities.
 - The extension of spaces to local community groups and support agencies.

8.7 Irish Senior Citizens Parliament

The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament, at its Annual Parliament Meeting in May 2013 distributed a short questionnaire to delegates which covered the following topics:

- Use/non-use of the public library.
- Reasons for using the library.
- Materials and services used i.e. books magazines, DVDs, PCs, Wi-Fi, Internet etc.
- Perceived gaps in existing library services.
- Non-users reasons for not using the library.
- What library services and/or resources are/would be most useful to respondents.

Eighteen anonymous responses were returned, of which eleven were users of public libraries and seven were non-users. Fifteen respondents indicated that they were retired and three were employed – one full-time and two part-time.

Library users' main reasons for using the library included leisure, reading, general and health information, hobbies such as bridge and knitting and access to PCs, Wi-Fi, the Internet and language learning facilities. The use of a wide range of materials was reported i.e. books (including fiction, non-fiction and reference), magazines, newspapers, DVDs/CDs and topics such as family and local history were mentioned. No significant gaps in existing services were identified and no interest was expressed in additional or improved services.

Non-users of libraries indicated that they have little interest in reading or don't have time to read. A small number suggested that computer courses, free access to meeting rooms and facilities for grandparents to read to grandchildren would be useful.

8.8 Irish Sports council

The Irish Sports council recommends the public libraries should:-

- Seek to further understand the contribution of sport and physical activity to the economic, social, health and quality of life of older adults in Ireland.
- Consider physical activity as an integral part of information programmes and events, thereby helping to improve the health and wellbeing of older adults.
- Work closely with Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) to communicate to older people the benefits of participating in sports and recreational activities.

8.9 Meath Accessible Transport Project

Meath Accessible Transport Project (t/a Flexibus) submitted the following:

Observations and Barriers.

- Under the 'New Agenda on Ageing' developed by the Ageing Well Network it is identified that Engagement is a key measure in making Ireland the best place to grow old in and this includes communication and access to information.
- The library service under the local County Council is well placed to deliver services under this banner.
- There is no doubt that County Libraries give a great service to their community however if one lives in a rural area and have difficulty getting transport to essential services like shopping and medical appointment then access to the library may not be achievable.
- The greatest barrier for rural residents in using the library service in their local area is lack of transport.
- The passengers that use rural transport are, in the majority, older people who may not see the library service as being important or necessary.
- Passengers may not realise the variety of services offered by the library service.
- The use of computers has proven to be beneficial for older people and with free access within the library to internet enabled computers it reduces the need to own a computer.
- The library service not only offers a centre where older people can meet and enjoy, but gives a service that is inclusive and age friendly.

Recommendations.

- That each county library service works with the Rural Transport Programme to publicise each other's services e.g. that information on the local library service is distributed on the local rural transport service. Likewise, that the local library has information on the services offered by the rural transport programme in the area.

- That a special day /week is held in the local library introducing the library service to local RTP (Rural Transport Programme) services. This could be a 'meet and greet' day.
- That a day per month could be identified as the RTP day for visits.
- That the Bealtaine Festival is publicised on the RTP services.
- That the libraries and the Rural Transport Programme work together to introduce the library service to rural residents who have never been to the library.
- That there is more promotion of the library computer services available to rural residents.
- That we look at an integration pilot between VEC Adult Education, Library Service and Rural Transport Programme.
- That the library service and the rural transport co-ordinator meet once or twice a year to promote services and explore how the most isolated could be introduced to the library service.

8.10 National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

The NYCI reported that it would be happy to put a call out to their members to ask them if they would like to get involved in a particular library initiative. Formal collaboration would happen directly with their members who would be in a better position to be able to mobilise interest at local level. Irish Girl Guides, for example, have run a 'human library' project and are keen to do more as it was very successful.

Foróige has a very wide reach across the country and would be worth consulting and would the regional offices of Youth Work Ireland.

NYCI's work on intergenerational themes is more strategic. A chapter is being prepared on intergenerational practice for NYCI's Diversity Toolkit and they would be very happy to include contact details on how youth groups can get involved with intergenerational projects in their local libraries if specific information is provided to them.

9. Conclusions

It is clear from the national and international published literature and the field research undertaken in this project that older people are featuring as an increasingly significant demographic in the populations to be served by public libraries. It is also evident that some library professionals are becoming more aware of the newly emerging landscape and are endeavouring to identify and address the issues and face the challenges raised by societal changes in this regard.

9.1 What are the Issues?

There is currently an unprecedented growth in the 60+ demographic of the populations of developed countries. Unlike their predecessors in the same age group the majority of 60+ citizens are healthy, active, energetic and are looking forward in a positive mindset to a new and exciting life phase rather than surrendering to the inevitability of the constraints of old age. Because of increasing longevity, healthier living and changing social norms this phase of life is being referred to by some social researchers as *the ageing opportunity* and *the bonus years*.

Until recently, public libraries operated services on the basis of distinctly defined demographic segments – children, teenagers, adults and the “elderly”, the latter term implying someone who is frail, dependent, infirm, isolated and usually relegated to outreach services. Midlife adulthood, defined by some as 50+, and late adulthood referring to older people/seniors in their 60+ years, now represent a new demographic to be served in the 21st century and filling this gap is a major challenge for public libraries. Many librarians have not yet recognised the extent and significance of the shift and fail to realise its implications for library policy, planning and services.

The older adults/seniors issue is not yet established as a constituent core or elective element on library education curricula and certification programmes in the same manner as, for example, children’s librarianship is a recognised specialist category. The structural organisation of service provision continues to operate along traditional lines in most libraries and does not adequately cater for the needs of this rapidly developing demographic niche.

There is therefore the issue of what needs to be done to re-orientate library professionals’ perception and understanding of older people and how their needs are to be addressed by the library. This requires librarians to make themselves aware of findings of social and psychological research on the new breed of older, active senior who has a new life stage to live to the full and who has much to contribute to the community. Gearing up for new tailor-made services for older people will necessitate major change and re-orientation in public library missions, operational and staffing structures, resource allocation and service content and delivery to older people and will be predicated on buy-in by policy makers, senior management and all layers of library staff. It will also require new cooperative and collaborative working relationships to be put in place with other public, community, voluntary and private agencies serving older people.

Another issue of importance to librarians is the public’s perception of the library in the context of an increasing myriad of sources of information readily available to citizens. These competing sources are available on the high street and in the cyber world and there is a danger that the library is failing to keep pace with a rapidly changing information world and will be eventually left behind, turning into a dinosaur used to store outdated printed collections in which all but a few have little interest.

The older person must also be persuaded to buy into a revamped, revitalised public library that has been re-engineered to meet the needs of a new emerging active life stage.

9.2 What are the Everyday Information Needs and Sources used by Older People?

The literature reveals that information needs are directly associated with a change in life stage during the late fifties/early sixties – which traditionally has represented the end of formal working life and the beginning of retirement. Needs at this stage are often associated with a phase of self assessment and a review of new lifestyle options which involves dealing with reduced financial resources and likely changes in health and wellbeing status. In some cases a career change or a part-time extension of a full-time occupation may be on the cards or, alternatively, a retiree may take the opportunity to pursue hobbies and interests for which there was no time while fully employed. Couples will have seen their children leave home and raise their own families presenting them with grandchildren to be indulged and enjoyed and in some cases, cared for. All of these circumstances will influence the information needs of older people and will vary on foot of a broad spectrum of personal choices, activities and life goals.

The six focus group meetings convened by Kildare and South Dublin library authorities revealed that seniors have a wide range of information needs. Specific topics include information on government services such as social welfare entitlements, information on health and wellbeing, local community news, events and services including transport, hobbies and recreational information, courses and exhibitions, legal information and assistance with form filling.

According to the focus group sessions, the most common sources used to meet information needs include the Internet (Googling), word of mouth i.e. family, friends and acquaintances, the public library, the local community centre and the citizens' advice bureau. People also use other local sources such as parish and community newsletters, newspapers and radio, public notice boards in community centres, shopping malls, churches etc. In cases where specialised advice is needed, people are likely to consult a professional such as a GP or solicitor for the appropriate information.

9.3 How is the Public Library perceived by Older People?

Participants in the focus groups generally held a conservative view of the public library mainly as a collection of books and other information materials such as DVDS, magazines and newspapers for public use. The library is also associated by some with Internet services, book clubs and storytelling and as a venue where information on courses, exhibitions, hobbies and interests and local events is likely to be found. Some people, particularly in Kildare, also see the library as a friendly, neutral, space for social networking with the potential to serve as a focal point and meeting place for the local community.

While the majority of people are aware of the existence of library websites and Internet services there is generally a low awareness of the assistive technologies available in public libraries that are of potential benefit to older people when using the library i.e. large keyboards, text to speech software etc.

9.4 What has been the Response by Public Libraries?

The survey of 32 public library authorities in Ireland revealed the following in the cases of the 26 valid responses returned:

- Approximately half of local authorities have an Age Friendly County (AFC) Strategy in place.

- One third of library authorities have a specific library policy/programme for service provision and offer staff training for dealing with older people.
- The remaining libraries include older people as part of their clientele in planning and providing services.
- One in four library authorities has a staff coordinator for services to older people.
- Two thirds of libraries have age related information on their members and are therefore in a position to target older people when planning and developing services.
- Apart from the current study, very little research has been undertaken by libraries on matters relating to older people.
- All libraries claim to provide reading space, toilet facilities and a welcoming, comfortable environment for patrons.
- Over half of library authorities make special provision for older people by way of access to buildings (ramps, doors etc) and within buildings (lifts, wheelchairs, seating etc.)
- All library authorities provide for older people in their collections in terms of content, format and lending arrangements.
- Most libraries offer information services but only one in four makes special provision for older people.
- Two thirds of library authorities provide a mobile service which often includes delivery to local nursing homes, day care centres, hospitals and the housebound. However, most library authorities consider their outreach services to be inadequate due to constraints on financial and human resources.
- There is widespread provision of assistive technologies by virtually all public libraries throughout the country. These include PCs with large type and audio enabling software, speech synthesizers and low tech magnification devices.
- All library authorities offer ICT training and 80% provide courses and events that are targeted specifically at older people e.g. *"Digital Literacy for over 50s"*, *"Silver surfers, Coffee and Computers"*, *"The Grey Guide to Social Media"* etc.
- Approximately one third of library authorities make special provision for older people on their website. This can involve measures such as a dedicated section on the site, provision of Browse Aloud, screen magnification and links to other websites of interest to older people.
- Intergenerational programmes feature prominently in public libraries, not only in the area of ICT where pupils from local schools help silver surfers to improve and acquire new ICT skills, but also in grandparent/grandchild reading programmes and in *"Wisdom Clubs"* and mentor/buddy programmes where knowledge is transferred from older to younger generations. Intergenerational choirs and projects between retirement groups and schools that are facilitated by the library also feature in the service mix.
- Three quarters of library authorities provide lifelong learning courses aimed at older people. These cover a very broad spectrum of topics such as arts and crafts, language learning, photography, creative writing and yoga.
- An impressive array of events, exhibitions and other community activities, many of which are targeted at older people, was reported in the survey. Bealtaine events, book clubs, reading sessions, art exhibitions, music, poetry and dancing sessions, flower arranging, genealogy, health and well being classes, quizzes, board games and many other events serve to address the many and varied needs of the older population.
- A small number of library authorities operate volunteer programmes where older people are happy to contribute to the work of the library.
- All libraries have links with other agencies, including local community agencies, public bodies such as the HSE, FÁS, VECs, organisations representing older people and a host of other bodies such as the Citizens' Information Service of An Garda Síochána. Liaison and networking between libraries and these agencies serves as a basis for an integrated and coordinated response to the needs of the older population at both community and national levels.

9.5 What Service Models Exist?

A broad spectrum of models of library service provision to older people has been reported in the literature (see Section 5). These range from very basic programmes where the library operates a marketing campaign to attract older adults to current services but does not involve any other changes in the library. Some programmes operate on the back of wider national initiatives aimed at older people such as age friendly policies. In other cases, various short term pilot projects have been undertaken with grant aid to test approaches and community response to experimental services for older adults but may not be continued as part of mainline services at the end of the project. Some libraries have both inclusive programmes where new services are added to core services in order to attract older people to the library. At the top of the pyramid there is full commitment and sustained support by the library to serving older adults as reflected in dedicated staff allocation, appropriate operational structures, targeted programming and a clear identity and branding of the library as a service provider to older people.

The survey of Irish public library authorities indicates that most library authorities have taken age-friendly library policies on board on the back of wider Age-Friendly County (AFC) policies at local authority level.

9.6 What are the Problems and/or Gaps in the Service?

The survey of Irish public library authorities and the six focus group sessions held by Kildare and South Dublin Library authorities revealed the following:

- Public libraries are not perceived as a first port of call when older people are seeking information and this represents a significant barrier to library use.
- Other bodies, such as local community agencies and those representing older people, are generally perceived as more effective than libraries as sources of information.
- Public libraries have a conservative image and are mainly associated with book collections and a restrictive, quiet environment.
- Public libraries do not promote their services adequately to older people.
- No focus for services to older people exists in most libraries i.e. no staff coordinator or library champion for older people.
- Library staff training does not make adequate provision for dealing with older patrons.
- Provision of outreach/offsite services by libraries is inadequate, especially to the homebound and those in hospitals, nursing homes and day care centres. This is due to a number of reasons – a general lack of financial and human resources in libraries and, in some cases, nursing homes and other centres are unwilling to take on block loans from the library because of the administrative burden it entails.
- Although the physical environment and library accommodation are generally considered to be satisfactory, some problems were noted. These include the location of the library, limited parking, poor access to and layout of the library building, unclear signage, inappropriate seating, shelving and reading space and a lack of refreshment facilities.
- Some people were of the view that opening hours and transport issues act as barriers to the use of public libraries. This applies particularly in rural areas where people reside some distance from the nearest branch library and public transport is infrequent or unavailable.
- Some non-users of the library do not read books and because they associate the library with books only, they do not consider the library to be relevant to their needs. Others simply got out

of the habit of using the library and had become accustomed to buying rather than borrowing books.

- There are severe constraints on developing and implementing an age friendly library policy and these include issues such as ageism, staffing and financial limitations, difficulties in promotion and image building, in segmenting and targeting older populations and in dealing with competition from other agencies.

10. Serving Older People Better: A Policy for Public Library Authorities.

On the basis of published literature, the findings of the nationwide survey of public libraries in Ireland and the focus groups sessions in Dublin and Kildare, together with submissions received from representative bodies, the following policy and outline implementation plan are recommended to library authorities to enable them to better serve the needs of older people:

Each Library authority should:-

- Actively and consistently promote themselves internally to their local authorities and ensure that they are fully represented in all relevant decision making regarding policy making, programme design and implementation at both local and national levels.
- Allocate responsibility for services to seniors to a designated staff member with the responsibility and authority to develop and implement appropriate programmes for this segment of the public.
- Prepare a mission statement on the library's age friendly policy and display it in all library premises.
- Design and deliver training programmes for management, professional and para-professional library staff to support older people and enable staff to appreciate the needs, concerns and circumstances of older people and to provide them with appropriate services.
- Pro-actively liaise, cooperate and build relationships with other agencies serving older people in the community in order to maximise the impact of the library on the lives of older people.
- More fully engage in promotional activities and develop campaigns targeted at older people, for example by
 - organising events such as lectures, exhibitions on topics of relevance and interest to older people (including the annual Bealtaine festival during May).
 - placing printed notices in locations outside the library that are likely to be frequented by older people e.g. community centres, citizens' advice bureaux, nursing homes, GP and dental surgeries etc.
 - forming book clubs, reading and other special interest groups.
 - advertising in parish and other newsletters, local newspapers and radio.
 - Designing the library website to contain easily accessible information specifically for seniors.
- Improve their service offerings and/or provide new services aimed at older people. The nature and content of services will depend on local circumstances, including services offered locally by other agencies. Services could include:
 - Education and lifelong learning.
 - New/improved ICT services and assistive technologies.
 - New/improved offsite services.
 - New/improved collections in appropriate formats and delivery modes.
- Provide more new/improved training courses in areas of interest to older people e.g. ICTs, financial planning, career change, health and wellbeing, arts and crafts, hobbies and interests etc.
- More actively engage and avail of the expertise, goodwill and willingness of older people to contribute to the community, including the library, through community engagement and partnership and participation in representative and consultative mechanisms.
- Operate as venues for social, cultural and educational events, both independently and in cooperation with other community agencies. For example, the library should support community groups to use the library as their space and to showcase their activities and services.
- Be better exploited as a signpost to local events and activities of various local and community groups.

- Monitor accommodation in line with legislative requirements– e.g. install ramps and lifts where needed, appropriate internal layout design to accommodate reading space, meeting rooms, exhibition areas, wheelchair mobility and seating, low shelving, clear signage, notice boards, good lighting, heating and ventilation and refreshment facilities. Focus groups highlighted the importance of a welcoming environment manned by a friendly, helpful member of staff.
- Give consideration to older people in all aspects of library policies, planning and programmes and include them as a demographic group in the provision of core collections and services and in applying the principle of universal access to information.
- Incorporate services to older people in performance indicators.
- Recommendations received in submissions by representative bodies should also be given consideration library level. These have been described in detail in Section 8 above and are summarised in Appendix 3.

11. A National Policy for the Provision of Public Library Services to Older People

The primary aim of this project was to establish a policy for public libraries to provide and promote relevant services for older people (those aged 60 and above), ensuring their interaction with all services and library user groups. The policy elements proposed below outline a clear direction for the provision, development and promotion of services at national and local level for the foreseeable future.

1. The most effective means of ensuring that a national policy targeted at providing appropriate library and information services for older people is developed and implemented is to ensure that specific measures for this demographic group are incorporated into relevant national strategies already in place or about to be adopted. The three most relevant national strategies at this time are those relating to public libraries, positive ageing and local governance. Libraries Development, LGMA, the Department of Environment Community and Local Government (DECLG), the Department of Health and representative bodies such as Ageing Well Network, Age Action Ireland etc are strategically well positioned to exert influence in the formulation of the above three national strategies and also in regard to promoting the adoption of other age friendly policy initiatives proposed below.

2. A national policy on the provision of public library and information services to older people should be referenced where appropriate in the *National Strategy for Public Libraries 2013 - 2017* currently in preparation.

3. Although the recently launched *National Positive Ageing Strategy* report (April 2013) acknowledges the need for improved information provision for older people (p22, 46), it does not formally and explicitly acknowledge the role of the public library in positive ageing. As an implementation plan is to be developed within the next six months there is now an opportunity to ensure that the role of public libraries is more clearly stated and fully incorporated in the National Positive Ageing Strategy.

4. It is imperative and opportune that, as part the Action Plan on effective local governance, *Putting People First*³⁸, the public library should be positioned in a leadership and public relations role at the front end of local authority community engagement with all members of the public and in particular, older adults, who need to interact with local authorities on a regular basis for economic, social and health reasons.

5. There is a need for a national campaign to promote public library services as a vital source of information and, in particular, to meet the needs of older people.

³⁸ Putting People First, Action Programme for Effective Local Government, (2012), Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG),
<http://www.environ.ie/en/Publications/LocalGovernment/Administration/FileDownload,31310,en.pdf>

6. Provision of services to older people should be incorporated within library education and training curricula and be recognised as a specialist area on the same basis as specialist services to children, teenagers and other user /non-user groups.
7. The establishment of a high level National Advisory Forum for Public Libraries (NAFPL) to act as a formal consultative body in relation to national library policies and initiatives has recently been approved by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. The Forum will advise the Libraries Development, LGMA, the library authorities and the Department on issues, particularly national policy and strategy in other public service areas which impact on public libraries, and will facilitate co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration. Issues relating to services for older people should be included on agendas for the NAFPL and Libraries Development, LGMA as required. These bodies could serve as a platform to discuss and develop a holistic approach to serving older people and establish cooperative working principles and mechanisms for best serving their needs.
8. Organisations representing libraries at national level should encourage and assist library authorities, working with other organisations, to formulate and implement local policies and programmes designed to enable and encourage older people to engage with and contribute to their local communities (and public libraries) by way of participating in consultation processes, volunteering to engage in mentor/buddy programmes, reading, local history sessions and delivering courses in their areas of expertise.
9. An Age Friendly Library guide on the provision of library and information services for older people will be produced and published by Libraries Development, LGMA as part of this project in the near future.

< END >

APPENDIX 1

American Library Association Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults

Library Services to an Aging Population Committee, Reference Services Section, Reference and User Services Association of the American Library Association 1987. Revised 1999, Approved in 2008.
<http://www.ala.org/rusa/resources/guidelines/libraryservices>

Introduction

The American Library Association has a longstanding record of promoting library and information services to older adults. These guidelines, first developed in the 1970s, have been updated to respond to the changing demographics of an aging U.S. population. In 2007, one of every five persons was 55 years or older, or over 68 million people. The aging of the “baby boomers” will add to these numbers well into the next decade, and the lengthening of the average lifespan is creating several generations of older adults at a time that the U.S. has become more ethnically and linguistically diverse. As a result, the current population of older adults is the most heterogeneous in U.S. history. These updated guidelines reflect a basic principle in library services to older adults that recognizes this diversity and discourages stereotyping in planning collections, programs and services for this growing population.

For purposes of these guidelines, an “older adult” is defined as a person at least 55 years old. The updating of these guidelines began in 2005. Current and past members of the Committee on Library Service to an Aging Population and the Office of Literacy and Outreach Services (OLOS) Library Service to the Aging Subcommittee contributed to this revision.

Guidelines for Library and Information Services to Older Adults

1. Acquire current data about the older population and incorporate it into planning and budgeting.

- a) Conduct surveys on a regular basis of the older population and the aging service providers in the community, including their numbers, demographic characteristics, and other information, such as their location and housing; educational, socioeconomic and ethnic background; religious organizations and other groups to which they belong; agencies that serve them; and the local media that targets older adults in the community.
- b) Supplement surveys with focus groups and user studies among the community's older population to determine their needs and interests and to gauge how services, collections and programs might be made more appropriate and relevant to this population.
- c) Collect data on the specific and varied information needs of older adults due to language, culture, education, income, Internet skills and access, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, and age.
- d) Utilize the above data in combination with the more general informational needs basic to older adults in their everyday lives. Such subjects include: health, health care, social security, financial planning, housing, independent living, elder law, care giving (including grand parenting), lifelong learning (including adult literacy and computer skills), community service, civic engagement, and volunteering. The library's collections, programs, and informational services should reflect the diverse interests and needs of older adults.
- e) Ensure that any services that target older adults are an integral and ongoing part of the library's operations and budget. Additional funding may be required for collections, accessibility equipment/software, and the time expended by library staff in services to older adults and community. If a special grant or external funding is sought to support a pilot or

demonstration program, consider how the program will be integrated into the library's regular budget and services at the end of the grant.

- f) Involve older adults in the library's planning process by establishing an advisory committee. This committee might include older adults who are regular library users; library volunteers, staff, board members, or members of the library's Friends group; and leaders of organizations of older adults and other community organizations.

2. Ensure that the special needs and interests of older adults in your community are reflected in the library's collections, programs, and services.

- a) Appoint a librarian to act as a coordinator of services to older adults, ensuring that there is at least one designated staff member monitoring and developing the library's collections and services with older adults in mind.
- b) Consider how the library can be made more visible, more welcoming, and more relevant to older adult users.
- c) Advertise the library's services and website in local newspapers, magazines, radio or television programs that target older adults, and in senior centers, nutrition programs, and residential housing.
- d) Offer to speak to organizations of older adults about the library's services on a regular basis.
- e) Establish an ongoing liaison with agencies that serve older adults (especially senior centers that employ activity coordinators) to explore cooperative programming, recruit volunteers or friends of the library, and seek suggestions for programs or services that would encourage library use.
- f) Work with state library agencies that may provide staff training and development and information resources for older adults.

3. Make the library's collections and physical facilities safe, comfortable and inviting for all older adults.

- a) Evaluate your library's accessibility by older adults with physical, visual, aural, reading and other disabilities, according to the Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- b) Consider providing at least one wheelchair in the library for public use.
- c) Accommodate users for whom prolonged standing is difficult by placing chairs or stools near stacks, information desks, check-out areas, computer terminals, and other areas. If possible, create a "Senior Space," using easy chairs gathered in an area adjacent to books and magazines of interest to older adults.
- d) Consider placing materials frequently used by older adults on easily accessible shelves.
- e) Place paperbacks, clearly labelled and well spaced, in areas of the library that are especially well lit, accommodating older adults who prefer paperbacks over heavier and more cumbersome hardback books.
- f) Assure that spacing between shelving accommodates users in wheelchairs.
- g) Ensure that signage is clear, Brailled (where appropriate), and readily visible to all, including users in wheelchairs. Library brochures should be in at least 14-point font type.
- h) Provide at least one computer station prominently labelled and installed with large type software for older adults with low-vision. If needs warrant and resources are available, acquire other assistive technology such as a stand-alone Reading Machine which speaks the book's text to a blind reader; speech synthesizer and related software; low-tech magnification and other devices.
- i) Provide TTY access, closed-captioned videotapes, and assistive listening systems to older adults with hearing disabilities.
- j) Acquire and make available books and periodicals in large print

4. Make the library a focal point for information services to older adults.

- a) Cooperate with local Area Agencies on Aging, senior nutrition programs, senior volunteer programs, and others in the aging service provider network by advertising their service and making their publications and other information more readily accessible. The library can provide an invaluable service by organizing and consolidating information about government and community programs and services available to older adults.
- b) Consider developing or expanding the library's Web site to provide links to the sites of organizations of older adults, government departments and agencies serving older adults, newspapers and other Web sites whose focus is older adults.
- c) Ensure that the library's collection includes materials that are pertinent for caregivers of older adults, for their children or other family members, and for professional caregivers in the community.

5. Target the older population in library programming.

- a) Incorporate adequate funding for programs, materials, and services for older adults in the library's operating budget, and actively seek supplemental funding through partnerships with other agencies, organizations, and foundations interested in serving older adults.
- b) Plan programs each year that specifically target older adults and enhance their ability to remain independent and skilful library users. Publicizing such programs can heighten the library's visibility among the older population.
- c) Select themes for programs that deal with specific interests of older adults identified through user surveys, focus groups, or circulation statistics reflecting borrowing patterns by older adults.
- d) Plan programs for specific age groups or generations within the older population, being aware that interests and information needs vary greatly.
- e) Include intergenerational programs and participate in intergenerational projects sponsored by others in the community. Consider partnerships with local schools, daycare facilities or community organizations.
- f) Pursue other opportunities for cooperative programming with partners such as community and senior centers; Area Agencies on Aging and other community agencies; and educational institutions offering continuing educational programs for older adults. Cooperative efforts might involve active participation in planning and delivering programs, assistance in advertising programs, or providing book displays and booklists in conjunction with the library's programs.
- g) Consider providing computer and Internet courses specifically designed for older adults to accommodate a slower pace of instruction, provide sufficient time to develop "mousing skills," and allow for the possibility that some older adults may have visual, physical, or hearing disabilities. If possible, include individual tutoring provided by peers or others.
- h) Explore opportunities to provide library services and programming to older adults outside the library, such as in senior or community centers, nursing homes, and senior housing units. Consider offering computer and Internet training in these locations.
- i) Use library displays to combat ageism or the stereotypes in our society about older adults.
- j) Provide opportunities for older adults to volunteer in the library.
- k) Create opportunities for lifelong learning programs.

6. Reach out to older adults in the community who are unable to travel to the library.

- a) Survey community needs and consider library budget planning to accommodate possible increases in demand for outreach services such as delivery of library materials by mail and mobile library services. Analyze community demographics, population forecasts, and housing trends to plan to meet this need effectively.

- b) Offer the library's services to assistive living, alternative housing, senior day care, congregate meals sites, senior community centers, nursing homes and senior residential or care homes in the community. Also offer assistance to older adults who are confined to private residences or who are unable to carry library materials home.
- c) Advertise the library's services through local media, public health agencies, and other agencies that work with older adults.
- d) Eliminate waiting lists for library services through innovative approaches to delivery of materials, a redistribution of personnel, or establishment of a volunteer delivery system. Partner with Regional Libraries for the Blind and Physically Handicapped to expand available services.

7. Train the library's staff to serve older adults with courtesy and respect.

- a) Provide sensitivity training to staff at all levels to make them aware of difficulties older adults may have in using the library, and how to make the library a more welcoming and comfortable place for older adults.
- b) Train staff to recognize and combat ageism and stereotypes about older adults.
- c) Ensure that all staff are aware of any special services the library offers that may be of interest to older adults, such as home delivery service, a talking books collection, a service to retrieve materials from the stacks, reading aids, or waiving of fines or fees.
- d) Promote the employment of older adults as professional and support staff members.

8. Bibliography

1. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, (2002). *ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG)*. Retrieved June 6, 2008, from <http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm>
2. Association for Library Service to Children, American Library Association, (2004). "Books for Children Portraying Aging and Older Characters in a Positive Light." Retrieved June 6, 2008, from http://www.gwumc.edu/cahh/booklist/booklist_20041110.pdf
3. International Longevity Center—USA, New York, NY, (2006). *Ageism in America*. Retrieved June 6, 2008, from <http://www.ilcusa.org/pages/publications/ageism-caregiving-sleep/ageism-in-america.php>
4. Mates, Barbara T. (2003). *5-Star Programming and Services for Your 55+ Library Customers*. American Library Association, (ALA Programming Guides). Paperback.
5. Missouri State Library, Jefferson City, MO, (2002). *Serving Seniors: A Resource Manual for Missouri Libraries*. Retrieved June 6, 2008, from <http://www.sos.mo.gov/library/development/services/seniors/manual/>
6. Rubin, Rhea. (1993). *Intergenerational Programming, a How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc.

APPENDIX 2

Library services for older people – good practice guide (Link to PDF)

Sloan, M. and Vincent, J., (2009), Library services for older people – good practice guide,
http://www.seapn.org.uk/content_files/files/library_services_good_practice_guide_1336795.pdf

Appendix 3

Summary of Recommendations received in the Consultation Process

Recommendations received in submissions by organisations representing the interests of older people have been described in detail in Section 8 and are summarised below.

- Age Action Ireland is actively involved in intergenerational projects, including the production of an intergenerational toolkit, and would welcome cooperation with public libraries that are active in this area.
- Public library policy should build on the experience of those public libraries with extensive experience in facilitating older people's access to arts and cultural opportunities through the Bealtaine festival. The policy should aim to establish public libraries as cultural hubs for older people. A first step might be to gather the experience of certain public libraries and use it to motivate others through a seminar or conference. Age and Opportunity/Bealtaine festival would be happy to work with Libraries Development LGMA to achieve this.
- Public libraries could explore how the health promotion / healthy lifestyle information they disseminate is received by older people, and whether there is a way to enhance the role of libraries in this context. This work might be done in tandem with other providers of health information, such as the health promotion units of the HSE and providers of local physical activity opportunities, such as the local sports partnerships.
- It is recommended that AgeWise training be delivered more widely within the library service. Age and Opportunity would be happy to discuss the tailoring of this further with Libraries Development LGMA
- It is recommended that library policy include becoming dementia friendly as a key objective for public libraries, and that the consultation process engage with the Alzheimer Society of Ireland in this respect.
- The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI) recommends that further consultation with different cohorts of people with disabilities would be required for some guidance on what initiatives would have a good chance of engaging people who have traditionally been excluded from libraries due to disability or educational disadvantage.
- The Irish Sports Council recommends that libraries consider physical activity as an integral part of information programmes and events work closely with Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) to communicate to older people the benefits of participating in sports and recreational activities.
- The National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) recommends the establishment of a national repository of alternative accessible formats (e.g. Braille, audio CD and cassette, DVD, downloadable audio titles etc.) as part of a national policy for public libraries.