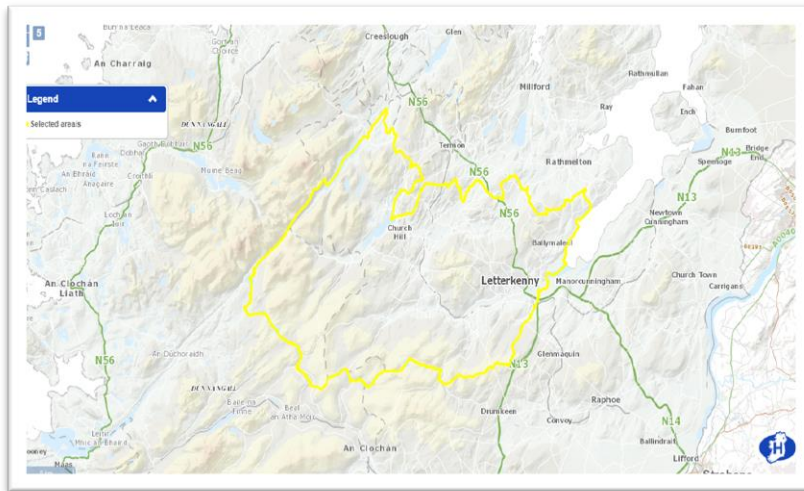


4.12 Letterkenny Primary Care Team Area Profile

1. Background

Letterkenny Primary Care Team (PCT) Area Profile covers three Primary Care Teams located around the central town of Letterkenny with Finn Valley PCT to the north, Milford/ Fanad PCT to the north, Derryveagh to the west and Fintown & the Rosses to the south west.

Figure. 1: Letterkenny PCT area



The current Letterkenny Primary Care Team covers three separate Primary Care Team areas: Ballyraine Letterkenny Railway House Letterkenny and Scally Practice Letterkenny. A decision was made at the outset that one Primary Care Team would cover the whole area, and although some meetings have been held it has never really functioned in any productive way.

The Community Health Forum in the Letterkenny PCT area also operates as one, but has struggled over the years with getting people involved. In the past the CHF has met on a more regular basis than the PCT, but it has not met since the new Community Support Worker started in September 2017.

2. Overview of Area¹

Letterkenny is the largest town in Donegal and acts as a service hub for the rest of the County, particularly the north of the County. Letterkenny along with Derry City is designated as one of ten Development Gateways in the Republic of Ireland (National Spatial Strategy). It is unique in that it is a cross-border gateway linked to Derry City. This Letterkenny - Derry Gateway is the focal point for the North West Gateway Initiative which is being promoted by the Governments of the Republic of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Executive, with a view towards placing an emphasis on the development of the North West Region of Ireland.

¹ The statistical data in the section is drawn primarily from the Area Profiles developed by the HSE Public Health Department using Census 2016 data and other relevant health data sources.

As the largest town in the County, Letterkenny is home to many services including leisure centres, swimming pools, sports facilities, theatres, arts centres and a third level Institute of Technology (LYIT). Letterkenny has the following services:

- 17 Primary Schools
- 4 Post Primary Schools
- 3 Primary Care Centres
- 4 Health Centres
- 8 Public Health Nurses
- Letterkenny University Hospital (with Emergency Department)
- St Conal's Hospital
- 1 Library (County Central Library)
- 1 Fire station
- 1 Garda Stations
- 2 Day Centres
- 1 council Public Services Centres
- 1 MABS
- Social Prescribing Programme
- 1 Women's Centre
- An Grianan Theatre
- 1 Cinema
- 3 Community/Leisure/Sport Centre
- Colmcille Heritage Centre, Church Hill
- Gartan Outdoor Education Centre
- Glebe Gallery
- 1 Community Development Project (Letterkenny CDP)
- Cara House Family Resource Centre
- Regional Cultural Centre
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Rossan College
- 1 Men Shed

The town is also well served also with various community projects offering supports to women, parents, families and communities including youth projects, and various other community groups supporting different interests e.g. sports, mental health, substance misuse, refugee support, domestic violence, heritage and culture. It has one Family Resource Centre and a Community Centre.

The issue of transport is not as acute in Letterkenny as in other parts of the County, as it is the central arrival and departure hub for many bus companies both within and outside of the County.

Population Structure

The population of Letterkenny PCT area in 2016 was 26,144 with 8% of these in the 0-4 year old age bracket which is above the County and national average (6.8% and 7% respectively). This is in fact the only PCT in the area that has a higher birth rate than the County or national figure. It is also telling that in many other PCT areas, 1 in every four or five of the population is over 65 years of age but in Letterkenny, only 1 in every 10 persons (10%) is over the age of 65, lower than the County (16%) and national (13%) averages.

A closer look at the figures show that there was actually a decline in the birth rates (0-4 age bracket) at 6% which is lower than rates experienced in other PCTs but nonetheless a decline. At the other end of the age spectrum, much like other areas, the population in the older age category has increased since 2011 with the biggest increase seen in the 70 – 74 age bracket, rising by 37%. The majority of people in the older age categories are women reflecting national trends of women living longer.

The population shift in the younger working population is not as pronounced as in other areas yet there still is evidence of significant proportions of young people aged 20 – 34 leaving the area (declined by 15% in both the 20 – 24 and 25 -29 age bracket). These shifts however are lower than the changes recorded at County level and at national level.

In relation to population projections, it is anticipated that the population will rise to 28,070 by 2025 (a rise of 7%). Projections for the younger age brackets show a decline in the population from 0 – 9 with changes of 15% for the 0-4 age group and 10% for the 5 – 9 age group. What this will mean in numbers is a decrease of 520 young people in these categories. The younger working population will also experience a decline in population from the age of 30 – 39 with a change of up to 20% for this age bracket (corresponding to 771 people). From this age upwards, the projected population figures steadily increase where the 85+ age cohort will increase by 65% resulting in 420 people of this age living in the area and 3,832 people over the age 65 living in the area (corresponding to 14% of the population).

Age Dependency

Reflecting the demographic data above, the age dependency ratio for Letterkenny is relatively low at 50% compared to County (60%) and national (53%) figures. This means that for every one person working in the area, there is one person dependent on public or state services (under 15 and over 65). This is a very different picture to other parts of the County and is the lowest age dependency ratio across all of the PCTs. It should be no surprise therefore that the old dependent population figure is low at 16% (County figure 25%) given the relatively small older population in the area, but the young dependent population is following County and national figures of 34% and 32% respectively.

Nationality & Ethnicity

The proportion of people of other nationalities is high in Letterkenny compared to other areas at 16%. The Polish community accounts for 4% of that figure, 3% are from the UK, 2% are from elsewhere in the EU and 4% are from 'elsewhere in the world'. In total (excluding visitors), the 2016 Census showed that there were 3,337 people of different nationalities (other than Irish) living in the area.

Letterkenny also has a significant Traveller population with 283 people identifying as a Traveller in the 2016 Census. This accounts for 1% of the population which is higher than the County (0.4%), CHO 1 (0.5%) and the national figure (0.7%).

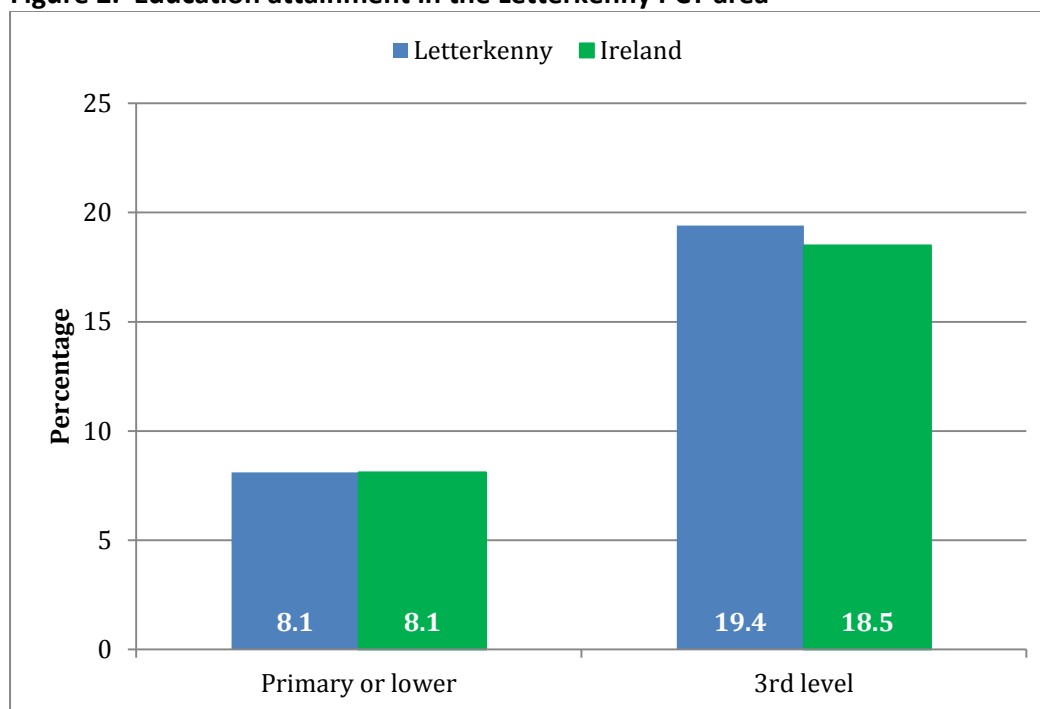
Socio-Economic Profile

Nearly one in ten (9%) of all the people in the Letterkenny area are categorised as ‘professional’ which is the highest of all PCT areas and unusually is higher than the national average of 8.1%. The proportion of people classified as ‘semi or unskilled’ is lower than the County (16.6%) and national average (14.1%) at 13%.

Educational Attainment

The proportion of people educated to primary level only is also quite low compared to other areas at 8%. This is the lowest across all PCT areas and also lower than the County (13.4%) and national (8.1%) figures. At the other end of the education spectrum, nearly one in every five people has attained a third level education (19%) again much higher than the County average (14%) and close to the national figure of 18.1%. These figures have all improved since the 2011 Census.

Figure 2. Education attainment in the Letterkenny PCT area



Unemployment

The unemployment rate in Letterkenny is 7%, similar to the County average and slightly above the national figure of 5.6%. This rate has fallen significantly since 2011 (by 26%) but much like the other areas it is difficult to know whether the fall in unemployment is a result of job creation and opportunities in the area or the migration/ emigration of the working population or the

increase in the number of people ageing into retirement or the numbers of people on labour market schemes. It is highly likely to be a combination of all four factors

Occupations

The total number of people at work in the Letterkenny PCT area in 2016 was 6,308 accounting for 53% male and 47% female. The greatest numbers work in Professional Services, Commerce and Trade and Manufacturing (outside of the 'Other' category).

Industry	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	466	425	41
Building & Construction	343	318	25
Manufacturing Industries	902	658	244
Commerce and Trade	1280	656	624
Transport & Communication	268	203	65
Public Administration	371	181	190
Professional Services	1490	366	1124
Other	1188	555	633

Family Structure

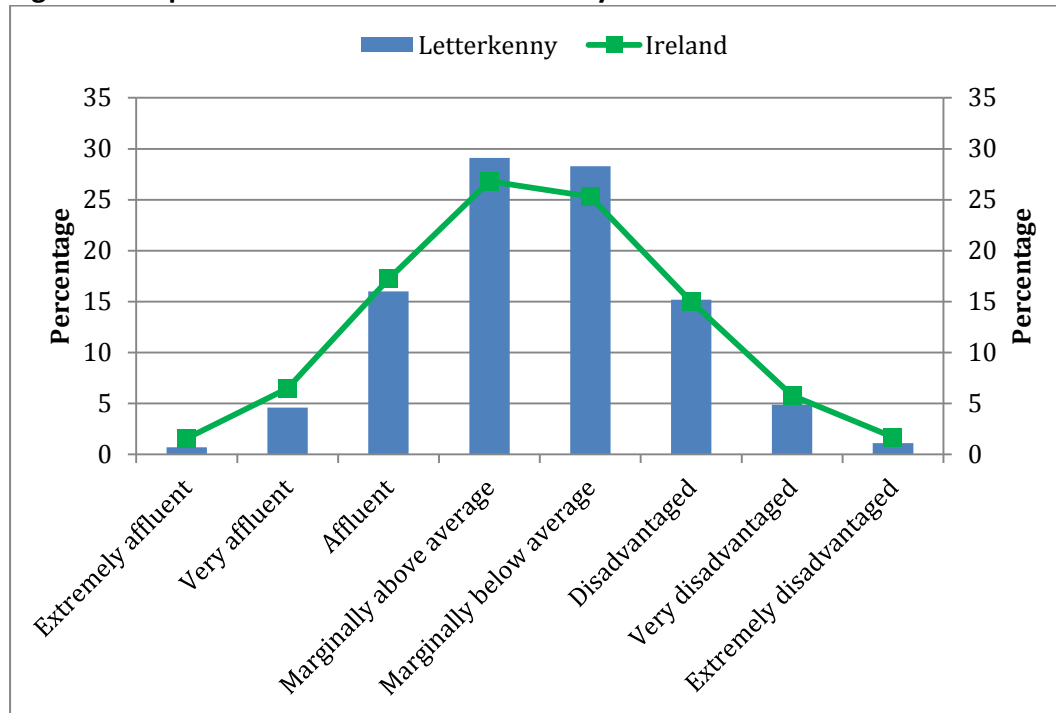
There were 3,794 families in Letterkenny in 2016. One in five were families are 'empty nesters' and 'retired' (19%), and 40% of families had children in the education system (primary and secondary) which corresponds with County figures but are slightly higher than national figures. The proportion of the population in preschool (11%) is also higher than the County or national averages, indicating the need for focus on early school and adolescents over the next number of years.

Looking at the family structure, 17% of families are one parent families in the area which is about the same as other PCT areas and slightly lower than the County (18%) and national averages (18%).

Deprivation

One in every five people living in the Letterkenny PCT area are categorised as disadvantaged (21%), broken down across 15% of the population are 'disadvantaged', a further 5.8% 'very disadvantaged' and 1.7% are 'extremely disadvantaged'. This is the lowest deprivation figure compared to all other PCTs by a significant margin (other areas recording lower deprivation rates include Moville (29%) and Donegal Town (29%), lower than the County figure of 38.6% and more in line with what is seen nationally at 22.5%.

Figure 3. Deprivation Levels in the Letterkenny PCT area



Health Indicators

Four hundred and forty five people (2% of the population) rate their health as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’. This is in line with County and CHO 1 averages (2%) but a little higher than the national figure of 1.6%.

Connectivity

One in every 10 persons in the area does not own a motor car which is a lower than the County (14%) and national (15%) figure. The town also compares favourably to other areas in terms of broadband with nearly two thirds of the population indicating they have broadband (69%) which is above the County average (62%). Nineteen percent of the population do not have access to the internet in the Letterkenny PCT area.

3. Consultation Findings

Overview

This section presents the findings arising from discussions at the CHF focus group where 8 people were in attendance. Given the PCT had not met in over a year, it was not possible to hold a consultation with members but they were given the option of participating through the online survey, and 10 people took this opportunity. This section also incorporates the findings of the consultations held as part of the Healthy Ireland Community Engagement process where meetings were held across the 5 Municipal Districts (the MDs of Letterkenny most relevant here) on health and wellbeing issues.

It is important to note that this section directly reflects the views of the people who attended the focus groups, and has not been filtered in any way. Where possible fact checking has taken

place, but there is the possibility that some feedback reflect personal viewpoints which may or may not be wholly accurate. However, people's perceptions reflect their own reality so if views are considered 'inaccurate' then this can be taken as a communication issue that needs to be addressed.

Access

Transport. Transport around the town is poor, and the routes and times are 'hit and miss'. Given the sprawling nature of the town, it is very difficult to get around it without a car. There is a town bus which is privately run, but it does not have wheelchair access. Bus Eireann buses are also not accessible for people in wheelchairs. The other issue regarding transport in the town are congestion and traffic, which 'only seems to be getting worse'. Finally, speeding in estates is an issue and it is extremely difficult to get any traffic calming measures in place via the Council.

Information. More accessible information on local supports and services in both the statutory and community and voluntary sector is needed. People are not aware of what is available to them in the town.

Services and Community Connectivity

Inadequate Housing. Social Housing is very hard to secure and the standard is often poor. People in the MD consultation talked about accommodation being at 'crisis point' in the County. There is inadequate hostel accommodation for people who are homeless, in terms of both availability and quality. St. Vincent de Paul have limited short stay accommodation available and the other option people are availing of is 'couch surfing' but this means that people are not eligible to be classed as 'homeless' and therefore not in a position to receive support. The standard of private rented accommodation in the town is generally very poor and is usually not well maintained, and it is the most vulnerable people who are being exploited by private landlords. The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme does not have strict landlord maintenance standards and this does not help.

Increasing social isolation. This is a particular issue for older women who often just want company and a chat rather than a workshop or a course. Given the older age demographics and projections, this will continue to be an ongoing issue as older women are living longer than men. For women who are newly retired or whose spouse is newly retired, this is also a challenge. Social isolation is also an issue for people with disabilities as public transport in and around Letterkenny is challenging and accessible and affordable taxis is also a problem. There are limited places where adults can socialise in a non-alcoholic environment.

Immigrant families. There are many families in Letterkenny from different nationalities and some face particular challenges such as language, culture and social isolation from the wider community. Dealing with health professionals and explaining issues of health is particularly difficult and bringing their children to explain is not appropriate. Anecdotally, Chinese people are living in the town illegally and so are reluctant to or are unable to access health and welfare services and supports.

Under-resourced Community and Voluntary Sector. This sector experienced significant cuts during the recession that has severely impacted on the sector's capacity to provide services and supports. Many groups have simply ceased to exist. These cuts have not been reversed in any

meaningful way with the upturn in the economy, and far too much is now expected from the sector operating out of 'good will'. The sector perseveres in supporting people when the state says 'we have done all we can'. Whereas funding and supports have reduced, bureaucracy and reporting requirements have increased with new governance requirements and regulations added every year.

Unemployment. As in other areas, people questioned the unemployment rate as this is not the reality they see on the ground. They are suspicious of figures being massaged through labour market schemes. The number of long term unemployed needs to be addressed, moving people away from long term dependence on benefits and consequent impact on mental health. There are too many disincentives in place that present barriers to people getting a job (likely to earn less than they would get on benefits that in a minimum wage job). Children in families where there is a long-term unemployed parent often follow the pattern of their parents, leading to intergenerational unemployment. Finally, people with disabilities face particular issues around accessing CE schemes as there is a risk if they go on a scheme, that they may lose their disability benefit. For many, understandably, this is a risk they are unwilling to take, and yet many would appreciate the experience of work supporting their local community.

In some cases, young people are given rented accommodation funded by Tusla, which is subject to meeting certain conditions e.g. school attendance, and if the young person does not comply, their accommodation is 'at risk'. Young people in this situation often have complex needs e.g. mental health problems, addiction issues and experience of domestic violence and need to be positively supported, feel able to ask for help, rather than sanctioned in this way.

Health Services

A number of issues were raised around Letterkenny University Hospital:

- People are often misdirected to the Emergency Department by Primary Care services, and this clogs up the system making waiting times often up to over 10 hours. Also the Triage system at Letterkenny University Hospital does not seem to be working properly
- All out-patients appointments are at 2pm, so it is a first come first served basis and people can be waiting for hours
- Most doctors are on very short-term contracts (7 – 12 months) which is not long enough to plan to settle in the area
- GDPR (newly introduced data regulation and privacy) will have an impact on people ringing about spousal/parental appointments
- X-Rays are taking 4-6 weeks to get back to the GP

Other issues raised with the health services:

- Travellers often need access to Older People's services at a younger age than the general population due to lifestyle factors and health inequalities
- Home care packages are inadequate
- Health services need to see the whole person in terms of the link between physical and mental health
- Poor access to counseling for young people (under 17 years)
- Improved Addiction services are needed (detox, step down supported housing, therapeutic communities)
- There are a lot of chronic conditions that require management at PCT level and there needs to be more education around self-management and patient ownership

Mental Health

The discussion on mental health concentrated very much on young people, and how difficult it was to access mental health services, and the long waiting lists for CAMHS and Psychology services. When a young person asks for help, they have to wait too long for support. Further, access to services seems unequal, with those that shout the loudest and who have the capacity to shout the loudest, getting seen. Concern was expressed about the levels of Prozac prescriptions for young people.

The transition from CAHMS to AMHS is often fraught as vulnerable young people have to tell their story again to a different team and start building new relationships with clinicians. There also appears to be limited access to talk based therapies, and consequently the medication model is generally used, which is not always appropriate.

Healthy Ireland Priorities

Physical Activity. Letterkenny is not a safe town for walking, e.g the roundabouts are very dangerous and it makes it difficult for people to get out to exercise. There is a lack of pedestrian crossings and the cycle paths are very stop-start.

Sexual Health. Educating young people about sexual health and sexually transmitted infections is a real issue, but it is not getting a much attention as 'mental health is sexy' at the moment, and sexual health is not.

Vulnerable Groups.

A number of groups were singled out for special attention as being more vulnerable and at greater risk of health inequalities:

- People with substance misuse problems (there is only 1 Drug/Alcohol Outreach worker in the County)
- Adult LGBTI+ people (there are better supports for young LGBTI+ people)
- Children with disabilities
- Black and Ethnic minorities
- Young unemployed people and the long-term unemployed
- Travellers
- Immigrants from Eastern European countries
- People with limited mobility

Positives in the Letterkenny PCT area

- Pieta House now having a presence in the County which is helping fill the gaps in the HSE mental health services
- The CE Scheme for Rehab people has been going now for four years and is great project. It is only a pilot and there are calls to make it permanent
- Intergenerational projects have been positive e.g. younger people teaching older people how to use their tablets, phones, laptops etc.
- Letterkenny CDP Project for older people making crafts in their home which are sold in charity shops
- The Senior Alert service continues to work very well

4. Recommendations from Letterkenny Consultation

PCTs

- HSE to invest in and formally support the reinstatement, development and improvement of PCTs in the County in line with national policy
- Increased connectivity and communication between primary and secondary care services
- Increase education around self-management and patient ownership for people with chronic conditions

Appointments:

- Carry out a County wide review of reasons for Did Not Attends (DNAs) for health appointments. The current policy is that if a person does not attend an appointment without prior notice, they are automatically put the 'the back of the queue'. Account needs to be taken of unavoidable circumstances that mean people cannot attend
- Where it is known that literacy is an issue, follow up appointment letters with a telephone call and simplify appointment letters

Letterkenny University Hospital:

- Reduce Emergency Department waiting times by improving the Triage system and educating Primary Care staff on when it is appropriate to send people to the ED
- In the ED and Outpatients Waiting Room, introduce a number/intercom system in order to save time and protect privacy
- Make the reception area in the ED 'soundproof' to protect privacy
- Reduce time for X-Ray results to be returned to the GP (4-6 weeks)

Mental Health:

- Reduce CAMHS waiting lists
- Improve transition from CAMHS to AMHS
- Improve access to talking therapies to reduce reliance/overuse of medication for people with mental health problems
- Fill vacant mental health services posts and address barriers to people taking up jobs in the County

Housing:

- Ensure the County Homeless Action Team (interagency (statutory, non-statutory and community & voluntary sector membership), coordinated by DCC, addresses the issues affecting homeless people in the County
- Appoint a dedicated County Homeless Worker

Access:

- Improve HSE interpreter/translation language services at primary and secondary care (Indian, Chinese, Bangladeshi, Roma, Polish, Arabic)
- Provide accessible information on local supports and services (languages/plain English etc.). Letterkenny CDP are doing this to some extent through a private grant
- Make Letterkenny more pedestrian friendly
- Improve access to green spaces and improve the green spaces

Substance Abuse:

- Improve outreach services for people with substance misuse problems
- Make the CE scheme for Rehab people permanent and sustainable
- Improve Addiction Services e.g. detox facilities, step down supported housing and therapeutic communities

Community Support:

- Establish and maintain parity of esteem between the Community and Voluntary sector and the Statutory Sector, with better financial and resource supports put in place
- Set up an adult LGBTI+ support group(s) where needed across the County.

Employment

- Facilitate the retention of disability benefit when a person goes on a CE/TUS scheme
- Increase length of the TUS/CE schemes

Sexual Health

- Increase awareness of sexual health for young people as there is more to this topic than consent and contraception

Positive Mental Health

- Increase the number of community based programmes e.g. gardening, social activity, physical and mental health boosting activities, community food growing. These activities should be promoted and shared within and across the County so that skills and knowledge are shared

Positive Ageing

- Ensure the new national call/befriending service (ALONE) takes account of the local need and situations through setting up a County advisory group
- Provide more activities/courses for Older People e.g. IT, languages, arts & crafts etc.
- Enable people under 65 to access the senior alert service in cases where it will impact positively on their safety and wellbeing
- Facilitate Travellers accessing Older People's services when they need the service, and not based on their age