



Annual Report **2023**

All older people
more active, more visible,
more creative, more connected,
more confident, more often.

At **Age & Opportunity**,
our mission is to achieve the best
possible quality of life for us all as
we age. Our vision is an Ireland
where all older people can be more
active, more visible, more creative,
more connected, more confident,
more often.

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Chairperson's Statement



It gives me great pleasure to present Age & Opportunity's Annual Report for 2023, which documents our continued work in alignment with the goals outlined in our Strategic Plan for 2021-2024.

Since our inception in 1988, our commitment to promoting positive attitudes towards ageing has only grown more urgent. While health services and various agencies have demonstrated creativity and effectiveness in challenging times, the pandemic highlighted the ongoing journey needed to cultivate a truly age friendly society.

Understanding that positive ageing necessitates comprehensive policy responses across multiple fronts, we strive to align our work with key strategies such as the National Positive Ageing Strategy, Healthy Ireland, the National Physical Activity Plan and the National Sports Policy, the Arts Council of Ireland's Making Great ArtWork, and Culture 2025, the National Cultural Policy Framework.

We are continuously exploring important questions about ageing, including redefining older age and fostering positive lifestyle changes for prolonged well-being.

In 2023 we commissioned and published a critical piece of research funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) – Rights and Duty, the voice of older persons as rights holders. The aim of the research was to carry out an older person led study about older persons' perceptions of themselves as rights holders and how their rights are compromised by ageism. Almost 40% of respondents indicated that they feel they had been treated unfairly on the basis of their age at some point in the past, which should be of concern to all of us.

We have been progressing our work challenging ageism and negative stereotypes associated with ageing through all of our programmes, ageism workshops, guidance materials around language and imagery and policy submissions. We continue to work with our partners in the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, advocating for a government response to tackle ageism and to establish an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People. We worked on a review of Ireland's policy commitments for ageing and older people, 'Taking stock: Is Government keeping its commitments to older people?', that will be launched in early 2024.

The Board recognises the pivotal role of strong governance in our sector, ensuring effective decision-making and resource allocation. Committed to upholding exemplary standards, we are compliant with governance and regulatory requirements, as evidenced by positive outcomes of audits by our key funders, including the HSE and Sport Ireland, and the continued implementation of a comprehensive three-year internal audit plan which commenced in 2022.

I would like to recognise the huge voluntary commitment of my colleagues on the Board of Age & Opportunity, and across our organisational Committees and Advisory Groups, and to thank them for their support and dedication.

A special word of thanks and appreciation must go to Ita Mangan, for her invaluable leadership as Chairperson of the Age & Opportunity Board over the past nine years, until June 2023. Ita's dedication has been instrumental in paving the way for numerous impactful initiatives benefiting older people. We are profoundly grateful to Ita for her unwavering commitment and her remarkable contributions to enhance the lives of older people across our community.

Thanks also to our CEO, along with our dedicated team of employees, volunteers and extended support network. Their invaluable contributions have been key in ensuring Age & Opportunity remains responsive and resilient. Together, we uphold the collective effort of enabling the best possible quality for us all as we age, and confronting ageism in its various manifestations—an investment that enriches both our own futures and those of generations to come.

Josephine Feehily
Chairperson, Age & Opportunity

CEO's Statement



I am delighted to provide an overview of Age & Opportunity's endeavours and accomplishments throughout the year 2023. I am so pleased to share the highlights of our efforts and the impact they have made to the communities and organisations we work with.

As we transitioned out of a period when Covid-19 was central to our lives, Age & Opportunity enthusiastically reintroduced in-person activities. We remained cognisant of the significant impact the pandemic had on older individuals, spanning physical, mental and emotional well-being, and endeavoured to address these challenges proactively.

We recognise that older people do not form a homogenous group – we are all different, we are all ageing differently and there isn't a one size fits all approach to achieving the best possible quality of life. This meant that across our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes, we adapted and tailored our initiatives to the different needs and wants of the older people we work with. We placed significant focus on supporting and empowering older people to continue to engage, or to re-engage, in our communities.

Throughout 2023, our initiatives witnessed a significant expansion in connecting with older individuals nationwide. Our efforts extended across every corner of the country, embracing diverse demographics from rural and urban landscapes, spanning various socio-economic strata. We expanded our reach to individuals with diverse experiences of social exclusion, loneliness, and isolation. Our focus remained steadfast on engaging those traditionally harder to reach, including residents of care facilities, family caregivers, male counterparts, members of the traveller community, migrants, older people with intellectual disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ older people.

Collaborative ventures with new partners further enriched our organisational insight. Central to our approach was the continuation of a hybrid model, seamlessly blending online, telephone and in-person delivery methods, fostering heightened levels of engagement.

In 2023, our Person and Public Involvement (PPI) group, formed in 2021, continued to play a crucial role in helping us build meaningful partnerships with older people and boosting our ability to conduct research activities. This group consists of older people who bring valuable firsthand experience to our research and evaluation work, as well as collaborative projects with other organisations.

I would like to thank my exceptional colleagues for their commitment and passion to ensuring that we continue to broaden our reach so that we can ensure that more older people stay connected, active and creative, whatever our age and wherever we call home.

I would also like to thank our funders, in particular the HSE, Sport Ireland, the Arts Council of Ireland, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, and the Community Foundation of Ireland for their continued commitment, without which our work would be impossible.

I would like to thank the Board of Trustees of Age & Opportunity for their unwavering commitment, strategic leadership, expertise, advice, support and guidance, and also our Finance, Governance, HR, Quality, Safety and Nominations Committee, our Audit and Risk Committee and our four organisational Advisory Groups for their commitment and expertise.

Finally, thank you to all of our programme participants the length and breadth of the country who continue to enable us to push the boundaries in exploring diverse models for ageing. Throughout 2023, our participants have consistently demonstrated remarkable resilience, leadership, determination, humour, and innovative thinking, enriching every facet of our efforts to enable the best possible quality of life for us all as we age.

Karen Horgan
CEO, Age & Opportunity

Strategic Plan

2021 – 2024

Our Vision

An Ireland where all older people can be more active, more visible, more creative, more connected, more confident, more often.

Our Mission

Our mission is to achieve the best possible quality of life for us all as we age.

Our Values

Our values are centred around ensuring that the views, opinions and experiences of **Older People** inform all that we do. We seek to promote Equality and Inclusivity. We aim to be **Brave, Pioneering and Inspiring** and we strive for **Excellence** in everything we do.

What We Do

Age & Opportunity is the national organisation that provides a range of opportunities for older people who want to get more involved in arts and culture, sport and physical activity, civic engagement and personal development.

One of our key priorities is to truly understand what ageing in Ireland means for people today by increasing the dialogue we have with them – conducting regular research through focus groups and workshops and by generating more opportunities for their feedback across all of our programmes.

We work with local communities and organisations across the country to run a range of programmes and activities in three key areas:

Our **Active Programme** is designed to get us more active and participating in recreational sport and physical activity.

Our **Arts Programme** provides opportunities for us to engage more in arts and cultural events and initiatives.

Our **Engage Programme** offers a range of workshops and learning initiatives for our own personal development as well as opportunities for us to play an active role in our community.

Engage Programme, Changing Gears course in Cork



Our Strategic Themes

Our Strategic Plan 2021-2024 enhances our strong research orientation to ensure that when designing, developing, and delivering our programmes, we are meeting the needs of participants. The rich data that we have garnered informs programme design while also providing confidence to our funders. The pandemic required a shift to new methods of programme delivery, and much has been learned through this process. Throughout 2023, a continued mix of online, telephone and in-person engagement allowed an extension of our reach to new communities and help ensure that fewer older people are left behind.

Throughout the lifetime of our Strategic Plan 2021-2024, the focus is on achieving ambitious goals in four areas to help society make the most of the social and economic opportunities presented by people living longer. We continue to measure and track progress on these aims to be sure that our programmes, and the funding which supports them, are making a real difference. In keeping with ambitions set out in the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), by 2030 the aim is for more people in later life to be in good health, physically active, to have social connections and to continue to feel that our lives are meaningful and purposeful.

One

Enhancing the ageing experience
Strategic objectives

- Develop and deliver programmes which promote community development and enhance the ageing experience.
- Challenge ageism and negative stereotypes of ageing.
- Conduct and collaborate on research with programme participants and older people and apply findings gathered through consultation and programme delivery.

Two

Influencing public policy
Strategic objectives

- Strengthen engagement and communication with politicians and national level policymakers.
- Shape informed, compelling and targeted goals for relevant policy and decision makers.
- Create opportunities for older people to have their voices heard by relevant policy and decision makers.

Three

Working with partners
Strategic objectives

- Engage strategically with partners, programme participants and older people to advance our stated vision and mission in a sustainable and effective way.
- Ensure stronger collaboration across our three programme areas.

Four

Delivering value for our funders and programme participants
Strategic objectives

- Promote an innovative and learning working environment that motivates, challenges and develops the organisation.
- Facilitate the continued development of staff and optimise the effective deployment of available resources.

Our Year in Numbers

Programme	Number of initiatives	Number of events / sessions across initiatives	Number of engagements*
Active	23	369	95,216
Arts	201	478	15,102
Engage	43	131	911
Total	267	978	111,229

*Engagement refers to peoples’ encounters with or experiences of Age & Opportunity initiatives. There is a range of ways this can happen - for example, participating in a course or workshop over a number of weeks, attending an arts event, taking part in a physical activity initiative led by a PAL, being funded by our Active National Grant Scheme or receiving resources from us. It does not include the significant reach of our digital media platforms.

Attendees at Bealtaine Gathering event, 2023



Age & Opportunity

active

**What we want
to see for older
people**

An Ireland where all older people are more active; more visible; more creative; more connected; more confident; more often.

Age & Opportunity's Active Programme is the national sport and physical activity programme for older people funded by Sport Ireland and the HSE. The programme is designed to get us more active, providing opportunities for us to take part in recreational sport and physical activity.

Why We Run Our Active Programme

Physical inactivity is recognised as one of the leading risk factors for overweight, obesity, non-communicable diseases and chronic conditions. The national guidelines tell us that older people should be active for 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity activity with a focus on aerobic activity, muscle strengthening and balance. Science has proven that staying active keeps our body younger and our mind happier, no matter what it says on our birth cert.

Since 2001, our Active Programme has been getting more older people more active more often. We are funded by Sport Ireland as part of its commitment to increase participation in physical activity and recreational sport among older people. The objectives of our Active Programme are closely aligned with Sport Ireland's strategy, as well as the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025, the National Physical Activity Plan and Healthy Ireland.



Final day of PALs training for our new Kerry group

Physical Activity Leaders (PALs)

Physical Activity Leaders (PALs) is an education and peer leadership initiative that trains older people as physical activity leaders to lead recreational sport and physical activity initiatives with older people in their local communities. In 2023, we delivered 30 PALs workshops and 5 PALs Re-connect workshops across the country in counties Dublin, Louth, Galway, Longford, Clare and Kerry with 103 participants overall.

PALs Re-Engagement

Following on from the work carried out by our PALs Re-engagement Stakeholder Group in 2022, the focus in 2023 was to establish stronger connections with our existing PALs network as well as building relationships with newly trained PALs. This is being accomplished following the creation of the new position of PALs Coordinator in the Active team. Her role includes reaching out to existing and new PALs to see how they can be supported going forward, organising follow

up workshops and finding out where their interests lie when it comes to physical activity. In addition, we are producing a quarterly newsletter to keep PALs informed and linked in with each other.

People with intellectual disability Physical Activity Leaders (PPALs)

People with intellectual disability Physical Activity Leaders (PPALs) enables people with intellectual disability to become physical activity leaders. This initiative was developed in conjunction with TCD in 2018. At the end of 2023 there were 37 PPALs trained to date a series of workshops is planned for 2024.

CarePALs

CarePALs are Physical Activity Leaders (PALs) who have been trained to lead physical activities specifically in day and residential care settings. Our CarePALs initiative, like the National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland and the National Positive Ageing Strategy, is focused on keeping older people as healthy

as possible for as long as possible. CarePALs is a two-day course, adapted from the PALs workshops, which empowers staff in day and residential care settings to lead suitable physical activities with older people who live in or visit their settings. It is based on our original PALs leadership model and means that physical activity sessions can be delivered by staff and included as part of the daily or weekly routine, without cost to the care setting.

In 2023 we delivered CarePALs training to a total of 225 care staff. Since we began delivering CarePALs in 2016, we have trained 1,560 CarePALs around the country.

Active National Grant Scheme

Since 2001, our Active National Grant Scheme has been providing funding to groups and organisations to help them engage older participants and peers in more physical activities and sport, by purchasing equipment and/or encouraging further participation through programmes and activities. Local Sports Partnerships, HSE Coordinators and other local agencies work closely with the groups when they are applying for funding, giving assistance and advice to applicants.

In 2023, we rolled out our Active National Grant Scheme in February and had 1,136 applicants, of which 909 were successful. We had a marked rise in applications from various sports clubs who worked on many new initiatives and innovative ideas to attract their older club members, and those in the community, back to their sports. We issued €317,000 in total under the Scheme in 2023 and we estimate the reach of our Grant Scheme to be 32,000 older people across Ireland.

Go for Life Games

In 2023 more and more groups have been returning to the Go for Life Games activities within their local sports partnerships and other groups, and we will be hosting our National Go for Life Games event again in June 2024.

Walking Football Initiative

Our Walking Football initiative has grown from strength to strength since the pilot was held back in 2022. This has proven very successful in reaching older men in particular, to encourage them to become more active and involved in group activity and sport. We have partnered with the Football Social Responsibility Officers within the FAI and completed an agreed delivery of the walking football initiative to 7 of their League of Ireland clubs around the country.

We also worked with various Men's Sheds around the country to deliver Walking Football to some of their members. In total 114 men took part in this initiative in 2023.

FitLine

FitLine is a nationwide telephone mentoring service that supports people aged 50 and above to be more physically active through fortnightly phone calls from a dedicated mentor. It is targeted at older persons who are not physically active and those who are not members of a group that might be served by the PALs and our National Grant Scheme. It reflects both our and Sport Ireland's strategic aims to target interventions at hard-to-reach groups and it directly responds to the 2008 Strategy to Prevent Falls and Fractures in Ireland's Ageing Population.

Throughout 2023, FitLine continued to grow. The age demographic of participants ranges from 50s to 90s, and 22% of participants are male, which illustrates an increase in

male participation as per our ambition. We publicise FitLine in local newspapers, through radio interviews and libraries and get many older people contacting us directly because of this.

We also reach out to organisations and professionals who have contact with older people and can refer people to FitLine. Community Connectors are an example of an organisation referring individuals to FitLine. They work with older people aged 65+ who have been referred from a health setting, often the Accident and Emergency Department.

In 2023 we had 134 participants signed up and 21 volunteer mentors who all carried out their role remotely. The number of phone calls made by FitLine Mentors to participants in 2023 was 1,387.

Online Activities

Our Active Programme online physical activity videos continue through our YouTube and social media channels and were viewed 50,649 times in 2023.

Offline Resources

Our Active programme continued to provide various resources directly for older people including our 'Active DVD' and our fact sheets teaching balance, strength and posture, and encouraging people to remain active. Our 'Steady Sevens' booklet is still popular and offers practical and simple movements which help with mobility and preventing falls.

All of these resources are sent to older people when requested through our own communication channels, and also through our partners and local community support groups.

Working in partnership

In the National Sports Policy 2018-2027, the Government recognises that policy cannot be implemented in isolation and urges all agencies to work together to increase participation in sport and recreational sport to enhance the physical wellbeing for all.

Much of our work runs in partnership with the Local Sports Partnerships that are a central point within each county for sport and physical activity. All of the initiatives within our Active programme are enhanced and reach a wider audience because of the close relationships we have developed over the years with these organisations.

We continue to engage with other organisations in developing new ideas to help support older people to stay active and engaged. In 2023 we continued to work with FAI League of Ireland clubs and the Men's Sheds groups to expand our Walking Football initiative, and we also collaborated with Brothers of Charity in relation to our PPALs training for 2024.

We worked with Dun Laoghaire Sports Partnership on a 'Sofa to Saddle' initiative to encourage more older adults to return to or start cycling in their area. There were ten participants over five sessions.

European Week of Sport (EWOS)

This event takes place each September and encourages everyone across Europe to become more active and involved in sport. Each year we place a strong emphasis on engaging with the National Governing Bodies for Sport and with local activity providers as part of the week's #BEACTIVE campaign.

Our contribution to EWOS 2023, which took place from 23rd to 30th September, was to attend the Sport Ireland #BEACTIVE Festival

to promote physical activity options for older adults. We also collaborated with Cycling Ireland’s Community Bike Ride’s initiative to organise greenway cycles for older adults in Wicklow and Waterford. Additionally, we re-established our partnership with Swim Ireland to welcome 15 participants to Clontarf baths for a dip and dance event. The total number of participants in our 2023 European Week of Sport events was 74.

Dance and Dip event at the Clontarf Baths for the European Week of Sport 2023



Active Programme Our Year in Numbers

Activity / event / workshop	Number of initiatives	Number of Events / Sessions across Initiatives	Number of engagements
Physical Activity Leader (PALs) Workshops	2	35	103
Estimated reach of PALs to their groups			1,030
Walking Football	7	5	114
Sofa to Saddle	1	5	10
Physical Activity Talks	4	5	147
Training of Volunteers and Mentors	2	3	20
CarePALs			
CarePALs Workshops (new CarePALs)	1	30	225
CarePALs Survey (existing CarePALs)	1	1	1,240
Resources			
No. of Active DVDs sent out			314
No. of Fact Sheets posted out			126
No. of Steady Sevens posted out			85
Let’s Dance Resource			91
European Week of Sport	1	18	74
FitLine	1		
FitLine Mentors			21
FitLine Participants			134
FitLine Posters circulated			6,310
FitLine - number of phone calls			1,387
Active National Grant Scheme	1		
Total number of applications (of which 909 were successful)	1	1	1,136
Estimated reach of Active National Grant Scheme			32,000
Online Physical Activity Videos	1	277*	50,649
TOTAL Active Programme	23	369	95,216

*We produced 277 physical activity videos since 2020; these had 50,649 views in 2023

Showcasing CarePALs

CarePALs are Physical Activity Leaders (PALs) who have been trained to lead physical activities specifically in day and residential care settings. The CarePALs initiative has been designed to enable care staff to deliver physical activity sessions, which can be included as part of the daily or weekly routines, without additional costs to the care service.

The workshops offer a number of different benefits to participants such as an increased awareness of the social, psychological and health benefits of physical activity for older people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to lead Health Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) sessions for older people with varied levels of ability on a regular basis and the chance to improve health and service for people living in care settings.

In 2023, we organised 30 CarePALs workshops, training new CarePALs in Cavan, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Leitrim and Limerick.

A total of 225 CarePALs were trained across Ireland over the course of the year.



Tralee CarePALs completing training in 2023

Testimonials

"I did some training with Age & Opportunity's CarePALs initiative, and it was invaluable. They taught me a variety of different techniques and various different things that you could do so that exercise becomes fun and is incorporated in. The exercises we do, helps people to retain independence and they do feel the benefits and their mood improves."

Sinead Almole (CarePAL), Lead Activities Coordinator, Curam Care Home, Dundalk

"I am a CarePAL since 2016 so it's been fantastic to take all the benefits and everything that we learnt in the training back and be able to show our older adults how to exercise. They really enjoy the activities, and our clients love to finish off every single exercise session with a dance routine."

Veronica Callanan (CarePAL), Acting Manager, Carrigoran Health and Wellness Day Centre, Co Clare

"The exercises just keep me feeling much better, make me sit up straighter, give me confidence. Then the other part of it is that you are doing it with other people."

Mary (Service User)



Showcasing FitLine

FitLine supports older people with a wide variety of needs to become more physically active, and many of our participants live with health conditions. The one-to-one telephone calls from an allocated mentor means that individuals can explore how they can move more in a way that best suits their needs and situation.

FitLine is an important initiative within Age & Opportunity as it is very accessible, and it reaches out to older people who may be marginalised and vulnerable. Many of our participants do not have digital skills for example, and so do not have access to online courses or activities. We also have participants who live in rural areas who don't have access to a regular public transport to access resources such as leisure centres.

Sending out the "Staying strong and active at home" leaflet is the starting point, and with encouragement from their mentor, participants can begin to incorporate exercises to promote balance and strength into their weekly routine.

Some participants also join local groups/activities because of information shared by FitLine and have the added benefit of being more socially connected.



Feedback from participants:

"It's very nice that someone calls. It does encourage me to do more."

"It's going well. He says all the right things. He's very good and interested. By working with him (my mentor), it gives me more incentive."

"The calls do encourage me if I'm inclined to get lazy. It encourages me because I want to be ready to tell her (my mentor) a whole lot of things that I've done."



Age & Opportunity **arts**

**What we want
to see for older
people:**



An Ireland where all older people are more active; more visible; more creative; more connected; more confident, more often.

Through our Arts programme, we support the meaningful participation and representation of all older people in the arts in Ireland through celebrating the arts and creativity as we age. We also aim to underline the importance of the arts to positive ageing, showcasing the diversity of ageing and to influence policy and practice in the area.

The programme comprises a range of initiatives and events, the biggest of which is the annual, month-long Bealtaine Festival, which takes place in May throughout local communities all around Ireland. We also deliver a comprehensive development and resource programme designed to support the arts and ageing/creative ageing sector in Ireland.

We work through resourcing artists, arts participants (and audiences) and arts organisations to engage with us and raise the standard, knowledgebase, and visibility of the arts and ageing sector in Ireland.

Bealtaine Festival

Established in 1995, Bealtaine Festival is the world's first national celebration of creativity in older age and Ireland's largest co-operative festival. The festival takes place each May for the entire month. Through Bealtaine, we bring together older people and artists from all over Ireland and across generations to participate in arts and creative activities.

The festival has also been an inspiration for international festivals including Luminate in Scotland, Gwanwyn in Wales, The Age of Creativity in England and ARMAS in Finland.

In 2023, most of our initiatives were devised and run via a hybrid of online and in-person formats, with the majority of Bealtaine events delivered in person.

The festival comprised of 452 events (71 of which were in house and 381 were part of the national festival) arising from 181 initiatives and 12,340 total engagements. There were 120 registered Bealtaine organisers and another 36 nursing homes that hadn't registered.

Why We Run Our Arts Programme

Ireland is committed to upholding the cultural rights of every citizen to access and express their own culture as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. As such, our Arts Programme primarily aims to provide more opportunities for older people to engage with the arts and to resource the arts sector to support that engagement.

We also wish to make sure older people are represented in the arts in Ireland and to demonstrate and celebrate how our creative potential can improve with age.

In addition, creativity is a key factor in how we adapt to ageing and there is a significant body of research demonstrating the health and wellbeing benefits for older people who engage with the arts and creative activities. The evidence suggests that the arts and creativity specifically strengthen self-confidence and morale in later life, contributes to physical and cognitive health and enriches relationships through greater social connectivity.

Bealtaine Festival aims:

- Nurturing the greater participation and representation of older people in the arts.
- Celebrating older artists and highlighting the creativity and potential of older people.
- Platforming the diversity of older age.
- Supporting organisations to deliver their own events.
- Nurturing solidarity between generations.

Bealtaine Festival objectives:

- Creating an inclusive and welcoming Festival in a wide variety of settings and locations with a wide variety of events.
- Challenging expectations of a festival celebrating older age.
- Nurturing the participation of organisations and communities around Ireland.
- Platforming and reflecting on key issues impacting on age through projects and discussions.

Bealtaine Festival

The festival programme in 2023 reflected the last year of the theme of in(ter)dependence and showcased hybrid events across Literature and Ideas, Music, Theatre, Dance, Visual Arts, Circus, Comedy and Film. The festival also featured a mixture of popular events (the Dawn and Dusk Choruses, Standing on the Shoulder of Giants, National Arts in Nursing Homes Day) as well as new genres of events (Comedy and Circus, Poetry Line, Bealtaine on Screen etc.). There was a balance of direct participation (workshops and discussions) and audience experiences (Bealtaine Tour).

Our collaboration with Dance Limerick to commission the intergenerational Golden Flood of Memory was extremely memorable, as was our continued work with the LGBTQIA+ community through commissioning Unshrinking Violets (showcasing the history of Lesbian Activism in Ireland), and the music and story event, Celebrate: The Songs that Shaped Us with musicians and raconteurs Tom Dunne, Jerry Fish and Alan Connor. We also explored the scope and shaping of masculinity in the discussions No Country for Old Men: Ageing, Men and Identity, as well as representations of care and intergenerational relationships.

We reached audiences in almost every county in Ireland, and our online events also meant we were able to reach those who could not attend in person.

Development work

Our Arts programme has been supporting the development of older arts audiences and participants since Cultural Companions was established in 2011.

In the last five years, with the development of supports and training for artists, as well as supports for arts organisations working with older people, our Arts programme has vastly expanded its work by developing new ways

to support creative ageing and the arts and ageing sector in Ireland. Specifically, we have developed initiatives that resource older arts participants, audiences and artists, as well as arts organisations who work with older people.

We ran a total of 19 development initiatives in 2023, reaching 2,757 people.

There are three strands to this work:

- artist development activities.
- audience development activities.
- arts practice/organisational development activities.

Artist Development Activities

This strand aims to support the careers of older professional artists and offer them more opportunities to develop and show work.

Arts in Care: Introduction to Arts Health and Older People (AHOP)

This is an initiative that was developed in 2021 and 2022 between Age & Opportunity, Realta (formerly Waterford Healing Arts Trust) and Uileann, West Cork Arts Centre. AHOP aims to provide a broad introduction outlining the essential components for emerging arts practitioners who wish to work with older people and/or in a health context. In 2023 the event consisted of a one day in person programme of presentations, case studies, workshops and networking.

Arts in Care: Artists Care Information Exchange (ACE)

The Artists Care Exchange is professional development initiative which was created as a result of artists requests for support in this area as well as recommendations contained in an evaluation report on our Artists in Residence in a Care Home initiative.

In 2023 ACE provided the opportunity for 8 professional artists from a variety of disciplines who work in care settings and/or with older people to exchange information, advice, and experiences in a group setting while learning from and being mentored by a variety of professionals in the social, medical, and arts fields.

Residencies

As part of our work to support older artists and artists working with older people, we partner with KCAT (Kilkenny Collective for Arts talent), Fingal County Council, Meath County Council, Louth County Council, and the Tyrone Guthrie Centre to deliver artist residencies, with resulting work often being presented at the annual Bealtaine Festival.

Visual Arts Professional Development KCAT Residency

The KCAT (Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent) partnership offers us the chance to directly engage with a dedicated and open-access life-long learning initiative and a programme, Engagement at KCAT, which forges partnerships between artists with

learning disabilities and professional artists of different backgrounds and skills. Engaging in arts initiatives that involve disadvantaged older people is a key objective for our Arts programme. The award recipient in 2023 was ceramicist Clare O'Reilly.

Visual Arts Professional Development Bealtaine, Fingal and Tyrone Guthrie Centre Residency

Developed in 2022. This residency offered two Fingal-based visual artists aged 50+ the opportunity to spend a month in the Tyrone Guthrie Centre exploring their work and practice. The residency was awarded to writer Colette Cullen and visual artist James English.

Artists Professional Development Age & Opportunity, Local Authority (Meath and Louth) and Tyrone Guthrie Centre Residency

This residency was developed by Age & Opportunity in partnership with local authorities in 2022 to offer artists of any artform from Louth and Meath who are aged 50+ the opportunity to spend a week at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre exploring their work and practice. In 2023 it was awarded to poet Susan Connolly and visual artist Fiona Kerbey.



Artists Care Exchange 2023, Dublin

Music

In 2023 we started working with the music resource organisation First Music Contact to discover the needs of older musicians and develop a response to this. The result was a webinar on funding opportunities for musicians aged 50+.

Artists Awards

Emerging Artist award

This award aims to encourage and support older artists who are newly emerging and may benefit from mentoring or other opportunities to further develop their practice. The award recipient in 2023 was visual artist Kate Nolan.

Professional Development award

This award aims to offer support for an artist to undertake professional development opportunities. The award recipient in 2023 was Maree Hensey, also a visual artist.

Creative Ageing Writing bursary

The bursary aims to afford time and space for an artist, arts worker writer to reflect on their practice as it relates to creative ageing – the learnings, insights but also challenges they have faced as they have got older or as they have worked with older people. In the coming years, we hope to contribute to this growing body of knowledge of creative ageing in Ireland as we continue to offer this award. The award recipient in 2023 was writer and former republican prisoner, Laurence McKeown.

Audience Development Activities

Cultural Companions

Cultural Companions brings people together who wish to go to arts events but have no one to go with. In 2023 we switched our focus from direct delivery of Cultural Companions in Dublin to the creation of a national network of Cultural Companions organisers. The

Cultural Companions Regional network aims to bring organisers together to network, share experiences and plan collaboratively. There are currently six branches of Cultural Companions nationally.

National Arts in Nursing Homes Day (NANHD)

NANHD was developed in partnership with Nursing Homes Ireland in 2021 to promote the active participation of care homes in a 'National Day of Arts' on the third Friday of the month of May (during our Bealtaine Festival). The event aims to create arts experiences for residents and visitors of day and care home settings, and to stimulate and encourage the homes to value and engage more with the arts. The National Arts in Nursing Homes Day 2023, delivered in partnership with Nursing Homes Ireland, attracted 56 nursing and care homes who devised events specifically for Bealtaine and approximately 2,815 residents and family members.

NANHD Awards

We awarded three pots of funding (1 x €1,000 and 2 x €500) via the National Arts in Nursing Homes Day Award to Mooncoin Residential Care Centre, Co Kilkenny, Borris Lodge Nursing Home, Co Carlow and Highfield Healthcare, Whitehall, Dublin.

Bealtaine Tour

This award aims to support interesting touring productions to become part of the Bealtaine Festival. In 2023 it was awarded to the street theatre performance 'The Grannies' by Bill and Fred Productions. The Grannies performed in Dublin and Galway.

Arts Event Listings

This year-round listings portal was launched in Autumn 2022 on Bealtaine.ie. It offers a searchable database of age friendly arts events that older people and their relatives, carers and social prescribers can see at a glance.



Organisation and Art Practice Development

The Gathering

The Gathering is an annual event which brings together our local and national partners for a day of networking, showcasing good practice, discussion and feedback on the festival. It provides us with an opportunity to hear about the challenges and needs of the organisers, showcases interesting and inspirational events from the previous Festival, and promotes the next Festival.

In 2023, The Gathering took place at the National Gallery of Ireland and focused on how to create more diversity in our work.

Arts & Creative Charter for Older People

Arts Charter launch and Pilot Project

The establishment of the National Arts & Creative Charter for Older People at the end of 2022/beginning of 2023, concluded a three-year process of discussion and consultation with and amongst older people and the arts sector in Ireland. The consultation related to

the expectations and needs of older people in relation to the arts.

The main aim of the Charter, which we believe is the first of its kind in the world, is to improve and extend the experiences of older people engaging with arts organisations in Ireland and to underline their value as active arts participants. We also want to support arts organisations so that they can deepen their relationship with older people. This enhanced engagement, we hope, will lead to increased confidence amongst older people when they visit and participate in the work of arts organisations.

A Charter pilot project involving six arts venues and aiming to test the feasibility and usefulness of the Charter from an organisational point of view, ran from the end of 2022 until the end of 2023. The pilot was evaluated and yielded a series of recommendations and observations in relation to a national Charter roll-out.

Training and Resources

Specific outcomes from the Charter Pilot evaluation underline the need for both on and offline arts and ageing training and practical information/resources for arts organisations wishing to increase their arts engagement with older people. The findings also point to the need for additional promotional materials for organisations, including a dedicated Charter website page, more printed materials and a Charter logo which organisations can use across their own promotional materials. The development of a training module will be integral to the sign up or registration process for the Charter. It is envisaged that this training will be part of the Arts, Disability Equality & Older People Training and Tool Kit due to an overlap in some older audiences and audiences with disabilities.

Arts, Disability Equality and Older People Training and Tool Kit

The Arts, Disability Equality and Older People Training initiative intends to ensure arts access and supports for older people and people with disabilities and to support the Arts Charter initiative through developing a training framework for arts organisations.

Resources

Alongside the newly launched Arts Events listing service, the Bealtaine Festival and Age & Opportunity websites contain many resources to support artists, audiences, and organisations. These include the Toolkit for Arts & Creativity in Care Settings (for care setting workers); 'Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: An Introduction to the Arts' video; commissioned publications such as 'I Love Museums But They Don't Love Me' (a source for arts organisers); and other resources for art making, organising events and working with older people.



Arts Programme Our Year in Numbers

Arts Programme Statistics - Full year 2023	Number of initiatives	Number of events / sessions across initiatives	Number of Engagements
Bealtaine May 2023			
Events curated by Age & Opportunity:			
Total Bealtaine Age & Opportunity curated events 2023	57	71	3,025
Events curated by National Partners			
National Arts in Nursing Homes Day: Mooncoin	1	1	60
National Arts in Nursing Homes Day: Borris Lodge	1	1	40
National Arts in Nursing Homes Day: Highfield Healthcare	1	1	50
National Arts in Nursing Homes Day	1	53	2,665
Bealtaine website registrations	120	325	6,500
Total events curated by national partners	124	381	9,315
TOTAL BEALTAINÉ 2023	181	452	12,340
Development initiatives			
NANHD information webinar	1	1	55
VAI Professional Development Event	1	1	15
AHOP	1	1	13
ACE	1	7	7
KCAT	1	1	1
Fingal Tyrone Guthrie Residency	1	1	2
Meath/Louth TG Residency	1	1	2
Emerging Artist Award	1	1	1
Professional Development Award	1	1	1
Creative Ageing Writing Bursary	1	1	1
First Music Contact Funding for Older Artists Webinar	1	1	48
The Gathering	1	1	29
Charter Pilot Organisations	1	1	6
Commission: "Where Do All The Old gays Go"	1	1	1,700

Arts Programme Statistics - Full year 2022	Number of initiatives	Number of events / sessions across initiatives	Number of Engagements
Resources			
Toolkit	1	1	400
Whats Next? Arts & Ageing Resources Publication	1	1	n/a
I Love Museums But They Don't Love Me	1	1	n/a
Creative Ageing Writing Bursary: A Life Fully Lived	1	1	n/a
Arts Events Listings	1	1	476
Total development initiatives	19	25	2,757
Total including family and staff attendances			2,757
Focus Groups			
Bealtaine 2024 Focus Groups	1	1	5
Total Focus Groups	1	1	5
Total development initiatives (INCL FOCUS GROUPS)	20	26	2,762
Overall Total	201	478	15,102

Showcasing The Golden Flood of Memory, Limerick

One of our key strategic aims for Bealtaine is to foster intergenerational connection and collaboration. This focus is not only designed to increase social solidarity and respect, but the potential for learning and inspiration to move both up and down the generational tree. In this spirit, in 2023, we worked with DL.Bridge (Dance Limerick) choreographer Katy Hewison to co-commission a dance project that involved three different generations working together for three months prior to the festival. The aim was for the project to culminate in a final performance during the festival.

The groups involved early years, children and youth groups as well as adult associations and an over 50s dance group called the High Kicks. The project was inspired by the festival theme at the time (In(ter)dependence), and collaboratively drew on ideas and inputs from each group member, resulting in a performance, The Golden Flood of Memory. The final event was effervescent and fun, but also sensitive and very moving, taking place on Saturday the 13th of May in the beautiful St. John's Church (home of Dance Limerick) to rapturous applause and excitement amongst the proud friends and families of the performers.

Bealtaine Festival
2023, Golden Flood
of Memory, Dance
Limerick, image by
Shane Vaughan



Bealtaine Festival 2023,
Golden Flood of Memory,
Dance Limerick, image by
Shane Vaughan

In their own words

"At the beginning of the project, I was looking at the theme and wondering where this will go. I was really excited to meet the people that we were going to work with. We've connected with a group of six-year-olds from a school. They've then connected with our over 50s High Kicks participants and with a Saturday group who we've just done a call out for any age to take part. We've had a grandparent and their grandchild take part in the process. We've had a mom and son coming along, and it's just been really beautiful to see the connections between the different ages and to have everyone's ideas and inputs."

Katy Hewison, Project Director

"This is my first performance here in Limerick. I have been here for a year and this Saturday, May 13th, it is my anniversary of living here and I have the opportunity to celebrate it by doing a performance. It is amazing for me because it feels like it is meant to be you know, like things happen for a reason."

Rodrigo, Saturday Group participant

"I become a grandmother now for the first time. It's making me look at childhood very differently. You know, this idea that we're beings, not doings. I was really struck by that in this work. You know, just being is lovely. I have discovered a sense of that here from this performance."

Older participant

Showcasing National Arts in Nursing Homes Day 2023

In 2023, three National Arts in Nursing Homes Day awards were made to care settings who applied to work with an artist on an innovative project, that would culminate as part of National Arts in Nursing Homes Day on May 19th.

One of the awardees was Mooncoin Residential Care Centre in Kilkenny, working with musician, Liam Merriman. Below is their report on the project and the impacts of the award.

'If These Hands Could Sing' - Mooncoin Residential Care Centre National Arts in Nursing Homes Awardee 2023

The Idea

We applied for funding from Age & Opportunity and NHI to create a documentary based on reminiscence and sensory techniques, the use of music in a residential setting and its benefits with dementia.

The premise of the project was built around the life story of the hands. Working with Liam Merriman, Artist, Singer Songwriter, and leading Healing Arts Professional, the idea was to complete 6 workshops, write a song based on conversations that occurred, teach it to the residents, perform it for fellow residents, film the performance and interviews, and then have a documentary release/ viewing party of which the residents' families were invited to.



Participant from "If These Hands Could Sing" outside Mooncoin Nursing Home, as part of National Arts in Nursing Homes Day, May 2023



Musician Liam Merriman with residents from Mooncoin Nursing Home, as part of the project 'If These Hands Could Sing' for National Arts in Nursing Homes Day, May 2023

The Workshops

The workshops were completed over a series of weeks. We looked at footage of hands, pictures, drew and painted our hands, whilst listening to familiar music, smelling familiar smells, and being supported by the kitchen, having familiar tea and treats which also provided space for conversation.

The Song

Liam penned the song based on conversations had with residents. We then taught this to the group and some of the other residents, outside the workshops as well.

The Viewing – on National Arts in Nursing Homes Day

We invited the residents who had taken part, their families, staff and other people in the community who play a role within our care centre including the local priest and the ladies who give communion and spiritual comfort.

Art created by residents was on display and we finished the event with tea, cake, and sandwiches in the Dining Room.

Conclusion

The project created a buzz within our centre, the residents really thrived with music, which is evident in the recording and meant so much to everybody. It also gave them the opportunity to continue to self-actualise, to continue to achieve, build self-esteem and to feel part of something special. People all across all ages were singing, having fun, enjoying the chats and each other's company, proud of their achievements.

Watch the documentary here:

[Bealtaine 2023: If these Hands Could Sing Documentary – Bealtaine Festival](#)

Age & Opportunity engage

**What we want
to see for older
people**

**An Ireland where all older people can be more active;
more visible; more creative; more connected;
more confident; more often.**

We understand that education and learning are not just for the young, and that opportunities for learning and personal development are key to our wellbeing throughout our lives. Our Engage Programme is a response to this and offers a range of learning initiatives, comprising courses and workshops focused on personal development and civic engagement for those older people.

In 2023 our Engage team worked on 43 different initiatives which led to 911 engagements with older people nationwide.

Why we run our Engage Programme:

None of us are born with all the skills required to carry us through our lives successfully; we are all a work in progress throughout our lives. We all age within an environment and a culture which will help or hinder our lives as older people at different points, and we will have to determine if, and how, we grow to embrace those opportunities or face those challenges.

We run our Engage Programme to support older people to achieve the best possible quality of life as we age and how we achieve this will be different for all of us. This may involve:

- Becoming more 'age aware' –recognising ageism within ourselves and others and identifying ways to counter it. Realising older age can be a time of real growth and transformation, that we become more diverse, not less diverse as we age and considering ways to age creatively.
- Learning how to cope with major life changes, building resilience and reframing transitions so that we can manage them better.
- Deciding we'd like support to age more confidently and learning we can do that by looking holistically at our spiritual, physical, psychological, social and emotional selves.
- Recognising that we've more time to become involved in our community and that we want to develop skills to help us do that and further our personal and collective agency.
- Or simply deciding that we want to become more digitally literate so that we can manage daily life more easily in an age of smartphones and tablets which constantly offer more functionality.

Online / In-person

In 2023, our Engage Programme initiatives were provided in-person with the exception of two of our Changing Gears courses delivered online and one Spirituality course.

We learned from our online delivery of courses during the pandemic that, although they did not work for everybody, with digital access posing a significant problem for some, they allowed us to reach participants nationwide who may otherwise not have had access, or the means to travel, to our in-person initiatives. Given this, in 2023 we decided to retain some online delivery of our Changing Gears and Spirituality initiatives.

Changing Gears – Promoting Resilience in Later Life

Changing Gears continues to be our most popular and successful initiative. It is typically delivered over five sessions and focuses on building resilience and managing significant life-change or transitions more creatively. This could involve change arising from a change in career, retirement, bereavement, dealing with ill health, or for some, simply having more time to focus on themselves and their own interests which presents a new opportunity.

It was originally developed through a peer design process that drew people from different educational backgrounds together and it still attracts participants from a wide variety of backgrounds. We also tailor the course to suit those with physical and/or intellectual disabilities and in those cases, normally keep the participant numbers smaller.

HSE funded deliveries

During February to March 2023, we delivered three Changing Gears courses, which were open to the public. These were run in Dublin and Clare and one course was facilitated online.

These were part of our commitment to deliver eleven HSE funded courses which commenced in the autumn of 2022 and was completed in March 2023.

Between April and November 2023, we delivered eleven more Changing Gears courses funded by the HSE which we ran nationwide. Seven of these were open to the public to enrol on and were held in Cork, Kilkenny, Sligo (two courses were organised due to demand) and Longford, while two courses were offered online.

At the request of community organisations, four courses were delivered to groups. These took place at: Robert Emmet Community Development Project, Dublin (one of our showcase items); St Canice's Neighbourhood Hall, Kilkenny, Cliona Park Apartments, Community Hall, Limerick (we worked with the Northside Family Resource Centre to deliver the course at Cliona Park) and Northside Partnership in Coolock, Dublin.

Courses were free to participants thanks to our HSE funding, and those offered directly to the public were promoted through a variety of channels. We received excellent uptake for the courses, and in both Sligo and Kilkenny we ran two courses, due to demand and were also able to generate waiting lists for in-person courses in certain counties to carry forward into 2024.

Two other Changing Gears were funded by National Lottery grants and were facilitated for Blessington District and Day Care, Wicklow (CHO 6) and Rehabcare, Dundalk (CHO 8).

In Blessington District and Day Care, in addition to the practical focus of the course which allowed participants to draw on personal experience and be part of an interactive process - joining in different group activities, it allowed them to forge links in the community,

access local resources and rebuild support networks after the isolation experienced during the pandemic.

The Changing Gears for Rehabcare, Dundalk facilitated a group of older adults with both physical and intellectual disabilities. One carer supported the group of 9 through the sessions.

A Changing Gears course was funded by Standard Life through Business in the Community, and this allowed us to bring a course to Avista, Dublin during March. Here we adapted our material and approach to facilitate 6 adults with both physical

and intellectual disabilities and they were supported by their carers who participated with them throughout the course.

We also delivered Changing Gears to Skerries and worked again with a group drawn from the vibrant Skerries Active Retirement Group who meet weekly.



Changing Gears in Cork



Changing Gears in Kilkenny



Ageing With Confidence

Ageing With Confidence is about maintaining and building self-confidence, physical health and wellbeing and typically comprises four or five sessions of 2 hours. Research has shown that preparing for changes in later life can greatly improve our experience of ageing. The course achieves this by offering participants the time and space to reflect on how they want to prepare for the later stages of life.

During September we were commissioned by Older Voices Kildare, a social inclusion initiative targeting isolated older people, to deliver the course at McAuley Place, Kildare.

Creative Exchanges

Creative Exchanges is a training course designed to provide activities coordinators and those with an arts background, working in care settings with the skills, ideas, competence and confidence needed to run meaningful creative activities, as required by the HIQA Standards for Residential Care Settings for Older People. It was initially known as 'Arts in

Care' and with support from the Community Foundation for Ireland, had originally been developed as a Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) accredited course (Level 6).

In January 2024, we delivered a new 2-day pilot version of the course at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin and also created a waiting list for a second Dublin course. We also began planning a course for HSE staff in Donegal for 2024.

Spirituality

Our Spirituality initiative, delivered over four to six sessions, invites participants to explore the meaning of spirituality from the perspective of their life experience. Using art, music, poetry, literature and story, it examines spirituality as the search for meaning; a way of living; a source of wonder; a sense of connection with something bigger than the self; and "something, for the sake of which, it is worthwhile to live on earth," (Nietzsche). It was first piloted in 2019 for Waterford Institute of Technology.

In 2023, we delivered one course online for 15 participants at Lumen Dominican Centre, Blackrock, Dublin and another course in-person for the Waterford Institute of Technology at Milltown Institute of Theology and Philosophy, Dublin.

Azure

The aim of the Azure initiative is to improve access for people with dementia-related conditions to Ireland's galleries and museums and to enhance their experience of these cultural institutions.

Azure originated through collaboration between Age & Opportunity, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, the Butler Gallery Kilkenny, and IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art) and we work with these partners to train museum and gallery staff with the skills needed to deliver Azure tours. The Azure network (those organisations offering Azure tours) has now expanded to numerous arts venues nationwide.

Azure tours give people living with dementia and their families/friends/carers the opportunity to visit museums and galleries together. While there, they can join others to share an experience facilitated by trained museum and gallery staff.

During the autumn of 2023 the Azure steering group met several times to plan a group training course for organisations (who possibly due to their size) do not have enough staff to warrant commissioning a training course for their organisation. This allows a range of organisations to have one or two staff members trained and to benefit from the interaction with other arts organisations working toward the same goal. This will take place in June/July 2024 at IMMA.

Smartphone/Tablet Training

During March 2022 our research project funded by the Comic Relief fund at the Community Foundation of Ireland concluded and the research report 'Research on Digital Access and Older Persons Throughout Ireland using Public Person Involvement (PPI) as a core principle' was published. The research was in collaboration with Age Friendly Ireland and its aim was to coordinate and complete a qualitative study on digital poverty and its effects on older persons throughout Ireland. Not surprisingly, the recommendations included the provision of training in digital skills for older people and in particular, 'increasing the use of smart phone functionality given the prevalence of device ownership versus the low prevalence of maximising the functionality of devices.'

Given this we were delighted to have some underspend left from the project to channel into providing eight Smartphone/Tablet training sessions led by our IT Smartphone skills trainer (Smartphone/Tablet training took place as part of the CyberSeniors Project in the Spring, see our Showcase items) at three locations: Donabate, Kildare and Dublin.

Three morning sessions were run for participants drawn from the thriving Active Age for All community organisation in Donabate. It has a membership of almost 250 adults aged between 55+ and 90 years. We ran 3 other morning sessions at McAuley Place, Kildare and two more sessions for the Retired Secondary Teachers Association at the Teachers' Club, Parnell Square, Dublin.



Smartphone Training, Donabate, Co. Dublin

IHREC funded research project

We worked on our IHREC funded research project which commenced in the autumn of 2022 and finished in September 2023. The project centred around an older person led study about older people's perceptions of themselves as rights holders and how their rights are comprised by ageism. The research gathered insights from 302 older people across Ireland and a report of the findings was published. A launch event was also held in IHREC in September and both the older people who led the study and Sinead Gibney, Ireland's Chief Commissioner for Human Rights and Equality spoke.

Collaboration with our Active Programme

Changing Gears

In September/October 2023 we delivered a Changing Gears course at Marino Institute of Education to a group of FitLine participants as part of the nationwide expansion of the FitLine initiative, run by our Active programme and funded by Sport Ireland.

Resilience for Walking Football for Men's Sheds

Our Engage team also continued with the Resilience input for the Active Programme's Walking Football initiative for Men's sheds which began in 2022. Participants had two sessions with our Engage team focusing on resilience, and five walking football sessions with walking football coaches. They were delivered to 6 Men's Sheds across Dublin and Wicklow.

Collaboration with our Arts Programme

Age Awareness for the Arts Charter

In the autumn of 2023, our Engage and Arts Programmes worked together to modify and plan tailored AgeWise workshops for arts organisations as part of the development of the Arts Charter.

AgeWise examines the drivers of ageism in society and their detrimental effect on attitudes to our own ageing and older people. It promotes a life-course model of ageing, exploring strategies to counter negative images and stereotypes in society, and discrimination on the grounds of age. The resulting sessions were entitled ‘Age Awareness’ and were

delivered to IMMA (Irish Museum of Modern Art), Dublin; Axis Art Centre and Theatre, Ballymun, Dublin and The Glucksman, Cork. Further sessions are planned for additional arts organisations in 2024.

Experience: An Introduction to Arts, Health and the Older Person

Our Engage Programme also collaborated, in the form of an AgeWise presentation, with our Arts Programme on Experience: An Introduction to Arts, Health and the Older Person.

This is a one-day seminar for arts practitioners led by the Arts Programme and Réalta (formerly Waterford Healing Arts Trust) and held at The Centre for Arts & Health at University Hospital Waterford.



Cyberseniors Project
Skerries Co Dublin

Cyberseniors Project,
Teachers' Club, Dublin



Engage Programme
Our Year in Numbers

Initiatives	Number of initiatives	Number of Events / Sessions across Initiatives	Number of engagements
Ageing with Confidence for Older Voices Kildare – Total	1	4	7
Age Awareness for the Arts Charter - Total	3	3	37
AgeWise	0	0	0
Azure	0	0	0
Arts, Health and the Older Person	1	1	13
Creative Exchanges	0	0	0
Changing Gears HSE Funding – Total 2022	3	14	52
Changing Gears HSE Funding – Total 2023	12	53	138
Changing Gears (Other) – Total	6	25	68
Cyberseniors, Smartphone Training - Ennis	1	2	21
Cyberseniors, Smartphone Training - Skerries	1	2	25
Cyberseniors, Smartphone Training - Dublin	1	1	34
Smartphone Training Comm, Foundation, Kildare	1	3	9
Smartphone Training Comm. Foundation, Co. Dublin	1	3	12
Smartphone Training Comm. Foundation, Dublin	1	2	11
Spirituality – Total	2	9	33
IHREC ‘Rights and Duty’ Project – Survey Reponse	1	1	302
IHREC ‘Rights and Duty’ - Learning Event, Dublin	1	1	35
Resilience Piece for Walking Football – Total	7	7	114
TOTAL Engage Programme	43	131	911

Showcasing

Changing Gears - The Robert Emmet Community Development Centre

The Robert Emmet Community Development Centre was the venue for Changing Gears in August 2023. This delivery renewed our link with the Centre, following the very successful delivery of Ageing with Confidence just before the outbreak of Covid-19 in March 2020.

Given its location in Dublin's South-West inner city (which, according to 2022 census data from the Central Statistics Office, has the fourth-largest share, of all the local electoral areas in the country, of residents not born in Ireland or the UK) the Centre offers a wide range of services, including an integration programme for migrants and refugees. Many of these services were singled out by the participants in Mapping My Resource Network, an important element of Changing Gears. They included an afterschool service providing hot meals and homework support to children between the age of 7 and 12; lifelong learning classes on pottery, painting, yoga, cooking, sewing, computers, local history; tenancy support and advocacy services for residents living in rented or local authority housing.



What appealed most to the group of 13 however (5 of whom had taken part in Ageing with Confidence) was the interactive and creative nature of the programme – using poetry, music, images and symbols - allowing participants space to reflect as well as chat, share, perform, sing, improvise (a number had been involved in the 'Our Liberties' Exhibition, developed in the Centre in 2020, using stories, photography and art). The importance of doing it together was a repeated refrain for them, a key resilience building-block, alongside taking pride in and responsibility for the local area.

Among the many memorable moments were a Palestinian cry to the newly wed, which Wafaa introduced to the group (and got them to enact); a spontaneous rendition of A Weila Weila Waila and a group karaoke of Harper Valley PTA – a reminder of the power of music and voice to create a sense of connection.



In our participant evaluations we asked what was the most valuable part of this course and why?

Connecting with others and sharing experiences together.

Participant, Robert Emmet Centre

Gathering together and friendship.

Participant, Robert Emmet Centre

'The most important words in your life' (exercise), really made me think.

Participant, Robert Emmet Centre

Showcasing CyberSeniors

In November 2020 we began work on the Erasmus+ European project, CyberSeniors, as the Irish partner. The lead partner was Cibervoluntarios, based in Spain and the other partner organisations were based in Austria, Cyprus and Romania.

The objective of the project was to produce and evaluate a multilingual online training platform to provide free educational training resources (in-person and online), in the use of smart phones and tablets, for users aged 55+ years. The resources were designed for individual use or group use via a tutor. Essentially the project's aim was to help older people with smartphones and tablets to get more from their devices and to broaden the range of tasks they use them for daily.

Part of the project involved running pilot Smartphone training sessions to evaluate the success of the training materials for older persons and over February, March and April we ran five training sessions for three groups.

Two sessions were run for members of the public at Clare County Council headquarters in Ennis, with the support of Karen Fennessy, Age Friendly Programme Manager for Clare. Two sessions were held at Skerries Harps GAA Club in Co. Dublin for a group from the Skerries Active Retired Association. One final session was held at the Teachers Club, Parnell Square, Dublin and attended by over 34 retired teachers.

Topics covered within the training included: An Introduction to Smartphones/Tablets and Safe Use (Cyber Security), Use for Leisure, Health and Communications, Managing Daily Tasks and Banking.

We also benefited hugely from the intergenerational support lent by Transition Year Students from Ennis Community College, Skerries Community College and St Dominic's College, Cabra, Dublin during the sessions. Their help meant that participants could have some individual help when needed during the sessions and nobody was left behind.

As we noted earlier regarding our research project on digital exclusion among older people, one of the recommendations of the project report, was to promote more adoption of Smartphone functionality among older people. Given this the training materials from, and the funding of pilot Smartphone/Tablet training sessions as part of the CyberSeniors project was very complimentary and allowed us to respond, in some part, to a growing need among older persons for digital literacy support and education.



CyberSeniors in Ennis

"The training and facilitators are so impressive. I'd love at least another morning to learn more. Brilliant, thank you to Johanna and Teresa (our facilitators) and the two young men (TY students, Ennis Community College) for their assistance.... I enjoyed the course immensely."

Ennis Participant

"It was very enjoyable and helped me very much to understand my phone better so as I can make my life easier."

Skerries Participant.

Corporate and Public Affairs

Policy, Research and Evaluation

What we want to measure, inform and influence for older people:

An Ireland where all older people can be more active, more visible, more creative, more connected, more confident, more often

Our Policy, Research and Evaluation work underpins and supports our Arts, Active and Engage programmes through:

- Configuring the development of robust evaluation models which allow us to measure and report on the impact of our programmes and the social return on investment that we are providing.
- Configuring the work of Age & Opportunity in research frameworks to highlight our effectiveness and our capacity to support public policy development.
- Increasing our sustainability and impact by making best use of the organisational experience, insight and evidence to influence how policy is created from international to local levels and how it is implemented in practice in older people's lives.

During 2023 we gathered and shared evidence and expertise from our programmes with key external stakeholders including elected representatives, Government Departments, statutory bodies, Research Performing Organisations, funders, and other NGOs, across a range of communication channels to further policy development and progression across our stated policy objectives. We also continued to conduct robust evaluations of our programmes to continuously improve delivery as well as demonstrate outcomes and impact. With the support of our Policy, Research and Evaluation Advisory Group the drafting of twelve Policy Position Papers was initiated. This work is continuing into 2024 and significantly increases our capacity to influence and support public policy development.

During this year we used evidence from our research and programme evaluation to advocate for increased awareness and government support for age friendly public spaces, digital equality, continued support for community groups, lifelong learning initiatives, meaningful activities in care and equal access to the arts. These topics were highlighted in our pre-budget submission and in submissions and presentations made to Joint Oireachtas Committees on the Development of Local and Community Arts and Inclusion in Sport and Physical Activity as well as our engagements with other stakeholders in formal participation, presentations and communications and informal conversations.

Following calls for the past few years in our pre-budget and other submissions for awareness raising activities about the impacts of ageism, we were invited this year to be part of the Advisory Group for an Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission led awareness raising campaign about ageism. This campaign builds on the #AllHuman #AllEqual narrative used in other IHREC led campaigns released in 2024.

In January 2023, along with our colleagues in the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, we launched the second edition of the 'Telling It Like It Is' series in Dail Eireann. This report revealed how there has been an implementation deficit in relation to many of Ireland's policy commitments relevant to ageing and older people. Throughout the year we continued the collaboration with our colleagues in the Alliance to develop an audit on policy

commitments in 17 priority areas relevant to positive ageing in Ireland. This snapshot report tracks and spotlights the progress (or lack of) made by Ireland in respect of its key pledges and policy commitments relevant to older people in Ireland and calls for strong leadership, energetic implementation and active monitoring to improve Government's performance in this regard.

Our Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) Group continued to be involved in our research and evaluation activities and collaborative research projects with other organisations and internally. Members of the group, along with our Policy, Research and Evaluation Manager attended the PPI Summer School in University of Limerick in June. The group were allocated three bursaries by the Summer School for attendance.

The launch of our IHREC funded research into the voices of older persons as rights holders.



During 2023 the group focused on a research project, funded by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC), examining older persons' perceptions of themselves as rights holders and how their rights are compromised by ageism. It sought to support compliance with the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty – the legal obligation of all public bodies in Ireland to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of their employees, customers, service users and everyone affected by their policies and plans. Our PPI group were involved at all stages of this research which was launched in IHREC on Friday the 29th of September (scheduled to coincide with International Day of Older Persons on Sunday the 1st of October). Members of the group, along with Sinead Gibney, Chief Commissioner for Equality and Human Rights, presented the research at this event.

Also, in September this focus on human rights informed our participation on a panel to launch a Rights based card game developed as part of Resistere – an EU Horizon2020 research project tackling Isolation and Exclusion led in Ireland by Technological University Dublin (TUD). Later that month, we attended the Global Conference on Ageing in Scotland in September where Claudia Mahler, Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons at the United Nations, was the keynote speaker.

Our Policy, Research and Evaluation Manager presented the Peer Research on Public Spaces research at the Irish Physical Activity Research Collaboration Conference in January and at the Sport Ireland Sports Development Conference in May. This research, along with our 2021 research into the Impact of Covid-19 on Groups and the 2022 Review of PALs informed a submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Sports Inclusion

which we also made in May. This followed a submission made in January to Oireachtas Joint Committee on the development of local and community arts and subsequent appearance of our Arts Programme Manager and Arts Programme Advisory Group Chair at a Committee hearing in February. This research, which highlights transport as a barrier to participation, also underlined our participation in an Equalities Impact Assessment with the National Transport Authority regarding the Dublin City Centre Transport Plan.

We continued to gather robust evidence relating to our initiatives throughout the year. Formative evaluations of proposed initiatives continue to help develop new ideas across all of our programmes and ongoing process evaluations ensure that our delivery remains relevant, efficient and effective. During 2023 we evaluated our Active Programme's Walking Football Initiative and began establishing a framework to evaluate the impact of Artists' participation in the Bealtaine Festival. We also collaborated on the development of the Institute of Public Health learning resources "Arts and Creativity - Lessons for Healthy Ageing" and "How to guide – Evaluation Methods for the Arts and Creativity Sector".

During 2023 we continued to raise organisational capacity in relation to ongoing evaluations including revision of our evaluation frameworks and the upskilling of staff to use logic models and online survey software. Also, during 2023 we had the addition of a Post-Doctoral Researcher to our team (seconded to the HSE) with expertise in data analytics for the HSE, improving our approach and competency in this area as a result.

Throughout the year we continued to display leadership and grow influence by participation on government department and other stakeholder consultation and implementation

groups as well as presentation at conferences and forums of our research findings and evaluations of our initiatives. We sought out and responded to many opportunities for awareness raising and ensuring greater visibility and consideration of older people. The unique reach enabled by our Programmes, the generous contributions of our Policy, Research and Evaluation Advisory Group members and investment in staff development continues to improve our understanding of emerging issues for the age sector and older persons.

During 2023 we took every opportunity to share this evidence and expertise through consultation and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders including government departments, academic institutions, NGOs, statutory bodies and older persons. Also, in this regard and along with consolidation of our physical library, work began on a Policy and Research section on the website which will make all Age & Opportunity publications accessible online.

Communications

Communications activity is core to the operation and continued existence of our organisation. We refreshed our Strategic Plan in 2021 and set our strategic objectives to the end of 2024, when we will develop our new Strategic Plan.

Our organisational communication underpins all four key strategic themes in our Strategic Plan (2021-2024) by:

- Building understanding and awareness of our work, to engage and grow support for our initiatives.
- Creating opportunities for older people to have their voices heard by relevant policy and decision makers.

- Engaging strategically with partners, programme participants and older people to advance our stated vision and mission in a sustainable and effective way.
- Shaping informed, compelling and targeted goals for relevant policy and decision makers.
- Developing and delivering programmes which promote community development and enhance the ageing experience.
- Celebrating and profiling diverse stories of ageing.

All these activities are critical to our engagement with and reporting to funders, partners and all of our stakeholders, which in turn increases the sustainability and continued existence of the organisation.

In 2023 the world began to emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the year we continued to build on our profile across print, broadcast and online media as the voice of positive ageing in Ireland. We had 474 media pieces throughout 2023, which is 70% more than 2022, with an audience reach measured as Opportunity To See (OTS) of 118,089,000, which represents an 80% increase on 2022 figures.

Our IHREC funded report launched in September, Rights and Duty, was one of the main PR highlights of the year. There was huge interest in Bealtaine before and throughout the month of May. Throughout the year there was consistent local press coverage of Age & Opportunity initiatives.

We grew the followers on Age & Opportunity social channels (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn) by between 3% and 28%, and we grew the Bealtaine Festival social channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) by between

2% and 18%. The homepage continued to be the most popular page each month of 2023. In January and February, the Age & Opportunity Active National Grant Scheme was the second most popular on the website. Our Engage programme website page, or one of its initiatives was regularly a top page and the hiring page also had a very high rate of visitors in 2023.

Improving our understanding of the needs and views of older people

The focus of our Strategic Plan 2021-2024 is on continuing to improve our understanding of the needs and views of older people and building our communication and feedback processes with them. Covid-19 was an unexpected occurrence that changed the lives of people worldwide, and which heavily influenced our work. As we emerge from the pandemic, we continue to find ways to reach and communicate with all older people.

Digital Communications

In 2023 we continued to develop our digital communications, raising issues concerning contemporary ageing and ensuring older people are visible and their voices heard in today’s crowded media environment.

We communicate with our stakeholders across many channels and our Age & Opportunity website is a growing area for those who want to find out more about us and access a programme that may benefit them or someone they know. As this technology changes we continually review our site, the content, visited pages and seek to improve and build on the information provided and the most user friendly and accessible way to present it.

We continue to monitor and view analytics on the Age & Opportunity website in order to see what is working and what content is most popular with our users. Our statistics for the

website from January to December 2023 are:

- Total number of users – 34,435 (23% less than 2022)
- Total number of page views – 112,376 (8% more than 2022)

The Bealtaine Festival website statistics:

- Total number of users – 30,160 (1% more than 2022)
- Total number of page views – 116,139 (0.8% more than 2022)

For our Arts programme we send a monthly e-zine to some 6,000 Mailchimp subscribers. It has a consistently high open rate, averaging 47.9% per e-zine.

A quarterly Age & Opportunity electronic newsletter was sent to a Mailchimp audience of 7,000 general subscribers. It yielded a 47% open rate.

PPI Group Limerick 2023



The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs

Age & Opportunity is a member of the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs, which represents the collective thinking of seven significant NGOs working in the age sector in Ireland.

Separately, each of the Alliance member organisations provide vital programmes and services for older people; support older people to contribute to and participate in community life; and advocate for better policies, services and supports for older people at national and local level. Together, Alliance members collaborate to combat ageism and to seek action on the specific issues that make older people’s lives more difficult than they need to be.

2023 was another busy year for the Alliance. Highlights include:

- Development of a position paper for the Minister for Mental Health and Older People that sets out the need to refresh and ‘Covid-19 proof’ the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).
- Development of an Annual Statement calling for a renewed focus on regaining the positive role of older people, post-pandemic, in Irish society.
- Research and development of a second edition of the Alliance’s ‘Telling It Like It Is’ series. This document:
 - Exposed the ingrained nature and impact of ageism in Ireland in which older people are typically portrayed as frail and vulnerable.

- Revealed the implementation deficit of many of Ireland’s policy commitments relevant to ageing and older people.
- Identified practical and evidence-based steps to combat the ageism negatively affecting every section in society.

The Alliance also committed itself to a three-year Strategic Plan that will guide its work and focus from 2023-2025. The plan commits to leading a campaign for the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People in Ireland.

The Alliance believes that such an independent authority will have a key role to play in reviewing and overseeing the adequacy of legislation, policy formation and future planning with regard to an ageing population. An Independent Commissioner would, the Alliance believes, be best placed to hold Government and public bodies to account on the pledges that have been made in respect of positive ageing. The Alliance believes that an Independent Commissioner can provide the leadership required to enhance the capacity and capability of public services to address the challenges, and indeed opportunities, associated with population ageing.

The Alliance members are Age & Opportunity, Active Retirement Ireland, ALONE, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, Irish Hospice Foundation, The Irish Senior Citizens’ Parliament and Third Age.

Governance and Structure

Governance

Age & Opportunity is governed by a Constitution.

Our Board and CEO are committed to maintaining the highest standards of corporate governance. Our Trustees, all of whom are non-executive and independent, are drawn from diverse backgrounds and bring a broad range of experience and skills to the Board’s deliberations.

There are clear distinctions between the roles of the Board and the executive management team. The Board is responsible for providing leadership, setting overall strategy and monitoring budgets and outcomes of the organisation. The Board is also responsible for identifying the risks affecting the organisation and ensuring procedures are in place to reduce and manage the major risks identified. The Board is committed to working effectively, behaving with integrity and being transparent and accountable. The Trustees bring to the Board their significant policy, strategy, financial, governance, business and decision-making skills gained in their respective fields together with a broad range of experience and views. There were some changes to the Board with two Trustees leaving, including our long-standing Trustee and outgoing Chair, Ita Mangan, and three new Trustees joining our Board.

The day-to-day management is delegated to the CEO. The CEO leads the Senior Management Team in implementing our

vision, mission and strategic plan, and prepares and presents policies, business plans and annual financial budgets and management accounts for consideration and approval to the Board. There is a Schedule of Matters Reserved for the Board for decision.

We held five Board Meetings in 2023. We also held five meetings of our Finance, Governance, HR, Quality, Safety and Nominations Committee and 4 meetings of our Audit and Risk Committee.

We are fully compliant with the Charities Regulatory Authority’s Governance Code and the Governance Code for Sport as a Type C organisation, and our various funders’ governance and compliance requirements.

This was evidenced during 2023, as we continued with our three-year Internal Audit plan, with a further four reports being completed during the year, and one near completion by the end of the year.

A range of significant risks facing Age & Opportunity have been identified. These risks are detailed in our formal Risk Register and Risk Management Plan. We continued, at our Audit and Risk Committee meetings, Finance, Governance, HR, Quality, Safety and Nominations Committee meetings and Board meetings throughout 2023 to evaluate these risks and continue to ensure that all actions and initiatives undertaken manage these challenges proactively, with risk mitigation actions being identified and implemented without delay, so that our mandate to our participants can be pursued and effectively delivered.

Board, Committees and Advisory Groups

Board

Our Trustees throughout 2023 were:

- Josephine Feehily (Chair, from June 2023)
- Aileen Healy (from February 2023)
- Mary Kelly
- John Kerrane
- Michael Laffey (from February 2023)
- Ita Mangan (Chair, until June 2023)
- Catherine Marshall
- Tony McCarthy
- Helen O'Donoghue (to February 2023)
- Úna Redmond (from February 2023)
- Peter Smyth

Board Committees

Finance, Governance, HR, Quality, Safety and Nominations Committee

The primary responsibility of this Committee is to assist the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities for ensuring proper accounting and corporate governance procedures in the organisation. The Committee carries out its responsibilities mainly through regular contact with the CEO, the Financial Controller and with other members of the Senior Management Team. The Committee may investigate any matter falling within its terms of reference, calling on whatever resources (including outside professional advice) and information necessary to do so.

Its members are:

- Mary Kelly (Chair)
- Aileen Healy (from May 2023)
- Josephine Feehily (from June 2023)
- Ita Mangan (to June 2023)

Audit and Risk Committee

The primary responsibility of this Committee is to assist the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities for ensuring proper accounting, financial reporting, proper internal controls and procedures in the organisation. The Committee carries out its responsibilities mainly through regular contact with the CEO and Financial Controller and the external auditors.

The Committee is responsible for recommending the appointment of auditors for approval by the Board.

Its members are:

- Catherine Rogers (Independent Chair to November 2023)
- Katelynne Pilcic (Independent Chair from November 2023)
- Ita Mangan (to June 2023)
- Tony McCarthy
- Michael Laffey (from April 2023)

Board meetings

Trustee	27/02/2023	19/04/2023	19/06/2023	25/09/2023	04/12/2023	Attendance
Ita Mangan (Chair to June)	✓	X	✓	n/a	n/a	2/3
Josephine Feehily (Chair from June)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5/5
Aileen Healy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5/5
Mary Kelly	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5/5
John Kerrane	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	4/5
Michael Laffey	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	4/5
Catherine Marshall	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	4/5
Tony McCarthy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5/5
Helen O'Donoghue	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1/5
Peter Smyth	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	4/5
Úna Redmond	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	4/5

Finance, Governance, HR, Quality, Safety and Nominations Committee Meetings

Trustee:	13/02/2023	03/04/2023	29/05/2023	11/09/2023	20/11/2023	Attendance
Ita Mangan	✓	✓	✓	n/a	n/a	3/5
Mary Kelly (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5/5
Josephine Feehily	n/a	n/a	n/a	X	✓	1/2
Aileen Healy	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	✓	3/3

Audit and Risk Committee Meetings

Member:	24/04/2023	18/09/2023	30/11/2023	19/12/2023	Attendance
Ita Mangan	X	n/a	n/a	n/a	0/1
Catherine Rogers (Chair to November)	✓	✓	✓	n/a	3/3
Katelynne Pilcic (Chair from November)	✓	✓	✓	✓	4/4
Michael Laffey	✓	✓	✓	✓	4/4
Tony McCarthy	✓	✓	✓	✓	4/4

Organisational Advisory Groups

We have four organisational Advisory Groups. They are comprised of a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in encouraging the active participation of older people in sport and physical activity, arts, civic engagement, and policy, research and evaluation. Their role is to provide expert advice on our strategic themes and objectives, guidance on innovative approaches to encouraging participation of older people in our programme areas. They also provide guidance on innovative approaches to encouraging participation of marginalised older people in our programme areas. In addition, they provide guidance and support in the further development of partnerships, guidance and advice regarding European funded projects, funding and sustainability generally and guidance on action based research opportunities and health and wellbeing.

Active Programme Advisory Group

- Robert Grier (Chair)
- Tony McCarthy, Age & Opportunity Trustee, Physical Activity Leader (PAL)
- John Kerrane, Age & Opportunity Trustee, Former Lecturer in the School of Health and Human Performance, DCU
- Oisín Foley, Partnerships Manager, Sport Ireland
- Professor Liam Glynn, Professor of General Practice, Graduate Entry Medical School, University of Limerick
- Marian Mooney, Active Programme Physical Activity Leader (PAL), Bunbrosna/Multyfarnham/Ballinafid ARA

Arts Programme Advisory Group

- Catherine Marshall, (Chair) Age & Opportunity Trustee, Curator and Art Historian
- Damien McGlynn, Director, Create
- Helen O'Donoghue, Retired Senior Curator and Head of Education & Community Engagement & Learning Programmes, Irish Museum of Modern Art
- Brendan Teeling, Deputy City Librarian, Dublin City Council
- Dominic Thorpe, Visual Artist

Engage Programme Advisory Group

- Colm Kilgannon, Lecturer and Strand Leader, ALBA Programme, DCU
- Janet Gaynor, Co-Chair of Donegal OPC, trainer and facilitator, retired from the HSE

Policy, Research and Evaluation Advisory Group

- Fionnuala Hanrahan, (Chair) and Retired County Librarian
- Dr Austin Warters, Research Lead, HSE CHO 9
- Dr Jane O'Kelly, Chair BSc in Education and Training, Assistant Professor School of Policy and Practice Institute of Education, DCU St. Patrick's Campus
- Peter Smyth, Age & Opportunity Trustee and former Director of Research, Sport Ireland
- Professor Kieran Walsh, Professor of Ageing and Public Policy and Director of the Irish Centre for Social Gerontology, NUIG

Staff Members:

- Karen Horgan, CEO

Operations and Programme Support:

- Bryony May, Operations and Governance Manager (Deputy CEO) (from April 2023)
- Melissa Byrne, Communications Manager (returned October 2023)
- Iva Pocock, Communications Manager (October 2022 – October 2023)
- Anne Carroll, Communications Assistant
- Mary Harkin, Policy, Research and Evaluation Manager
- Margaret Roe, HR and Office Manager (retired October 2023)
- Ann Kehelly, HR Manager (from December 2023)
- Lasarine O'Carroll, Financial Controller
- Dariusz Hanusewicz, Salesforce Coordinator (from May 2023)
- Roisin McCarthy, Postdoctoral Researcher, seconded to the HSE (to January 2023)
- Aurelia Ciblis, Postdoctoral Researcher, seconded to the HSE (from August 2023)

Arts Programme team

- Dr Tara Byrne, Arts Programme Manager
- Bridget Deevy, Arts Programme Assistant Manager
- Eva Griffin, Arts Programme Administrator (January - May 2023)
- Isabel Loughran, Temporary Arts Programme Administrator (May – July 2023)
- Jessica Burton Restrict, Arts Programme Administrator (from July 2023)

Active Programme team

- Sue Guildea, Active Programme Manager
- Nicole Evans, Active Programme Assistant Manager (from June 2023)
- Paul Gallier, Active Programme Assistant Manager (to February 2023)
- Ciara Dawson, Active Programme Administrator (to May 2023)
- Philip Duffy, Active Programme Administrator (from July 2023)
- Meg Hegarty, Active Programme FitLine Coordinator (from May 2023)
- Mary Halpin, Active Programme FitLine Administrator (to July 2023)
- Cathy Ginty, Active Programme FitLine Administrator (from November 2023)
- Máire Murphy, Active Programme, PALs Coordinator (from July 2023)

Engage Programme Team

- Orla Byrne, Lead Engage Programme Manager
- Ciarán McKinney, Engage Programme Manager
- Brian Dooney, Engage Programme Training and Development Facilitator
- Fiona Holohan, Engage Programme Coordinator

2023

Our year in numbers



	Initiatives	Sessions	Engagements
Active 	 23	 369	 95,216
Arts 	 201	 478	 15,102
Engage 	 43	 131	 911
Total 	267 	978 	111,229



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