



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

**Age &
Opportunity**
Life is for
Living.

Inspiring and empowering older people to live healthy and fulfilling lives and influencing policy to ensure the active participation of older people in ways that benefit our community and wider society

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Our Mission

is to inspire and empower older people to live healthy and fulfilling lives and to influence policy to ensure the active participation of older people in ways that benefit our communities and wider society.

Our Vision

is of a world where, as we age, we have the right and the opportunity to realise our potential. We have the right to shape decisions that affect our lives and the life of our community.

Our Impact

In 2017 Age & Opportunity continued to lead the debate on the issues concerning contemporary ageing and older people.

Age & Opportunity is a national organisation, but one with powerful local impact. Thanks to our nationwide partners and volunteers, our programmes reach every county in Ireland. We strive to ensure that everyone 50-plus has access to our programmes and continue to seek out partners to help us increase our reach and impact. This report highlights key milestones in 2017 and the stories of the real people 50 + who are making their own difference to ageing in Ireland.

Chairperson's Statement

With so much to be proud of for 2017, on behalf of the board, I would like to congratulate our CEO and all of our employees, and the entire Age & Opportunity extended team and partners across Ireland for creating an Ireland where, as we age, we have the right and the opportunity to realise our potential, and one where we can shape decisions that affect our communities.

Although still relatively young by EU standards, the population of Ireland is ageing. The proportion of people 65 and over is growing rapidly and many people are now living longer and healthier lives. Currently 12% (or 540,000 people) of the total population of Ireland are aged 65 plus. This number is set to rise to 1.4m, or 22% of the total population by 2041 ([Central Statistics Office, 2013](#)). While the projected changes in the population aged 65-and-over are striking, changes for the group aged 80 and over are even more dramatic. Over the same thirty-year period, the number of people aged 80 and over in Ireland is projected to rise from 130,600 to 458,000 – an increase of 250%. Ageing on this scale is unprecedented in Irish history ([The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing \(TILDA\), 2014](#)). Life expectancy at birth is now 76.8 years for men and 81.6 years for women ([CSO, 2013](#)).

A major focus of our work throughout our programmes is encouraging and empowering everyone in our society to prepare for our own ageing. Ultimately our programmes are designed to address health and wellbeing, embracing the mental and physical benefits of engaging in arts, creativity, physical activity, lifelong learning, civic engagement, volunteering and social engagement. We aim for our programmes and ideas to be truly inspirational and transformational, provocative and empowering in equal measures.

“It is utterly false and cruelly arbitrary to put all the play and learning into childhood, all the work into middle age, and all the regrets into old age.” (Margaret Mead).”

In Age & Opportunity we envisage a world that incorporates play, learning and work at all stages of life thereby reducing, if not entirely eliminating, the regrets.

Our programmes are centred on this concept, and highlights of our key successes in 2017 include:

- Active Citizenship and Lifelong Learning – we developed a transitions in later life programme focused on resilience, called Changing Gears, with the support of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.
- Arts and Culture – we developed and enhanced our nationwide Bealtaine programme, ensuring increased numbers of participants and partners. In particular, we initiated a new regional commission initiative (with Sligo and Mayo in 2017) which will focus on a different part of the country each year during the festival, and a new Artist in Residence in Care programme and arts workshops for older people as part of our new development programme outside of the festival.
- Sport and Physical activity – we developed our collaboration with National Sporting Bodies further, and developed new and innovative projects as part of European Week of Sport.
- Alliance of age sector NGOs – we enhanced our partnership with six other NGOs in the ageing sector in order to make joint submissions on issues such as the implementation of the National Positive Ageing strategy, the Department of Health's Homecare Consultation, various budget submissions and submissions to the Citizens Assembly.

I would like to pay tribute to the Board of Age & Opportunity and our various committees and advisory groups, who remain deeply committed to the continued growth and success of the organisation, by constantly examining new and innovative ways of working, to ensure that we maximise our reach to all older people in Ireland.

CEO's Statement

I am very pleased to present Age & Opportunity's Annual Report for 2017.

Throughout 2017 we continued to enhance and plan further for the valuable, meaningful and effectual work that we have been carrying out for nearly three decades, in order to continuously improve the quality of life of all older people in Ireland.

2017 was a busy focused year, and we were delighted to be in a position where we could lay the foundation for our sustainable future in the absence of a valued funder, the Atlantic Philanthropies.

The reassurance of having a sustainable model for the future revitalised us as an organisation during 2017 thanks to the resilience and dedication of our Board and staff.

We realise that not everyone can fully participate in some aspects of society as much as they might aspire to due to social isolation or physical or mental health difficulties, and throughout 2017 we continuously reviewed, evaluated and developed programmes and initiatives to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all older people from all walks of life in Ireland, including older prisoners, older migrants, older people with intellectual disabilities, older people in nursing homes and older people who live with chronic and life limiting illnesses. Ultimately what we want to achieve is a recognition that all of our lives are for living, regardless of the difficulties and challenges that life throws at us, and that there are opportunities in life for all of us.

This year we approached the end of our strategic plan for 2015-2017 and we are proud to highlight our achievements in this annual report. Our key strategic themes were:

- Meaningful engagement; creating opportunities for all older people to realise their full potential, regardless of identity or circumstance, at the personal, social and civic level.
- Influencing policy and practice; 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.

- Organisational effectiveness – ensuring that the organisation continues to be a stable, reliable, NGO that can be depended upon to continually deliver quality programmes and projects.

Despite a number of challenges along the way, we were pleased to have met all of the key objectives that formed these core strategic themes. The detail of how we achieved this is outlined in this report.

We have entered into a very exciting period in Age & Opportunity as we develop our strategic plan for another three years, from 2018-2020. We are determined to advance our work on championing the value and contribution of older people in society and combatting the stereotypes and negative views of ageing. We want to drive the debate on key issues related to demographic change and an ageing society, and to ensure the visibility of older people in society, media and public discourse and debate. We will continue our work with key policy makers to ensure that Ireland's policies, strategies and programmes are directly informed by the views, needs and experiences of older people.

I would like to thank our funders for their continued support, without which our work would be impossible. We are deeply indebted to the Atlantic Philanthropies, the HSE, The Arts Council of Ireland and Sport Ireland. Our nationwide partners in the public, private and voluntary sector ensure that the reach of our programmes is as wide-ranging as possible, and we highly value these relationships.

I would like to also thank the Board of Age & Opportunity for their tireless commitment to the organisation on a voluntary basis, and all of our committee and advisory group members for their dedication and expertise. Many thanks also to my wonderful colleagues, and extended team of committed trainers, facilitators, artists, PALs and volunteers.

Finally thank you to the growing number of resilient, daring, brave and adventurous participants of our programmes across Ireland; we are honoured that you continue to choose Age & Opportunity as your go-to organisation in your quest to embrace the positivity of ageing.

Our Vision: PEOPLE 50+ HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET ACTIVE

Since 2001 our Go for Life Programme has been getting more older people more active more often. The programme is funded by Sport Ireland as part of its commitment to increase participation in recreational sport among older people. Our Go for Life programme's objectives are closely aligned with Sport Ireland's strategy as well as the National Physical Activity Plan, the National Positive Ageing Strategy and Healthy Ireland. Go for Life achieves its programme objectives through the use of peer-led interventions:

- **PALs** (Physical Activity Leaders), an education and peer leadership scheme which trains older people to lead sport and physical activity programmes with their peers in their local communities;
- Go for Life Small **Grant Scheme**, a national grants scheme which makes grants to local groups of older people to support the work of PALs;
- **FitLine**, a volunteer-led telephone-based motivation line to encourage older individuals to become more active;
- Go for Life **Games**, which encourages enthusiastic participation in our recreational games;
- **Creating links** between National Governing Bodies (NGB's) of Sport and older people, introducing and adapting sports for groups and providing opportunities for individuals and groups to try out new sports.

PALs (Physical Activity Leadership) Programme

Under the Go for Life model of peer leadership, there were 64 Physical Activity Leaders (PALs) workshops attended by 169 new PALs in addition to 6 Dance and 13 Games workshops attended by existing PALs. We estimate that at the end of 2017 there are **over 1,000 PALs leading or organising physical activity for their groups and communities.**

CarePALs

CarePALs is a specific adaptation of the PALs workshops. The two-day course aims to empower staff in day and residential care settings to lead suitable physical activities with older people who live in or visit their setting. It is based on the original leadership model developed by Go for Life 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.

During 2017, Age & Opportunity delivered 11 CarePALs courses throughout the country. A total of 166 care staff attended. The HSE National Office of Health Promotion and Improvement funded 9 of the CarePALs courses. The remainder were funded by HSE Lottery Grants or local agencies. This brings the number of **CarePALs to date to 637.**

Go for Life Grant Scheme

The seventeenth Go for Life Grant Scheme for sport and physical activity for older people was opened for applications in August. 2,500 applications were sent via email and post to community groups, and all our health promotion and sporting contacts. Local Sports Partnerships and HSE Coordinators were available to give assistance or advice to applicants and in many cases also helped distribute application forms locally, helping us reach even more communities and groups of older people.

By the closing date in late September we had received a total of 1,191 applications and a record number of **1,119 grants were allocated.** The application forms were processed and evaluated with assistance from Sport Ireland and the recommendations were submitted for approval to our Go for Life Steering Committee on 14 November 2017. Approximately **30,000 older people will take part in physical activity** funded by these grants. The 2017 allocation brings the total grants allocated (over 17 years) to over 13,000 and total funds allocated to almost **€5.5 million.**

FitLine

Age & Opportunity continues to target older adults at risk of social isolation, including those who may not be members of an existing social group. One of the ways we do this in our physical activity programme is through our Fitline telephone service, which supports individuals who are not members

of groups, to get more active with the help and encouragement of our volunteer peer mentors. During 2017, mentors continued to make fortnightly calls from Kilcross and Maynooth. At the end of 2017 FitLine had 14 active mentors and 78 participants.

Go for Life Games

Almost 300 finalists attended the fifth Go for Life Games, held in Dublin City University in June 2017. They represented 24 different counties; each county had a team of 12 people, playing 3 different sports. Many of the teams were selected locally from Sportsfests or Games Leagues around the country supported by Go for Life, the Local Sports Partnerships and the HSE.

Sporting Opportunities through Partnership

In 2017 we set out to interact more with the National Sporting Bodies so that older people were introduced to the huge variety of sports that exist in this country. Our Go for Life Games proves to us that older people can still have that competitive edge and very much enjoy being part of a team and representing their county at national games. We worked closely with FAI to help develop their walking football offering to older people. Swim Ireland teamed up with Go for Life to run an open swim event and will be making it a bigger event next year. We invited Cricket Ireland and the Croquet Association of Ireland to showcase their sports at this year's Go for Life Games and we are following up to adapt and promote both sports to our network of groups. We look forward to more collaboration in 2018.

European Week of Sport

This Europe wide event takes place each September and it encourages everyone across Europe to become more active and involved in sport. This year we placed a strong emphasis on engaging with the National Governing Bodies for Sport as part of the #BEACTIVE campaign for #EWS2017.

Once again we contacted our network of PALs and members of their groups, asking them what sport or activity they would like to try. As well as introducing new sports to the groups it allows us to work with the National Sporting Bodies who are more than happy to extend their reach to older

people. EWOS 2017 began with an Open Sea Swimming event in Portmarnock in Dublin, organised with the help of Swim Ireland. Groups of older people also took part in kayaking, falconry, clay pigeon shooting and ziplining. We teamed up with FAI for a walking football session in the National Sports Campus with 50 older people and with Croquet Association of Ireland for an introduction to croquet with 2 different groups.

Collaboration across Europe

EIT P-PALs is an EIT Health funded project on which Age & Opportunity is an associate partner. The project is being managed by Trinity College Dublin's IDS-TILDA (a longitudinal study researching ageing in Ireland among people with an intellectual disability aged 40 and over), and the University of Barcelona are the European partner. P-PALs is a programme prompting older adults with intellectual disabilities to take a leadership role in promoting physical activity among their peers. The proposed training programme, based on the established Go for Life model, will give older people with intellectual disabilities the skills and confidence they need to return to their peers to lead them in a range of games and activities designed to improve functional fitness.



"Age & Opportunity have been a complete 'game-changer' for our work with older adults.

They have assisted us in every sector of positively working with older adults ... from developing pre-activity resources and literature all the way through to correct warm-down and correct terminologies, their guidance has been first class. Every request or query we have asked has been dealt with in an effective, efficient and very proactive manner.

The FAI are very lucky to have such a positive partner in their Walking Football Programme and we look forward to continuing to working together."

Gerry Reardon, FAI Grassroots Development Manager

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME	Number of Events	Total Participants
PALs –New	64	169
Existing PALs –Dance workshops	6	121
Sports Fest supported by Go for Life	5	200
Go for Life Games Refreshers Local Games/Sportsfests supported by Go for Life Go for Life Games Support Go for Life Training	13	530
Go for Life Games Final - participants	1	288
Go for Life Games Final - volunteers	1	30
Trained PALs - 2,246 Estimate 1,030 active and each PAL works in an ongoing way with an average of 10 people		10,300
CarePALs 2 Day course	11	116
CarePALs Refresher		
FitLine Refresher Workshop	1	14 Active Mentors 78 Active Participants
European Week of Sport	6	50
Older people's groups funded by National Grant Scheme	1,119 Grants	31,356
TOTAL		43,252

Our Vision: PEOPLE 50+ HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACCESS, AND PARTICIPATE IN, THE ARTS

Age & Opportunity believes that the arts in and of itself contributes to quality of life, but can become even more meaningful in older age as we enter a new phase of our life. In addition, evidence shows us that engagement in the arts enhances the physical and psychological and cognitive wellbeing of older people. It can increase their self-confidence and morale and provide opportunities for increased social connections, leading to higher levels of social cohesion. But given the potential public health gains from participation are enough older people getting the chance to avail of this opportunity for meaningful engagement?

As part of our work in arts and culture each year we seek to increase the number of participants and reach out to isolated groups and new communities. In 2017 we were delighted to see an increase in the numbers involved, both older audiences and artists. Through our Bealtaine Festival, Cultural Companions, Residency programme, Public Arts Workshops and and Azure we are reaching more older people and we continue to be surprised by the ways in which older people create and engage with arts and culture.

Bealtaine – All Together Now: celebrating the power of the collective

Throughout the month of May 2017, our annual Bealtaine celebration returned for its 22nd year with events hosted nationwide to promote activity in the arts and creativity as we age. Bealtaine is the world's first national celebration of creativity in older age, and , once again, this year's events, featured some of Ireland's leading artists and creative peoples, under the theme *All together now*.

The programme included free and ticketed events open to the public across a diverse range of performances, commissions, residencies and projects. The festival included a gathering of poets and major sporting

heroes to discuss their philosophy, energy and connections as part of Listowel writers week; visual arts residencies in Kilkenny and Wexford with artists Vivienne Dick, Kathy Prendergast, Kevin Gaffney; Joanna Hopkins as artist resident in a care setting specialising in working with older people with dementia; the Bealtaine Book Club nationwide celebrating the work of writer Maeve Kelly; a major visual arts commission for artist Breda Burns in the Northwest of Ireland with Sligo and Mayo County Councils; a collaboration between poet Paula Meehan and composer Sean Doherty for local choirs in Dublin; continuous professional development opportunities for arts practitioners; and a critical seminar building on the themes of choice, participation and respect in relation to how we live in older age drawing on current trends in collaborative art/architectural and planning initiatives.

The 2017 Bealtaine Festival was our biggest ever with approximately 3,799 people participating in Age & Opportunity's directly curated festival events. The national partner curated festival had 96,997 people taking part. We had 510 national organisers, thousands of national festival events, and more than 20 Age & Opportunity curated festival projects. In 2017, the national festival took place in Antrim, Clare, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Leitrim, Limerick, Longford, Louth, Mayo, Meath, Monaghan, Offaly, Roscommon, Sligo, Tipperary, Waterford, Westmeath, Wexford, Wicklow, and the Age & Opportunity curated festival took place across: Clare, Dublin, Leitrim, Limerick, Louth, Kerry, Kilkenny, Roscommon, Sligo and Wexford.

The growth and success of the Bealtaine Festival year-on-year shows the importance of the arts in our lives and especially in relation to our wellbeing as we get older, as well as a showcase for the incredible talent and commitment of mature artists in Ireland. The people who participate such as our artists and community groups and our many partners such as arts centres, libraries, theatres, galleries, art and cultural institutions, and local authority arts offices are absolutely key to the festival's success. It is this 'all together now' approach that continues to strengthen the event and nurture creativity in people of an older age.

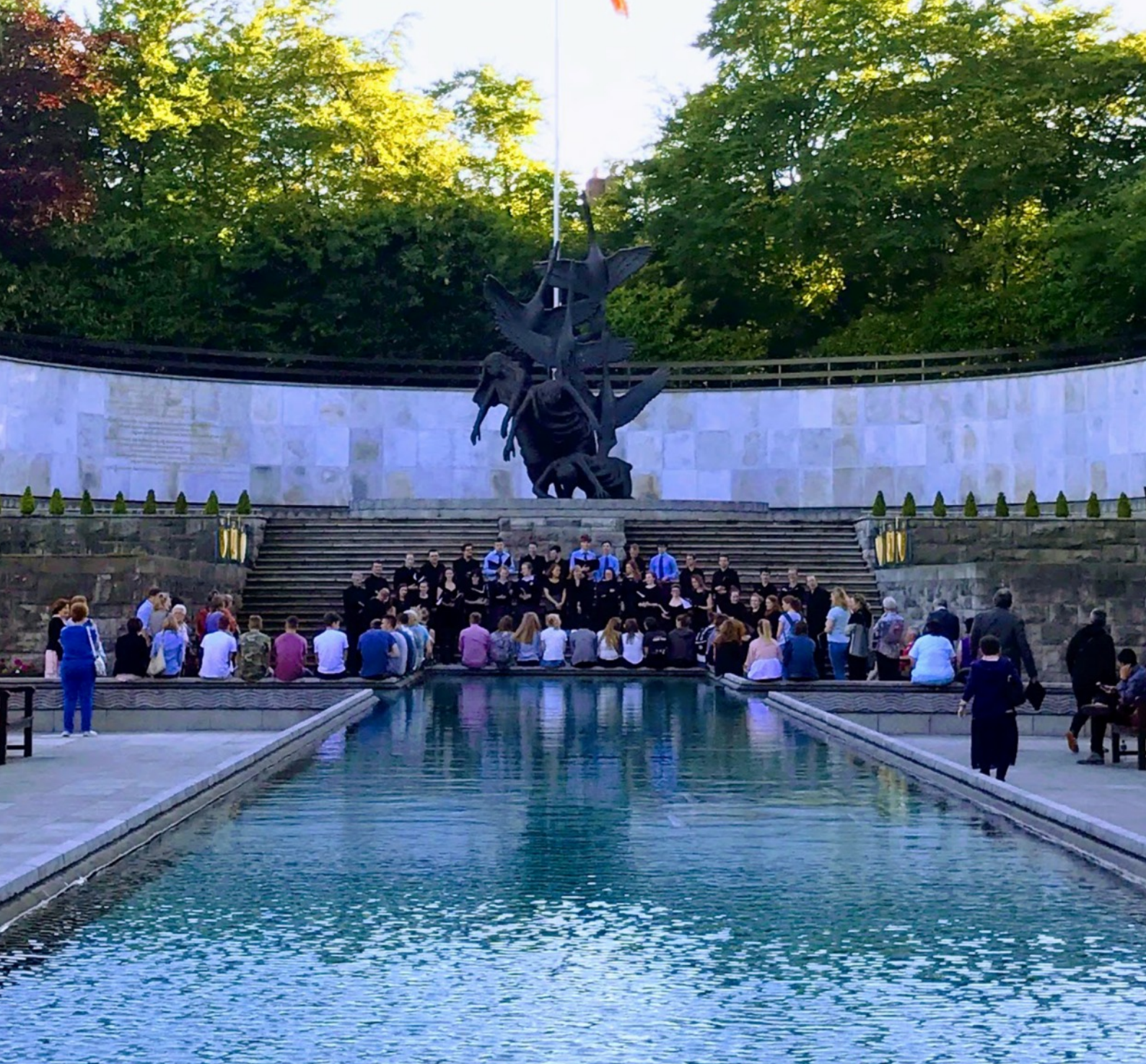
Workshops for Older & Emerging Writers

Throughout the year our Arts & Culture programme continues to support older artists and audiences. As part of this annual activity in autumn 2017 we invited Ron Carey, poet and Bealtaine emerging writer, to run a series of poetry workshops in the Irish Writers Centre.

The workshops were called **Second Act** and were based on the very successful course facilitated by Ron earlier in the year at the Limerick Writers Centre. Second Act consisted of four two-hour sessions that took place at the Irish Writers Centre at 2pm - 4pm on 17, 24, 31 Oct and 7 Nov. The workshops proved very popular and we hope to run this activity again.

Cultural Companions

In 2017 we developed plans to extend our Cultural Companions scheme outside of Dublin, something that has been on our wish list for quite a while, as we feel that such a popular and successful programme should be available nationwide. As part of this expansion, we made contact with the Age-Friendly county co-ordinators around the country to discuss possible models and modes of working. Plans are now underway to meet as a group in 2018, and we look forward to working together to create nationwide networks of older people attending arts events.



From *The Beauty of It* commission, by Sean Doherty and Paula Meehan – the Final Song at the Garden of Remembrance

Arts Collaboration across Europe

Having influenced the establishment of Gwanwyn and Luminate festivals in Wales and Scotland respectively, we continued to network with them. We met at an Arts Council of Northern Ireland meeting in Belfast in April 2017 (Gwanwyn) and at the Luminate festival in Scotland. At the British Society of Gerontology Conference 2017 The Art of Ageing in Wales, we co-presented on the three festivals. We also met with the coordinator of the new Age of Creativity festival in England to advise them on the setting up of that festival.

The Bealtaine Gatherings

While Bealtaine takes place in the month of May, we have an evaluation process that takes place later in the year. The Gatherings are platforms for discussion and learning from each other; we regularly invite Bealtaine organisers to take part, where we show-case good practice, innovations and the challenges of promoting participation. Over the years we have learned a lot from this process and have taken on board comments and suggestions from organisers. In 2017 we held Gathering events in Sligo, Dun Laoghaire, Fingal, Dublin City, Limerick and Wexford. At each event Bealtaine organisers from the area shared their stories about what worked and gave us feedback on how we can collaborate and support each other while continuing to increase the reach of the festival in communities across the country.

Supporting Artists - Artists' Professional Development Training

In 2017, we supported and celebrated artists by providing continuing professional development and training in both the practical areas of their career (ie finance/pensions etc.) and by exploring more in-depth issues to do with visibility, networking and staying professionally connected.

Supporting Arts Activity in Care Settings

The inaugural Artist Care Setting Residency took place in 2017 and created an opportunity for a publicly-funded care setting (Blackrock Day Care Centre in County Dublin) and its residents to engage creatively with an artist (Joanna Hopkins) over the course of a number of months. The residency also offered an artist the opportunity to spend a sustained period of time working with older people and developing their skills in an arts and health context.



“Bill and I attended the Macushla dance workshop ...as part of the Bealtaine festival. We both really enjoyed the experience. We felt very welcomed by the group and found the group leaders to be very professional and supportive allowing us to participate at our own pace. This was a whole new experience for us and we certainly intend to continue going along ...

Retirement and ageing is very challenging so it's great to have connected with a group like this ...as it's not just good exercise but overall it's very beneficial psychologically also to be in the midst of such positive energy.”

Joan Sugrue and Bill Roche

Bealtaine Organiser Figures

ORGANISERS	Total Participants
National Cultural Institutions & Arts Organisations	10
Local Authority Arts Offices or Other	16
Regional Arts Centres & Cultural/Heritage Organisations	171
Public Library Branches	139
Retired/Older People's/Community Groups	73
Care Centres/HSE	87
Other	14
TOTAL	510

Bealtaine Events & Participation Figures*

ORGANISERS	Total Participants
Estimated number of events	1716
Estimated number of participants	96,997

*These estimates extrapolate from the evaluation forms returned. Adjustments are made to Library and Local Authority figures to avoid double-counting of events. This may lead to underestimations.

Bealtaine Financial Contribution Figures

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION BY ORGANISER	Estimated financial contribution in 2017 €	Estimated in kind contribution in 2017 €
National Cultural Institutions & Arts Organisations	2,500	500
Local Authority Arts Offices or Other	43,940	8,500
Regional Arts Centres & Cultural/Heritage Organisations	37,090	27,089
Public Library Branches	7,520	20
Retired/Older People's/Community Groups	7,060	8,320
Care Centres/HSE	5,912	5,575
Other	5,000	0
TOTAL estimated in evaluation forms	109,022	50,004
Estimated total financial contribution by all organisers to Bealtaine 2017	557,279	369,474
Estimated total hours contributed by volunteers to Bealtaine 2017		12,070

Our Vision: PEOPLE 50+ HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME ACTIVE CITIZENS AND ADVOCATE FOR THEMSELVES AND TO CONTINUE THEIR LIFELONG LEARNING

We provide opportunities for older people to learn and share life experiences with others in safe and open spaces as we recognize the value of lifelong learning and the importance of civic engagement. We facilitate learning in informal settings, recognizing the value of each individual's lived experience and seek to build on it by providing opportunities for reflection, learning new skills and personal growth.

Our programmes encourage curiosity, openness, respect and discovery: we seek to deliver programmes from a perspective of equality in that participants bring their life experience to the programmes and work with each to share information and reflect on the material presented in each course. They work from a person-centred perspective as we facilitate personal development and explore ways in which participants can become more engaged with their communities. Through this delivery we aim to provide learning opportunities that are transformative, both for the individual and ultimately for the community, leading to an Ireland that is increasingly inclusive of older people and celebrating the huge contribution to civic life made by older people all around the country.

Through **Active Citizenship and Lifelong Learning** we provide a range of programmes in personal development, arts in care settings, civic engagement, transitions in later life and awareness of ageism and its effect on the lives of older people. We also facilitate and support the continued roll-out of the Age Friendly Cities and Counties programme in partnership with local authorities, Older Person's Councils and Age Friendly Alliances throughout the country.

Changing Gears: Transitions in Later Life

Age & Opportunity is one of seven organizations being funded by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK) to develop initiatives that encourage resilience in later life. We are the only Irish partner and we were successful in our bid for further funding to deepen the work that we started in 2016 and continued to deliver in 2017.

As part of this initiative we partnered with the HSE to deliver the “Changing Gears” programme to staff members in Donegal, Dublin and Galway who were considering retirement. The programme was evaluated very positively.

Throughout 2017 we continued to take part in Learning Community events with the other funded organizations. These have proven to be invaluable as we shared our experiences and the materials we were developing. We will continue this work in 2018

Get Engaged: Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme

The Get Engaged programme was in its final year of Atlantic Philanthropies funding in 2017. This was a three-year multi-county programme to provide skills development and support for people taking part in the national Age Friendly programme. Age & Opportunity continued to work with older people who were engaging with their local authority initiatives through the Older Peoples Councils.

Some of the groups requested specific training to build their capacity so that they could influence the development of age friendly programmes in their county, while others asked us to facilitate other processes as they developed their county programmes. Some of the counties we worked with had already completed their first three-year strategy and we worked with groups in developing subsequent strategies while other counties were at the start of the process altogether.

The Age Friendly programme is a good example of the necessity of our work being adaptable to local situations as there is no “one size fits all” approach. We meet with the local groups and local authority staff to identify what is needed locally and plan with them what we will deliver to support the process. This type of community development work requires us to be resourceful and flexible as we take account of the local situation and work with partners in facilitating them to respond to their situation.

It was a privilege to work with so many partners, including the Age Friendly Ireland Regional Development Consultant who continues to support the national programme.

Ageing with Confidence

This personal development programme was developed many years ago in response to a request from a counselling service that was encountering increasing numbers of referrals from older people who were experiencing loss of confidence as they got older.

In 2017 we revised the content and successfully piloted it in four settings in Dublin and Naas in partnership with the HSE. The revamped Ageing with Confidence programme is now delivered over a six-week period in line with feedback from those taking part.

Touchstone

This eight-week programme is an opportunity for participants to identify practical projects that they want to develop and deliver in their local communities. We usually deliver it in partnership with a university or other third-level institution. It explores what civic engagement is and how to influence decision-makers at local and national levels. It looks at how to use the media and how to carry out research as a back-up to lobbying for change. The programme also facilitates the development of networks in the community. Touchstone is ideal for supporting the development of Age Friendly programmes, and was developed in collaboration with NUIG, Third Age and Active Retirement Ireland.

Creative Exchanges

Our QQI accredited Creative Exchanges programme continues to be popular among those seeking to lead creative activities in care settings, providing them with the skills they need to help people in day or residential settings to age creatively. During 2017 we delivered four programmes, three in Dublin and one in Cork. The programme is delivered in partnership with arts institutions to facilitate care staff to learn new skills outside of a care setting and to encourage them to have greater engagement with arts settings in their work. We are indebted to the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) for their continued support to us in so many ways, but in particular for the huge support they give to Creative Exchanges. It is an example of how different organizations can work together.

Azure

Azure explores how people with dementia-related conditions such as Alzheimer's, and the people who care for them, can have a deeper involvement in cultural institutions and can participate in cultural activities. It is a partnership between Age & Opportunity, The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, the Irish Museum of Modern Art and the Butler Gallery Kilkenny.

Latest estimates suggest that some 41,700 people in Ireland are living with dementia. By 2041, the number of people aged over 65 is expected to reach 1.3 million (an increase of 180%). With these figures in mind the Azure network seeks to address the inclusion of people with dementia and their families, friends and carers within our communities, from an Arts & Cultural perspective.

In 2017 the programme continued to deliver guided tours across the network of member organisations to facilitate art-viewing for people living with dementia and their carers. Age & Opportunity is a member of the Steering Group, along with the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), The Alzheimer Society of Ireland and the Butler Gallery. During the year the Steering Group focused on audience development and creating a set of core values for members of the network.



"I just want to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for ... a place on this course (Changing Gears). It was a very purposeful, pleasant and enjoyable experience - I would recommend it to anyone without hesitation. The facilitators were professional, resourceful, respectful and authentic ..."

HSE Staff Member, Dublin

PROGRAMME	No. of Workshops	No. of Counties involved	Total Participants
Get Engaged	6	6 Wexford, Kildare, Dublin, Clare, Sligo & Mayo	112
Creative Exchanges	28	2 Dublin & Cork	53
AgeWise	3	2 Dublin & Kildare	22
Changing Gears	30	3 Dublin, Galway, & Donegal	81
Touchstone Programme	16	2 Dublin & Clare	38
Ageing with Confidence	24	2 Dublin & Kildare	76
TOTAL	107	17	382

Corporate and Public Affairs

Policy Work and the alliance of age sector NGOs

Our original Active Ageing Partnership, which was a collaboration of Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Third Age Ireland from 2013 to 2017, has now grown and expanded into the alliance of age sector NGOs. This alliance brings together the main NGOs making a difference for older people in Ireland: Active Retirement Ireland, Age & Opportunity, Age Action, Alone, The Irish Senior Citizens' Parliament, Third Age Ireland and the Irish Hospice Foundation. The alliance membership is comprised of the CEOs of each of the NGOs listed above, and is co-ordinated by Maurice O'Connell, previous co-ordinator of Active Ageing Partnership.

Having initially convened to discuss preparation for the 2016 general election, the alliance developed the Earn our Vote campaign, which has led to further co-operation on areas like the National Positive Ageing Strategy, the Department of Health Homecare consultation and the Citizens Assembly. It has also become a cohesive force within the sector, allowing NGOs to focus on their principal areas of interest while still coming together to pool resources and to co-ordinate work on key policy issues.

The funding which drove the alliance originally came from the Atlantic Philanthropies, and further funding has been secured from the Community Foundation for Ireland.

The alliance of the age sector NGOs has established a robust infrastructure and has enhanced support systems amongst the seven organisations. It has developed strong charismatic leaders to drive the sector forward and to win support in key areas. It is ambitious and has built and expanded its capacity and skills in a number of key areas such as communications, change management, policy formulation, media and PR, organising and building grassroots engagement, networking, relationship management, advocacy, etc. It has structures and protocols in place to ensure effective collaboration and complementarity between organisations and avoids unnecessary duplication.

The ongoing key areas of work include developing an implementation and monitoring mechanism for the National Positive Ageing Strategy in conjunction with the Department of Health, and working on establishing the right to age at home and access appropriate homecare, the importance of protecting income for older people, and combatting ageism generally.

Policy Submissions

In 2017 we continued to campaign for an investment in homecare, as part of a wider coalition of 17 different campaign groups and charities who had come together in 2016 to work on this issue. In 2017 the campaign focused on further calls for funding of homecare packages in Budget 2018.

Citizen's Assembly

The Programme for a Partnership Government committed the Government to the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly, mandated to look at a limited number of key issues including 'How we best respond to the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population'. As part of the discussion on this topic Ita Mangan, Chair of Age & Opportunity was invited to speak to a meeting of the Assembly on July 8. Her presentation entitled 'Opportunities in Retirement: Perspectives from Civil Society' highlighted the range of great ideas about improving quality of life in older years and the fact that these are not matched by real initiatives and actions. She urged us, as a society to address how we can enable greater opportunities to be available to older people and then enable older people to take advantage of those opportunities.

European Collaboration

Age & Opportunity is a full member of AGE Platform Europe, the EU lobby group on ageing and older people. We are involved in two Task Forces: Employment and Active Citizenship and Adequate Income and Poverty. We are also a member of the Better Europe Alliance of civil society organisations for a social and sustainable Europe. We were part of the delegation that met with the European Commission Fact Finding session in October 2017.

Communications

We have continued to build on the organisation's profile across print, broadcast and online media as the voice of positive ageing in Ireland. On many occasions throughout 2017 we were asked to provide the perspective of older people on issues like pensions, retirement, and sharing stories of how to stay active, and culturally and civically engaged in later life.

We ensured the positive side of ageing was highlighted with good coverage of Bealtaine on IrelandAM and TG4, and coverage of our Go for Life programme on RTE's Operation Transformation.

We are very grateful to all our volunteers who assisted the communications team over the year in doing media work – the best way to ensure the voice of older people is heard is to share our stories and without your stories we cannot help raise the visibility of older people in our media.

Age & Opportunity continued its work on branding and developing increased awareness of the Age & Opportunity brand, as well as the sub-brands of Bealtaine and Go for Life. This work will continue in 2018, and evolve with the development of our new three year Strategy.

In early 2017 we launched the new Bealtaine website which allows organisers from all around the country to easily register events, while also making it easy for visitors to search for a Bealtaine event near them. The site was developed with feedback gathered from the partner agencies around the country. They asked for a site with a more contemporary feel and improved functionality. One key request was that partners could easily register and edit their events, and that a What's On section would provide audiences with a user friendly way to find a festival event near them. The new Bealtaine site has delivered on all those requests, and we continue to test and improve on it following the launch. Next up is a redesign of the Age & Opportunity website in 2018.

Also, as part of online work, we continue the phased implementation of our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system will work across the organisation and all departments and has already improved our communication and reporting

for Bealtaine. The continued development will give us a better picture of how, and where, our programmes are being used by older people, and lead to a better understanding of audiences and all stakeholders. It will also help us streamline our evaluation and reporting work so that we can spend more time on developing pioneering programmes that meet the evolving needs of those 50+.

Our following on social media continues to grow, and 2017 saw a huge increase in our audience engagement on the Bealtaine social media channels. The festival offers a visual feast of photography and video and proved very popular among our digital audience. Our European Week of Sport events also proved to be a hit. Our regular e-zines and PALS updates continued to provide an excellent platform for keeping the community fully informed of activities.

We continue to develop our digital communications but as always, with choice at the heart of our actions and we engage with our audiences on the channels that they choose, both on and off line. In this way we can continue, with your help, to raise the issues concerning contemporary ageing and ensure older people are visible and their voices heard in today's crowded media environment.

The organisation had a presence at different events during the year, such as the Positive Ageing Week in Limerick, Dublin City Council Physio Days in Ballybough and Ballymun, Active Retirement Ireland Trade Show, Wexford and the 50s Plus Expo, Dublin.

Structure & Governance

Governance

Age & Opportunity is governed by a Constitution.

Our Board is committed to maintaining the highest standards of corporate governance and is determined that the company complies with the basic principles outlined in The Governance Code; A Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland.

Trustees, all of who are non executive and independent, and 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. There are currently 10 Trustees. The Trustees bring to the Board their significant policy, financial, business and decision making skills gained in their respective fields together with a broad range of experience and views.

The day to day management is delegated to the CEO. The CEO leads the Senior Management Team 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 to the Board for decision and a schedule of matters delegated to the CEO.

Age & Opportunity held three Board Meetings in 2017. We also held three meetings of the Finance, Governance, HR, Quality and Safety Committee and three meetings of the Audit Committee.

We are fully compliant with the 'The Governance Code: a Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland' as a Type C organisation, and our various funders' governance requirements. We have also registered under the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 and on the Register of the Charities Regulatory Authority.

Throughout 2017 we updated and developed various policies and procedures including our Fundraising and Volunteering Policies and our Internal Financial Controls and Procedure, and we have been conducting compliance reviews in order to ensure that we can fully implement the General Data Protection Regulation Bill 2018 when it comes into force in May 2018.

A range of significant risks facing Age & Opportunity have been identified. These risks are detailed in our formal Risk Register. We continued, at our Audit Committee meetings, Finance, Governance, HR, Quality and Safety Committee meetings and Board meetings throughout 2017, to evaluate these risks and will 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 & Staff

Trustees During 2017

Ita Mangan (Chair)

Sarah Bowman

Mariead Egan

Fionnuala Hanrahan

Mary Kelly

Catherine Marshall

Tony McCarthy

Shane McQuillan

Paul Murray

John O'Brien (resigned 8th September 2017)

Helen O'Donoghue

Staff Members

Karen Smyth: CEO

ARTS & CULTURE TEAM

Tara Byrne: Arts and Culture Programme Manager

Karen Hennessy: Arts and Culture Programme Coordinator

Kim Chew: Arts and Culture Programme Administrator

SPORT & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TEAM

Mary Harkin: Go for Life Programme Manager

Board & Staff

Staff Members contd.

Sue Guildea: Go for Life Programme Assistant Manager

Ciara Dawson: Go for Life Programme Administrator

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP & LIFELONG LEARNING TEAM

Ciarán McKinney: Active Citizenship & Lifelong Learning Programme Manager

Brian Dooney: Training and Development Facilitator

Fiona Holohan: Active Citizenship & Lifelong Learning Programme Coordinator

OPERATIONS & PROGRAMME SUPPORT

Michael Foley: Policy, Research & Evaluation Manager (to September 2017)

Anne Kearney: PR, Communications and Marketing Manager

Lasarine O'Carroll: Financial Controller

Margaret Roe: Office Manager/HR Manager

Patricia Forde: Information Assistant (to September 2017)

Committees in 2017

FINANCE, GOVERNANCE, HR, QUALITY AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Ita Mangan

Mary Kelly (Chair)

Shane McQuillan

John O'Brien

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Catherine Rogers (Chair)

Ita Mangan

Tony McCarthy

GO FOR LIFE ADVISORY GROUP

Robert Grier (Chair)

Emma Jane Clarke, Partnerships & Governance Manager, Sport Ireland

Arthur Dempsey, Board Member, Active Retirement Ireland

John Kerrane, Former Lecturer in the School of Health and Human Performance, DCU

Dr. Mick Loftus, Former Member, National Council on Ageing and Older People

Tony McCarthy, Age & Opportunity Trustee, PAL Representative

Caroline Peppard, Senior Health Promotion Officer, Health Service Executive

Karen Smyth CEO, Age & Opportunity

Committees in 2017 contd.

ARTS & CULTURE ADVISORY GROUP

Catherine Marshall, (Chair) Age & Opportunity Trustee

Lorraine Comer, Head of Education, National Museum of Ireland

Anne McCarthy, Arts Officer, Mayo County Council Arts Office

Ailbhe Murphy, Director, Create

Helen O'Donoghue, Senior Curator & Head of Education & Community Programmes, Irish Museum of Modern Art

Karen Smyth CEO, Age & Opportunity

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND LIFELONG LEARNING ADVISORY GROUP

Fionnuala Hanrahan, (Chair) Age & Opportunity Trustee

Sarah Bowman, Age & Opportunity Trustee

Mairead Egan, Age & Opportunity Trustee

Colm Kilgannon, Lecturer and Strand Leader, ALBA Programme, DCU - All Hallows Campus

Karen Smyth CEO, Age & Opportunity

Board Member	Meetings	Attended
Ita Mangan (Chair)	3	3
Sarah Bowman	3	1
Mairead Egan	3	3
Fionnuala Hanrahan	3	3
Mary Kelly	3	3
Catherine Marshall	3	3
Tony McCarthy	3	3
Shane McQuillan	3	0
Paul Murray	3	3
John O'Brien	3	0
Helen O'Donoghue	3	1

Finance, Governance, HR, Quality & Safety Committee Member	Meetings	Attended
Mary Kelly (chair)	3	3
Ita Mangan	3	3
Shane McQuillan	3	2
John O'Brien	3	2

Audit Committee Member	Meetings	Attended
Catherine Rogers (Chair)	3	3
Ita Mangan	3	3
Tony McCarthy	3	3



Age & Opportunity

Life is for
Living.

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