



**Age &
Opportunity**

Strategic Plan

2025 – 2029

Contents

3	About Age & Opportunity
4	Age & Opportunity in Context
6	Strategic Plan 2025-2029 Overview
10	Chairperson and CEO Statement
12	Vision, Mission and Values
14	Strategic Plan 2025-2029
14	Strategic Theme One – Enhancing the Ageing Experience
16	Strategic Theme Two – Influencing Public Policy
17	Strategic Theme Three – Strategic Engagement with Stakeholders
18	Strategic Theme Four – Excellence in Leadership and Governance
22	Resourcing and Delivering our Plan

Age & Opportunity is the national organisation working to create opportunities that empower older people to enhance individual and community wellbeing through participation in physical activity and recreational sport, arts and creativity, personal development and active citizenship initiatives.

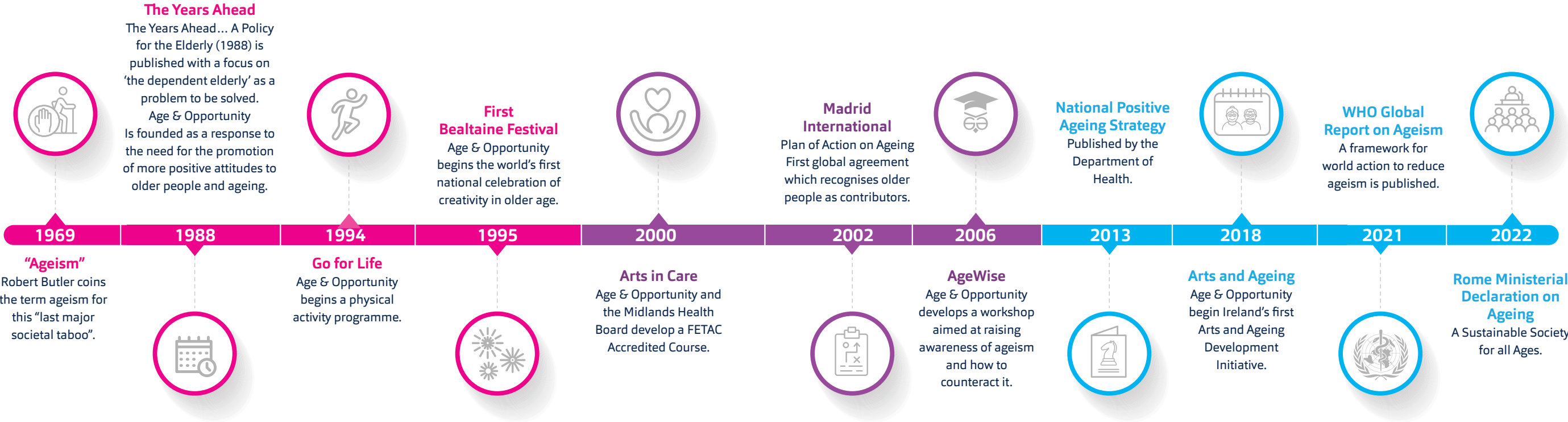
One of our key priorities is to amplify the voice of older people and influence policy development through research, evaluation and public engagement. We envision an Ireland where older age is recognised as a time of opportunity and where all older people can be active, visible, creative, connected and confident about ageing.

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

- Our Arts Programme provides opportunities for us to engage in arts and cultural activities and initiatives.
- Our Active Programme is designed to get us active and to participate more in recreational sport and physical activity.
- Our Engage Programme offers courses and workshops promoting personal development, community collaboration and active citizenship.

Age & Opportunity in Context

Age & Opportunity has been involved in creating opportunities for older people in keeping with the emergence of national and international policy developments since its establishment in 1988, as shown in the timeline below.



Strategic Theme One:

Enhancing the ageing experience

1

Strategic objectives

- Encourage greater participation in and expand the reach of our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes so as to promote personal, community and civic development.
- Develop a structure to identify and challenge ageism and negative stereotypes of ageing through all Programme initiatives.
- Conduct and collaborate on research and evaluation with Programme participants, older people and other research organisations.

Sought outcomes

- The reach of Age & Opportunity's Programmes is amplified to positively impact the lives and wellbeing of older people in a diverse society.
- Ageing is viewed as a time of opportunity, participation, growth and discovery.
- Learning from our Programmes is amplified to have a positive impact on the lives and wellbeing of older people.

Strategic Theme Two:

Influencing public policy

2

Strategic objectives

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

Sought outcomes

- Age & Opportunity is viewed by stakeholders as an informative, authentic, independent, authoritative and influential voice on ageing.
- Public policy and its implementation at national and community level is more informed by the lived experience of older people.
- An increased recognition of the social, civic, cultural and economic contribution of the diversity of older people to society.

Strategic Theme Three:

Strategic Engagement with Stakeholders

3

Strategic objectives

- Engage strategically with stakeholders, including the diverse population of older people, Programme participants, older people's groups, other NGOs, partners, volunteers, funders and sponsors to achieve and disseminate mutual strategic objectives in a sustainable and effective way.
- Increase the reach and visibility of Age & Opportunity through work with partners and stakeholders.

Sought outcomes

- Strengthen and widen our sectoral voice.
- Extension, recognition and increased support of the wide range of Age & Opportunity Programmes which are proven to produce successful, sustainable quality of life gains for older people.

Strategic Theme Four:

Excellence Through Leadership and Governance

4

Strategic objectives

- Have a leadership and performance culture that is aligned with organisation values, promotes continuous learning and development, ensures accountability and motivates, challenges and develops the organisation.
- Ensure stronger collaboration internally across the organisation's Active, Arts and Engage Programmes.
- Ensure excellent standards of governance, compliance and accountability across the organisation.
- Seek organisational financial sustainability for the lifetime of this Strategy and beyond.
- Demonstrate best practice in energy efficiency and sustainability.

Sought outcomes

- Age & Opportunity has a leadership and performance culture that fosters a culture of recognition and continued development of staff and demonstrates healthy work-life balance.
- Capitalise on the synergies between Programmes within the work cycles of relevant partner organisations.
- Age & Opportunity is recognised amongst all stakeholders as a model of excellence regarding governance and corporate responsibility.
- Age & Opportunity has sufficient resources allocated for the effective implementation of this Strategy, and ensures economy, efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in all its operations and the Board regularly reviews the reserves position.
- Age & Opportunity will ensure that consideration is given to social and sustainability responsibilities.



Chairperson and CEO Statement

It gives us great pleasure to present Age & Opportunity’s Strategic Plan for the period 2025 to 2029. Since our inception in 1988, we have firmly believed that seeing an ageing population as an opportunity, rather than a challenge, is vital for the progression of society. Our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes have a vital role to play in realising our ambitions by creating opportunities for enhancing the ageing experience. Inclusive social and cultural events are essential for connected and resilient communities and welcoming and accessible programming is key to participation. We want to support people as they age to seize the opportunities available and to thrive rather than just to survive.

The lifetime of our previous Strategic Plan was immensely challenging, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, rising climate anxiety, global events, and social instability impacting significantly on society and resulting in a radically altered landscape. The valuable contributions of our dedicated team of staff and volunteers have been key in ensuring Age & Opportunity remains responsive and resilient.

Over the next five years, changing demographics is a factor which will make our work more relevant to a wider target audience than ever before while bringing challenges of funding and scalability. Over the lifetime of our Strategy, we will promote greater involvement of older people in the areas of sport and physical activity, arts and creativity, personal development and active citizenship. We will also use our research, evidence and experience to create opportunities for consultation with a diverse range of older people and to influence policy in these areas. Our work with older people’s groups will continue to support vibrant and inclusive communities, empowered to participate fully in society. It also puts us in a unique position to communicate directly with older people and create opportunities for greater engagement with policy makers. This in turn facilitates the growth of grassroots community-led development and greater participation and engagement by all communities in local decision-making processes which affect them.

The process for developing this Strategic Plan was led by a Strategy Sub-Committee and consisted of a pragmatic process of stakeholder engagement, review and strategy formulation. Facilitated sessions were conducted with the Board, Senior Management Team, full staff team and a cohort of older people during 2024. Key stakeholders, funders, and sector experts participated in a survey designed to inform the process and to advise on where our focus should be over the next five years. The outcome of this process resulted in an honest appraisal of and insight into our strategic direction and has emboldened our vision of a society where all older people can be active, visible, creative, connected and confident about ageing and the opportunities this stage of life brings.

Understanding that enhancing the ageing experience necessitates comprehensive policy responses across multiple fronts, over the next five years we will continue to align our work with key strategies such as:

- The National Positive Ageing Strategy
- Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 - 2025
- The National Sports Policy and the National Physical Activity Plan
- The successor to the Arts Council of Ireland’s Strategy Making Great Art Work 2016 - 2025
- The current Creative Ireland Programme (to 2027)
- The Department of Rural and Community Development’s Statement of Strategy 2023 - 2025
- The Department of Health - Pathways to Wellbeing National Mental Health Promotion Plan 2024 - 2030
- The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

This document is a call to action not only for ourselves, but also for our funders, our partners and participants. It is an invitation to continue to work with us in extending our reach and in enhancing the ageing experience for all older people. We look forward to working with you to make it happen.



Josephine Feehily, Chair



Karen Horgan, CEO

Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

An Ireland where older age is recognised as a time of opportunity and where all older people can be active, visible, creative, connected and confident about ageing.

Our Mission

Create opportunities that empower older people to enhance individual and community wellbeing through participation in physical activity and recreational sport, arts and creativity, personal development and active citizenship initiatives.

Our Values

Participation

We uphold the right of all older people to freely participate in the cultural life of the community.

Inclusion

We promote inclusion and diversity in everything we do, and we strive to ensure that our participants reflect the widest possible range of older people.

Inspiration

We inspire society to recognise ageing as a time of opportunity, growth and discovery, where the knowledge and experience of older people continue to be valued.

Innovation

We deliver innovative high quality Programmes informed by research and public engagement.

Excellence

We strive for excellence and adhere to best practice principles in everything that we do.

Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Strategic Theme One:

Enhancing the ageing experience

1

Overview

Our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes have a vital role in realising our ambitions for enhancing the ageing experience. We want to support older people to seize the opportunities that are available and to thrive rather than just to survive. Inclusive social and cultural events are essential for connected and resilient communities and welcoming, accessible and appropriate programming is key to participation.

What does success look like?

Reframing attitudes to ageing will lead to more older people taking part in our Programmes.



Strategic Objectives	Sought Outcomes	How we will achieve this
Encourage greater participation in and expand the reach of our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes so as to promote personal, community and civic development.	The reach of Age & Opportunity's Programmes is amplified to positively impact the lives and wellbeing of older people in a diverse society.	- Develop and deliver initiatives through our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes that are engaging and enjoyable and result in tangible benefits to the lives of older people. - Create opportunities to reach structurally vulnerable groups of older people with existing and new initiatives. - Develop further enhancements to existing Programmes and develop new initiatives which promote personal, community and civic development. - Augment delivery channels and seek new opportunities for promotion and participant engagement. - Develop systems of live data collection to monitor participant numbers and engagement.
Develop a structure to identify and challenge ageism and negative stereotypes of ageing through all Programme initiatives.	Ageing is viewed as a time of opportunity, participation, growth and discovery.	- Develop and deliver a diverse range of initiatives designed to highlight different aspects of ageing and various types of participation through the organisation's Programmes. - Reinforce the message that Age & Opportunity is challenging negative stereotypes through all Programme initiatives. - Develop pathways for delivery of the organisation's ageism related initiatives into new audiences, including the public, private and voluntary sector and older peoples' groups.
Conduct and collaborate on research and evaluation with Programme participants, older people and other research organisations.	Learning from our Programmes is amplified to have a positive impact on the lives and wellbeing of older people.	- Develop an organisational Research Strategy. - Conduct, commission and collaborate on research to further strategic objectives and inform Programme development. - Develop capacity and experience within our Public Person Involvement (PPI) Group. - Develop organisational capacity to consult with older people. - Conduct robust evaluation across the Active, Arts and Engage Programmes and develop a common approach to data collection across the organisation.

Strategic Themes

Strategic Theme Two: Influencing public policy

Overview

Based on the guiding principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and inspiration, Age & Opportunity has identified eleven policy priorities that reflect our many years of engagement with older people. All of these priorities were developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, and they underpin our work to inform public policy and challenge ageism in Ireland.

What does success look like?

Policy change and development will reflect our stated priorities.

Strategic Objectives	Sought Outcomes	How we will achieve this
Strengthen engagement and communication with politicians and national level policy makers and community leaders.	Age & Opportunity is viewed by stakeholders as an informative, authentic, independent, authoritative and influential voice on ageing.	- Build effective relationships with relevant government officials. - Leverage organisational learning from consultation and engagement to inform policy debate and development.
Shape informed, compelling and targeted goals for relevant policy and decision makers.	Public policy and its implementation at national and community level is more informed by the lived experience of older people.	- Pursue stated policy priorities through delivery of our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes, research, communications and advocacy. All Policy Positions are available here: https://ageandopportunity.ie/resources/policy-and-research/ - Use organisational, national and international evidence to inform policy debate and development, through submissions to national level policy makers.
Create more opportunities for older people to have their voices heard by relevant policy and decision makers.	An increased recognition of the social, civic, cultural and economic contribution of the diversity of older people to society.	- Ensure that older people have a voice, by engaging with and listening to their views in order to inform policy debate and development. - Use organisational, national and international evidence to highlight the contribution of older people to society.

Strategic Theme Three: Strategic Engagement with Stakeholders

Overview

Engage strategically with stakeholders, including the diverse population of older people, Programme participants, older people’s groups, other NGOs, partners, volunteers, funders and sponsors to achieve and disseminate mutual strategic objectives in a sustainable and effective way.

What does success look like?

Effective collaboration between all stakeholders will result in the extension of our reach and an enhancement of the ageing experience for all older people.

Strategic Objectives	Sought Outcomes	How we will achieve this
Engage strategically with stakeholders, including the diverse population of older people, Programme participants, older people’s groups, other NGOs, partners, volunteers, funders and sponsors to achieve and disseminate mutual strategic objectives in a sustainable and effective way.	Strengthen and widen our sectoral voice.	- Enhance co-operation and collaboration with other NGOs in the sector, particularly through membership of the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs and collaboration with Age Friendly Ireland. - Enhance strategic relationships with grant recipients and ensure the development of new innovative and responsive initiatives through them. - Continue to deliver value for funders and participants. - Identify key strategic partners and stakeholders as a resource to the organisation generally and our Active, Arts and Engage Programmes.
Increase the reach and visibility of Age & Opportunity through work with partners and stakeholders.	Extension, recognition and increased support of the wide range of Age & Opportunity Programmes which are proven to produce successful, sustainable quality of life gains for older people.	- Develop and implement an organisational Communications Strategy (for the lifetime of this Strategy) with the aim of raising the profile of Age & Opportunity. - Continue to facilitate further links with relevant stakeholders. - Define outreach and engagement strategies for participants and potential participants. - Deepen and strengthen key relationships - promoting a positive, trusting, and inclusive strategic and operating environment based upon an effective, open, two-way dialogue with internal and external stakeholders and enhancing transparency.

Strategic Themes

Strategic Theme Four:

Excellence Through Leadership and Governance

4

Overview

The promotion of inspirational and inclusive leadership and excellent standards of governance, compliance and accountability across the organisation is of vital importance to the implementation of this Strategic Plan.

What does success look like?

Age & Opportunity is recognised amongst all stakeholders as exemplifying a model of excellence in leadership and governance.



Strategic Objectives	Sought Outcomes	How we will achieve this
Have a leadership and performance culture that is aligned with organisation values, promotes continuous learning and development, ensures accountability and motivates, challenges and develops the organisation.	Age & Opportunity has a leadership and performance culture that fosters a culture of recognition and continued development of staff and demonstrates healthy work-life balance.	• Develop and improve our organisational structure, operating model, people, and culture. • Ensure the continued availability of the Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme. • Develop a comprehensive training plan which identifies training and educational opportunities for the ongoing professional and personal development of staff, consistent with achieving our strategic objectives. • Develop an Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
Ensure stronger collaboration internally across the organisation's Active, Arts and Engage Programmes.	Capitalise on the synergies between Programmes within the work cycles of relevant partner organisations.	• Collaborate on an organisation-wide basis to enhance our offerings to our stakeholders. • Explore potential for engagement with partner organisations from a full organisational perspective.
Ensure excellent standards of governance, compliance and accountability across the organisation.	Age & Opportunity is recognised amongst all stakeholders as a model of excellence regarding governance and corporate responsibility.	• Ensure robust reporting and accountability mechanisms at all levels of the organisation. • Ensure that Age & Opportunity has a leadership and performance culture that is informed by best practice. • Maintain a robust Risk Management Policy and Process. • Maintain a Register of Compliance to monitor and track compliance and adherence to funder, regulatory and legislative requirements, including the Charities Regulatory Authority's Governance Code. • Ensure that Age & Opportunity carries out its functions in an ethical and professional manner.
Seek organisational financial sustainability for the lifetime of this Strategy and beyond.	Age & Opportunity has sufficient resources allocated for the effective implementation of this Strategy, and ensures economy, efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in all its operations and the Board regularly reviews the reserves position.	• Ensure continuation of existing funding and maintain relationships with funders. • Report to funders on outcomes and value for money achieved. • Examine all suitable funding opportunities and prioritise initiatives that result in significant contributions to staffing and operational costs and continued sustainability. • Ensure that resource allocation and the prioritisation of available resources are linked to strategic objectives and that budget setting and budget reporting is linked to strategic outcomes.
Demonstrate best practice in energy efficiency and sustainability.	Age & Opportunity will ensure that consideration is given to social and sustainability responsibilities.	• Develop a Climate Action Policy and Plan. • Proactively promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals throughout the organisation's operations, where relevant.



Resourcing and Delivering our Plan

This Strategic Plan will be a living document that guides all our activities for the next five years. We will revisit it regularly to ensure that it remains relevant, and effective in the context of evolving economic and operating circumstances and changes in the ageing sector. Several strategic objectives have been defined under each of the four strategic priorities. Each of the priorities and associated sought outcomes are strongly interlinked with the others.

On a yearly basis, Age & Opportunity’s Senior Management Team will identify specific deliverables under each of the four strategic priorities, which will in turn shape the organisation’s annual Business Plans during the lifetime of this Strategy and identify KPIs to monitor progress of achievement of these priorities.

The various actions will be resourced with the necessary depth and range of expertise and experience required to deliver on them. This approach will leverage the organisation’s capacity to deliver effective, and pragmatic Programmes and initiatives. The various activities will be driven at the highest levels of the organisation led by Senior Management and involving regular Board oversight, enabling us to optimise the use of limited resources and deliver initiatives for older people.

Enablers

The following Enablers are crucial to the success of the implementation of this Strategic Plan:

- Direct contact with older people through Programme delivery.
- Communication and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Sufficient levels of funding.
- Appropriate staff capacity.
- Experienced and committed staff and volunteer team.
- Highly motivated, well trained and supported volunteer mentors and peer leaders.
- Dedicated Board and Committees and Advisory Groups.
- A common approach to data collection across all programmes and organisation wide.
- Access to up to date and accurate data and information.
- Robust partnerships.
- Excellent standards of governance and accountability.

Implementation Approach

In order to successfully implement this Strategy, we have identified various principles, that will be used to guide its implementation.

We will be agile and flexible:

We will be agile and flexible throughout the implementation phase of this Plan. This means that through regular review, anticipated timelines, approaches, activities and available resources may change as we deliver on our Sought Outcomes.

All of our processes will be older person centred:

We will ensure that older people are at the centre of every planning and implementation conversation.

We will maintain the momentum for change:

In order to maintain our momentum and appetite for change, we must identify and communicate the existing challenges and work collaboratively with stakeholders to generate and implement innovative solutions.

We will measure and monitor our progress:

We will put in place the required infrastructure and processes that allow us to collect, analyse and leverage data to track the progress of the Strategy against identified KPIs.

The CEO will report to the Board at every Board meeting in relation to the implementation of the Strategy and will report on progress using a RAG status for each annual Business Plan, outlining the KPIs that have been completed, are on track, have been delayed or have yet to start.

The Board will regularly review the data in the report and also the context and seek clarification on movements in assessments and the underlying framework for how objectives are assessed.

We also report on progress on the implementation of this Strategic Plan in our Annual Reports throughout the lifetime of the Plan.



Marino Institute of Education
Griffith Avenue, Dublin,
D09K4P6, Ireland
t +353 (0)1 268 8607
e info@ageandopportunity.ie

ageandopportunity.ie



A company limited by
guarantee, not having a share
capital. Registered in Ireland.
No: 284318.
Charity No: CHY 12365.
Registered Charity No:
RCN 20036010.



SPÓRT ÉIREANN
SPORT IRELAND

