



A Study on the Awareness, Perceptions and Experiences of Older People of Rightsizing

Research on Rightsizing for 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population' policy statement



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1 Executive Summary

Our population is ageing and the projected trends indicate that it is set to continue growing. By 2051, it is expected that there will be between 1.5 and 1.6 million persons aged 65 years and over living in Ireland. Older people are living longer and while that is a positive trend, it also brings challenges. A particular challenge is housing – not enough supply suitable accommodation in local communities, and how we support older people who wish to remain in their homes for as long as possible and remain active in their communities.

In recent years, the World Health Organisation's Age Friendly Cities Initiative has propelled a greater awareness and appreciation of the needs of older people. Ireland has enthusiastically embraced this initiative and, through the Local Authority structure, has implemented age friendly policies and practices. In 2019, Ireland became the first country to be acknowledged as age friendly by the World Health Organisation.

While much has been written over the last twenty years, not enough is known about the perceptions and attitudes of older people to right-sizing. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) published a report on 'Housing Conditions of Ireland's older population: Implications for physical and mental health' (2016), which indicated that 92% of middle-aged and older adults in Ireland live in an owner-occupied home, the majority of whom own their home outright. The report states that over half of adults aged 50 years and over experience some housing problems. Furthermore, the report emphasises that as people age, they are more likely to live alone which may affect their ability to maintain housing quality, ensure energy efficiency and manage their accommodation. The TILDA report comprehensively addresses the implications of housing conditions on the physical and mental wellbeing of older people.

This study on perceptions and experiences of rightsizing was proposed by South Dublin County Council, who worked in partnership with Age Friendly Ireland to undertake the research. It built on a 2019 survey by Age Friendly Ireland which enquired into how local authorities are preparing housing for the ageing population.

This Research Report on 'Older People's Perceptions and Experiences of Right-sizing' aims to address the deficit of understanding of the attitudes and experiences of older people to the physical and environmental aspects of their housing needs. The findings from the research commissioned by Age Friendly Ireland supports other recent research carried out in Ireland.

The survey primarily targeted members of Older People's Councils in all tenure forms throughout Ireland. It was also advertised through Public Participation Networks. The total sample was 532 respondents. Data on the profile of survey respondents showed that the majority (83%) were between the ages of 55 and 74; 88% owned their own homes and 80% were living alone or as part of a couple.

Based on the consultation process carried out during this research project, the responses received highlighted the attitudes and perceptions of older people to rightsizing.



77%

said their home was **too large** for their current needs



90%

occupy accommodation of **3 bedrooms** or more



98%

wanted an **energy efficient** home



80%

said their home was **too expensive** to **heat** and/or maintain



44%

said they would be prepared to **consider moving**



93%

said they wanted a **minimum** of **2 bedrooms**



79%

would like to see an **enhanced care package** incorporated into new Age Friendly developments

The following were the most significant findings:

1.1.1 Key Findings:

- ▶ 90% occupy accommodation of 3 bedrooms or more
- ▶ 77% said their home was too large for their current needs
- ▶ 80% said their home was too expensive to heat and/or maintain
- ▶ 44% said they would be prepared to consider moving, with a further 14% unsure
- ▶ 83% said that they would like to see the availability of suitable accommodation, designed specifically for the over 55's, in or close to the area in which they live
- ▶ 93% said they wanted a minimum of two bedrooms
- ▶ 98% wanted an energy efficient home
- ▶ 79% would like to see an enhanced care package incorporated into new Age Friendly developments
- ▶ 69% would like to see a support coordination package provided to ease concerns and address the practical challenges of moving home

As a consequence of the information collated during the course of the research project, the following are the main recommendations proposed in the report:

1.1.2 Key Recommendations:

- ▶ Designation of **County Development Plan objectives**, specifically for accommodation suitable for the housing needs of older people
- ▶ The promotion of a greater **awareness of right-sizing options**
- ▶ The development of **right-sizing incentives**
 - ▶ A front-loaded **finance scheme**
 - ▶ The roll out of **Older Person's Integrated Services Manager**
 - ▶ A financial contribution towards **relocation costs**
- ▶ The publication of **right-sizing guidelines**
- ▶ The reconsideration of a **Social Housing Passport Scheme**
- ▶ The undertaking of **post Covid-19 housing research**



2 Introduction

Age Friendly Ireland's vision is that

"every county in Ireland will be a great place in which to grow old."

Over the last decade, Age Friendly Ireland (AFI) has consulted widely with older people on matters of concern to them. In 2016, the Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative (HaPAI) collaborated with AFI and Local Authorities to carry out research with people aged 55 and over, which according to Jim Daly, TD and Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, was "Research that for the first time shone a light on the experiences and preferences of older people living in our communities" (The Positive Ageing in Age Friendly Cities and Counties: Local Indicators for Ireland, HaPAI, 2016).

As the older population in Ireland increases in age, the need to explore housing options of older people has gained considerable momentum. Enabling older people to live longer in their homes is an objective of national government policy, as is evidenced in the policy statement '***Housing Options for our Ageing Population***' published in February 2019 by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health.

Consultations on housing have consistently shown that older people want to be able to stay living at home for as long as possible. The work carried out by the Department of Health under the 'Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative' (HaPAI, 2016) and the more recent work of the Housing Agency's 'Thinking Ahead' (2017) clearly support this premise.

In 2019, Age Friendly Ireland conducted a baseline survey of local authorities to explore how they are preparing for population ageing in terms of housing provision. Findings indicated that right-sizing policies were not standardised across the local government sector, and recommended enhanced data collection on underoccupancy and adapted housing. In response to the findings of this quantitative research, South Dublin County Council proposed a follow on study that would gather more qualitative data on older people's perceptions and experiences of rightsizing, with a view to understanding how to support and facilitate rightsizing. South Dublin have been very proactive in addressing the housing needs of older people, and had undertaken local research on underoccupancy to inform targeted infill development of age friendly housing.

The research on 'Older People's Perceptions and Experiences of Right-sizing' was commissioned by Age Friendly Ireland (a shared service function hosted by Meath County Council) in early 2020. It takes cognisance of national and local policy pertinent to older people. It builds on the Government's Policy Statement '***Housing Options for Our Ageing Population***', the ESRI Special Article '***Housing and Ireland's Older Population***' 2016; recent research carried out by the Housing Agency '***Thinking Ahead: Independent and Supported Housing Models for an Ageing Population***' and the Sliotar Report '***Housing for Older People: Future Perspectives***' and data sourced from CSO 2016, TILDA and HaPAI. (Full bibliography of literature reviewed attached in Appendix 1).

This report presents the research and findings of the 'Right-sizing Research Project'. It aims to review current, relevant literature - to collate and analyse the attitudes and perceptions of older people with regard to housing options available to them and present findings and recommendations based on the research.

While much has been written over the last twenty years, little is known about the perceptions and attitudes of older people to right-sizing. This report aims to address this deficit in the Irish context. It also aims to uphold and supplement recent work on this topic and encourage progress.

As part of this research, a questionnaire on right-sizing was developed and rolled out throughout the country. The survey covered social demographics, geographic locations and household occupancy, both private ownership and social tenancy. Moreover, in order to gather qualitative evidence to support the findings of the questionnaire, a number of focus group sessions were organised in four counties. In addition, a number of specific case studies of people who had rightsized, or who were exploring options to adapt their homes or make a move to more suitable accommodation, were identified for further examination.

At this juncture, it is important to note the considerable impact that Covid-19 has had on research methods. Three of the four focus group sessions had to be suspended until alternative arrangements could be made. Furthermore, the questionnaire which initially was to be available both online and in hardcopy format was subsequently available mainly in an online capacity, with hard copies being made available on request. This was due to the fact that most of the older people assisting with the roll out of the questionnaire country-wide were cocooning, in accordance with national government instructions and could therefore only consult with other older people online.

With specific regard to Covid-19, the pandemic will have had a significant impact on older people in particular. It would, therefore, be important to ascertain the views of older people on their housing situation and their future accommodation needs, in light of their experiences of cocooning.

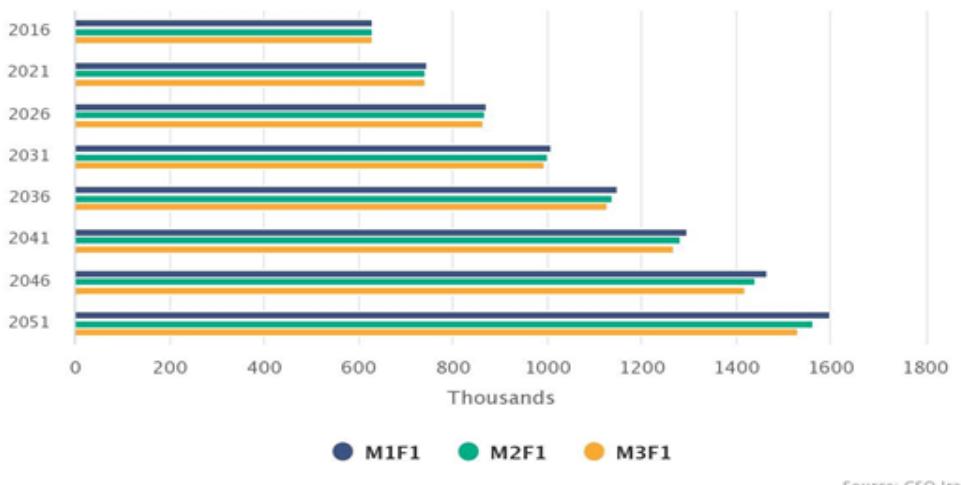
Notwithstanding these challenges, the questionnaire and case studies have presented a number of interesting findings. While the response to the questionnaire cannot be seen as representative of the country as a whole, it does reflect views of older people and is nonetheless valid. On the qualitative side, additional specific case studies were identified and the findings from these case studies are informative and further support the work done in this area.

3 Background and National Context

3.1 Ageing Demographics

According to the World Health Organisation, populations around the world are ageing at a faster pace than in the past. This trend is similar in Ireland. According to the CSO statistics, there has been a 60% rise in our population between 1960 and 2016. In addition, the CSO in its '*Population and Labour Force Projections 2017 -2051*' projects that the population in the Republic of Ireland could rise to between 5.6m and 6.7m people. The older population (i.e. those aged 65 years and over) is projected to increase very significantly to nearly 1.6 million in that period. Further, the very old population (i.e. those aged 80 years of age and over) is set to rise even more dramatically, increasing from 147,800 in 2016 to 549,000.

FIGURE 1 Projected Population aged 65 years and over, 2016–2051



3.2 National Policy

Over the past ten years a number of policy initiatives have been developed, nationally and locally, in response to Ireland's changing profile. The 'National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013' sets the backdrop for thinking about how we can support people in older age. A key principle underpinning Government policy regarding housing and our ageing population was demonstrated in this strategy under Goal 3 - "*to enable people to age with confidence, security and dignity in their own homes and communities for as long as possible*".

This principle was reinforced in the Government's 'Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness' 2016 p.54 - "to support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence for as long as possible". The Government demonstrated its commitment to this policy by the establishing a cross-departmental/inter-agency team to look at progressing housing initiatives. Further evidence of the Government's commitment to this principle can be seen in the development of the new policy statement, launched in February 2019 - 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population' prepared by the

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Department of Health. This policy statement provides a framework by which the Government not only facilitates and promotes a variety of housing options for older people but also supports the putting in place of measures to ensure that sustainable housing is provided in the right locations in order to enable older people to age in the community.

Sláintecare, the Government's ten year strategy for health and social care reform, is another highly significant document in the context of care and ageing, particularly with its ambition to provide more care in the community and close to home, and planned expansion of primary care and homecare.

Other examples of these policy initiatives include the Department of Health's 'Healthy Ireland: A Framework for improved Health and Wellbeing-2013-2025' and the 'National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015-2017', providing the blueprint for ageing policy developments.

The new Programme for Government 2020-2025 '***Our Shared Future***', reinforces the commitment of the earlier '***Housing Options for our Ageing Population***' policy statement. The Programme acknowledges that "being able to live in appropriate housing, with access to health and social care services, improves our health, but also ensures that older people stay close to their families and actively participate in their communities". The Programme pledges to deliver actions that will support the development of a wider choice of appropriate housing options and community supports.

3.3 Local Policy

In October 2012 the Government published '***Putting People First - Action Programme for Effective Local Government***' which set out Government policy for reforms across all the main areas of local government. The Programme was amended in 2019. One of the key principles underpinning the programme is that '***Providing strong community supports helps to empower and develop communities that value the health and wellbeing of all!***'. In 2018, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government demonstrated its commitment to the Age Friendly Initiative when it approved the appointment of Meath County Council as the National Coordinator to run the Age Friendly Ireland National Shared Service Centre on behalf of the local government sector.

3.4 Age Friendly Ireland

Since 2014, the Age Friendly Programme has been hosted by a new organisation, Age Friendly Ireland (AFI). The Programme is now a shared service function of local Government within Meath County Council and coordinates, supports and provides technical guidance to the nationwide network of 31 Local Authority-led, multi-agency Age Friendly Programmes. Since 2009, an Age Friendly Programme has been developed in each of the 31 local authority areas, following the application of a consistent methodology and governance structure which supports cities and counties to be more inclusive of older people. This is achieved by addressing their expressed concerns and interests under the eight defined World Health Organization (WHO) programme headings. Within the framework of the WHO's Age Friendly Cities and Communities model, city and county-based stakeholders are making commitments to shared action plans addressing pillars that span housing, health services, the built environment, transport and employment. Under the leadership of the local authority Chief Executives and senior managers, governance is anchored in the multi-agency Age-Friendly Alliances, supported by broadly representative Older People's Councils which are actively engaged as co-design partners.

3.5 The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) and Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative Ireland (HaPAI)

While ageing demographic trends, and the challenges they present, have been broadly reported in recent publications, the research carried out by the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing in TCD (TILDA) provides us with an insight into the experiences and preferences of older people on all aspects of health, economic and social circumstances.

The Department of Health's Healthy and Positive Ageing Initiative research, (HaPAI), was established to fulfil the 4th goal of the National Positive Ageing Strategy—to promote and sustain the use of research and evidence to inform policy and practice in ageing. The work of both TILDA and HaPAI provides us with a baseline from which to measure progress and can be used to support the development of policies and strategies pertaining to older people.



4 Literature Sources Reviewed

Life expectancy rates have increased dramatically since the middle of the 20th century. This phenomenon is not specific to Ireland but is a worldwide trend. While it is to be welcomed, it also presents huge social, economic and political challenges which need to be addressed. In the last ten years, national government, state agencies and Non Government Organisations [NGOs] have given greater attention to the subject of ageing and the impact on Health and Housing provision. This has given rise to the development of a number of research and policy initiatives as outlined above.

Also of particular relevance to this research project is the TILDA Report on 'Housing conditions of Ireland's older population' (2016), The Housing Agency's report 'Housing for Older People: Thinking Ahead', and Age Friendly Ireland's, 'Housing for Older People: Future Perspectives' (2016).

There is increasing evidence of growth in the number of independent and supported housing models for our ageing population. This is clearly demonstrated in recent publications, for example, '*Housing Options for Our Ageing Population, Policy Statement 2019*', Age Friendly Ireland's '*Housing for Older People, Future Perspectives, 2016*', the Housing Agency's '*Thinking Ahead -Independent and Supported Housing Models for an Ageing Population-2016*'. The range of examples of Housing Schemes suitable for older people around the country vary based on types of housing and supports offered. Housing Schemes including Great Northern Haven, Dundalk, McAuley Place, Kildare, Ballygall Road East, Dublin and Ringmahon Court, Cork are examples of good practice and are deemed so by residents who live there and also by groups who have availed of study trips undertaken by the Older People's Council representative.

A broad review of material comprising published reports, strategies and newspaper and online articles was undertaken as part of this research project. A bibliography of material reviewed is contained in Appendix 1.



5 Gathering Evidence

5.1 Why this research?

In order to build on the picture of the housing needs of our ageing population, Age Friendly Ireland, the National Shared Service, commissioned a report on 'Older People's Perceptions and Experiences of Right-sizing' as part of their commitment to the implementation of the Housing Options for our Ageing Population' policy statement. This research was commissioned to identify the attitudes and perceptions of older people with regards to right-sizing, in order to get a better understanding of how older people feel about the prospect of right-sizing and to look at obstacles and possible incentives that might encourage them to think and plan differently for their future needs. Over the last 10 years, Age Friendly Ireland, through the local Age Friendly Programmes in local authorities, has undertaken to consult older people in matters of concern to them. Hearing the voice of the older people has been the key to the success of the national Age Friendly Programme.

5.2 Who is the research for?

The research was commissioned by the Age Friendly Ireland National Programme and is of interest to policy makers. Its aim is to provide National and Local Government and Agencies and Organisations that support older people to live independently in their homes and communities, with further evidence of the housing needs of older people. It is also hoped that the research will provide the housing development sector with enhanced insight into the desired housing options of older people so that they may take cognisance of this when designing and planning new developments.

5.3 Right-sizing: What does it mean?

In the United States, 'rightsizing' is the term used to describe the process of understanding how you live in your home and whether you are maximising the space you have. For them it usually means de-cluttering and then moving to smaller or more suitable sheltered accommodation in a communal setting.

In an Irish context, while right-sizing also means taking a step back and looking at where you live and whether it suits your current or future needs, the consequences don't always necessarily involve moving from your home. Right-sizing can entail a number of options, as is depicted in Figure 7, Housing-with-care continuum taken from '*Housing for Older People: Future Perspectives*'.

FIGURE 2 Housing with Care continuum



Right-sizing options for Irish people are more varied and include:

- ▶ 'Ageing in Place' - Adapting your home to suit your needs
- ▶ 'Homeshare' - Sharing your home with a companion or redesigning your home to let part of it
- ▶ 'Dedicated Housing' for older people – moving to a more appropriate or specific housing development
- ▶ Nursing Home accommodation

The consultation process highlighted that older people were not aware of the range of right-sizing housing options available to them nor did they know where to start looking for information to support them to undertake the process.

6 Methodology

This study on the awareness, perceptions and experiences of older people of right-sizing is based on data collected in 2020. The research used a mixed-method approach. Methodologies included a desk top study of literature and models of housing suitable for older people. In addition, a number of tools were used to facilitate meaningful consultation with older people, such as focus group sessions, telephone interviews and an online and hardcopy survey rolled out nationally. These tools were used to help get a true picture of how older people feel about the process of right-sizing and to reveal what incentives, if any, might encourage and support them to undertake the process.

6.1 Survey

From the outset, it was agreed that the research would endeavour to elicit both qualitative and quantitative evidence of the attitudes and perceptions that older people have to right-sizing. A Rightsizing Housing Questionnaire was developed with the support of a Design Team, made up of representatives from the National Older Person's Council and facilitated by an Age Friendly Regional Programme Manager. The Design team met to develop and review the survey categories. Their task was to ensure that the questionnaire was easy for older people to understand i.e. written in simple language, that questions followed a logical pattern and that all questions relating to right-sizing/downsizing were captured accurately. The questionnaire was to be made available in both online and hard copy formats. Local Age Friendly Programme Managers and representatives of Older People's Council members were tasked with promoting it at local level. Data collated was used to support the findings and recommendations of this report.

This questionnaire was designed with the support of older people in order to elicit their views on right-sizing. The scope for circulation of hardcopy questionnaires was impeded by lockdown requirements of Covid-19. This resulted in a higher level of responses from that cohort of older people who had access to and were comfortable with technology. This limitation should be taken into account.

6.2 Focus Group Sessions

Four Local Authorities were selected by the Age Friendly Housing Advisory Group to participate in small focus group sessions. The programme for the session was pre-planned in advance by the Project Consultant, the Age Friendly Regional Programme Manager and the Design Team and was agreed by the Age Friendly Housing Advisory Group.

Four Counties were selected by the Advisory Group to participate in the sessions - Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council, Roscommon County Council and Westmeath County Council. The counties were selected to represent the urban/rural picture in the country. Topics discussed as part of Focus Group Session discussion included:

- ▶ Attitudes to current home and location
- ▶ Attitudes to Right-sizing
- ▶ Attitude to remaining in home with adaptations
- ▶ Obstacles
- ▶ Factors Influencing a move
- ▶ Questionnaire piloted at the session

Age Friendly Programme Managers from participating counties arranged the venue and recruited the participants. Participants were both private home owners and social tenants.

6.3 Case Studies on Older People's Experiences of Rightsizing

During the course of the research a total of 9 interviews/case studies were carried out with older people who had undertaken the right-sizing process or who were exploring their options to redesign their homes to suit their future needs. Access to interviewees was made with the support of the National Age Friendly Ireland Programme Manager, who extended an invitation to Older People's Councils around the country in order to encourage people who had undertaken the process of right-sizing or had undertaken adaptation work in the home, to participate. Interviews with older people were written up as case studies and are included in the Appendix. Additionally, learnings from interviews are included in the Section on Findings and Recommendations.

6.4 Interviews with Agencies and Service Providers

Five Interviews were also carried out with Agencies and Organisations that support older people to achieve with the process of rightsizing. Invitations were extended to a number of relevant agencies and organisations.

6.5 Local Authority Case Studies

Two additional case studies were provided by Advisory Group members (South Dublin County Council and Meath County Council), to illustrate examples of local activity to support older people to remain living independently in their communities.

6.6 Supervision of Research | Right-sizing Housing Advisory Group

In the initial stages of the project, a Rightsizing Housing Advisory Group was established to support and facilitate the direction of the research led by Age friendly Ireland Dr Emer Coveney. The group comprised the following representatives: Roslyn Molloy, Housing Agency, Jack Keyes, Age Friendly Ireland, Barry Lynch, Director of Services, Meath County Council, Elaine Leech, Senior Executive Officer South Dublin County Council, Rosaleen Smartt, Westmeath Older People's Council and Bridie O'Reilly, Fingal Older People's Council as well as Eithne Mallin, Project Support Consultant. The group met as required during the project timeline. While Covid-19 did restrict the group somewhat, members were provided with a project work plan and regular updates on progress and key preliminary findings were presented through online team meetings.

The Advisory Group consulted with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, providing key preliminary findings and recommendations from the research project.

7 Rightsizing Housing: Current Examples of Best Practice

There is a lack of smaller accommodation in my local area to suit my needs

CASE STUDY

Rightsizing – The development of housing options for older people living in South Dublin County

South Dublin County has a population of 278,767 people living in 92,363 homes according to the 2016 census. Although the county has a young age profile, over the last ten years there is an increasing number of older people living in the county, with a 34% increase in people aged 65 and over.

As part of the development of a new Age Friendly strategy, the Council has undertaken an under-occupancy study of social housing stock involving analysis of occupiers over 55 years of age living in three- and four-bedroom local authority homes. Examining and mapping the data has shown that there are over 700 older persons in single occupancy of tenancies and a further 500 older person couples living in similarly sized, under-occupied properties. This data has assisted in the preparation of a strategy for further targeted infill development and multi-site clusters of age friendly homes within our existing communities to support more efficient use of our housing stock by releasing existing homes for larger households including families in homeless, overcrowded or temporary accommodation.

The research carried out by Age Friendly Ireland has given us a better understanding of the factors that influence a person's decision to move home and to significantly inform our right-sizing strategy – we are now developing new programme of incentive schemes to promote the benefits of right sizing and encourage appropriate tenants to relocate. This will allow older social tenants to stay within their existing neighbourhoods and maintain their social networks with continued access to their usual transport, health and support services in a home that meets their current and future needs. The strategy will be supported by a dedicated officer to identify prospective tenants and engage with them throughout the process. We are working with the members of our Housing Strategic Policy Committee to develop a right-sizing policy for both existing tenants and older persons living in private accommodation in South Dublin County. This will be complemented by an extensive engagement process allowing prospective tenants to express their interest, visit our exemplar new older person's housing developments through organised 'open house' days and be supported on their right-sizing journey right through to occupancy of their new home

We have a range of new older persons' housing developments in the pipeline across South Dublin County with over 150 homes at various stages of design, planning and construction at locations in Tallaght, Clondalkin, Templeogue and Lucan and several additional sites at feasibility stage. This is in addition to some 350 existing older persons homes in our current social housing stock. A Wellness Village concept is also proposed for an older persons' development at Whitestown Way, Tallaght in partnership with Clúid Housing and Tallaght University Hospital - an innovative partnership approach to create a new age friendly housing model in the heart of Tallaght that exemplifies our aim of stable, supportive communities giving our older citizens appropriate local housing options and a high quality of life.

FIGURE 3 Illustration of Age Friendly Housing Development in South Dublin County Council



CASE STUDY

Supporting older social tenants during the Covid-19 Pandemic – an exemplar of Support Co-ordination in Meath County Council

A second phase of calls was conducted with 176 of those tenants, with a view to discussing their housing needs. When making contact with our tenants for the second time, the Tenant Liaison Team found that some tenants appeared to be suffering from low mood due to lack of contact with friends/neighbours/family. The COVID-19 restrictions appeared to be having an impact on some tenants in the over 70 age category who were very reliant on community groups, engagement with other agencies and family members for support. It became evident to housing staff during these follow up calls that some older tenants are now struggling and in some cases, have been admitted to hospital with physical or pre-existing conditions and do not know when they will be discharged. The TLO Team are continuing this work in reaching out to older tenants and signposting and assisting tenants where required. When completing contact with tenants, staff are taking note of any tenants who are lonely or vulnerable and will make contact with these tenants again in the short term. In early 2020, Age Friendly Ireland had been in discussion with Meath County Council's Housing Section about piloting a Integrated Services Manager Role locally, which would allow the housing team to undertake a face to face assessment of social tenants' rightsizing options. However, with the onset of the pandemic, this project instead focused on telephone support to social tenants.

During the Covid-19, Meath County Council's Tenant Liaison Team took a very proactive approach to supporting older people who were 'cocooning' based on government advice. Using iHouse (Housing Data and Information System), staff identified a list of 343 Local Authority Households with tenants over 70 years of age and within the cocooning category. This figure was made up of:

- ▶ 278 households between the ages of 70-79
- ▶ 60 households between the ages of 80-89, and
- ▶ 5 households over the age of 90.

The Team contacted all 343 households by telephone. The purpose of the communication was to inform the households of the community supports available to them. Housing staff also liaised with the Community Gardaí where additional support was required for vulnerable individuals. The process allowed the housing team to identify tenants who require supports through signposting and tenants who required a follow up call. Some direct outcomes from this contact were :

- ▶ A small number of people living alone identified as vulnerable were immediately referred to An Garda Síochána and acted upon same day which generated a good result in these cases
- ▶ A number of people received extra meals on wheels service due to follow-up intervention from Tenant Liaison Officer
- ▶ A small number of matters logged with Community Call were given a fast-tracked response

Liaison Team are of the opinion that this has been a very beneficial exercise, not only to connect with older tenants in the current pandemic, but to also establish relationships between the Tenant Liaison Officers and the households. A dedicated role supporting people with signposting and support co-ordination would clearly be hugely beneficial in this context. In particular, face to face visits would enable staff to observe the housing conditions and general well being of the older person as part of a needs assessment.

It also enables data collection to assist with policy decisions and in the local authority's approach to enabling and supporting older tenants to live independently in their communities.



8 Findings & Recommendations

The report presents findings based on feedback from the consultation process. A mixed method of consultation was used in order to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

8.1 Focus Group Sessions

The findings are based on the focus group session in Fingal, which was held prior to Covid-19 lockdown.¹ Ten people attended this session

Feedback from Focus Group Session

Attitudes to current home and location	Of the 10 participants one person has already moved to smaller accommodation, and one other is looking to move to smaller accommodation but can find nothing available in the desired location. One person would like to subdivide home but fears the financial implications. For the rest of the participants their current home is serving their needs and all expressed an emotional attachment to their home and community. All have good neighbours and friends and most rely on family living close by.
Attitudes to Right-sizing	7 of the 10 participants said they would prefer to age in place with their homes adapted. Some would consider a move but only to 2 bedroom accommodation in their desired location. Some expressed interest in moving to Age Friendly accommodation with an enhanced care package which would include services like Meals on Wheels, Personal Care and Home Support and Befriending
Attitude to remaining in existing home with adaptations	The majority of participants indicated that they would prefer to stay in their current homes, with adaptations if required. However, there was considerable concern about the lack of person-centred care packages tailored to suit the person's needs and a lack of continuity of care.
Obstacles	All participants said there was a lack of suitable accommodation in their local areas. A number of people had concerns about the financial viability of moving, as what they might get for the sale of their home would not necessarily buy them a smaller property in their local area. All of the participants indicated that the following factors were deterrents - stress of moving, emotional upheaval, concern about consequences for family inheritance, fear of change and fear of isolation.

¹ Four focus group sessions were scheduled to take place in Fingal, Roscommon, Westmeath and South Dublin. All arrangements were made and participants were recruited. The Covid-19 pandemic, however, meant that three of the sessions had to be put on hold as it was impossible to convene group meetings of older people at this time.

Feedback from Focus Group Session

Factors Influencing a move

Participants said that they would require suitable accommodation in the right location and an enhanced care package as part of a development, a minimum of 2 bedrooms, to be close to public transport, amenities and services. People said that they might be more amenable to moving to a new development if there was scope for other like-minded people in their own area to relocate in unison. The group expressed the benefit of having witnessed at first hand developments, for instance, St Benedict's in Fingal and Colivet Court in Limerick.

At the focus group session, participants presented examples of housing schemes that they felt they would like to see in their local areas. The schemes held up as models of best practice included St Benedict's, Malahide, St Patrick's, Baldoyle and Colivet Court in Limerick. Focus group participants said that study visits had helped them to envisage the new housing options available. However, all participants clearly indicated that they wished to see models such as these in their own local areas. All said they would wish to stay within their communities and close to family, friends and neighbours who provide them with their support network. Two of the participants were actively seeking smaller accommodation but with little success as there was nothing suitable to their needs available in the desired area.

Dún An Óir was another example of housing suggested by one interviewee from County Clare. He had moved into his new accommodation in November 2019. He cited the good mix of tenants, being close to amenities and the fact that there were good transport links, if he wanted to visit family and friends, as key to the success of this particular housing scheme. The joy and happiness with his new home came loud and clear. His experience, and those of the other focus group participants, reinforces the caution issued in the 2016 ESRI Special Article '*Housing and Ireland's Older Population*' which stated "if mobility of older people meant movement out of familiar communities, this could be damaging and any policies in this area should be cognisant of this issue." While the number of housing schemes suitable for older people has increased over the last ten years, it is clear from the focus group session, over-the-phone interviews with older people and the Irish Council for Social Housing, that there is a need for more of this type of housing, with additional supports to enable older people to live in their local communities for as long as possible.

While the numbers at the session were small, it did allow for full and frank discussion amongst participants. There were a greater number of private home owners than social tenants in the group. Many of the participants are actively engaged in the Age Friendly process in the county, which likely indicates that they already had a clearer picture of the housing options available to them and could therefore make more informed decisions regarding their future housing needs. All were of the opinion that an awareness raising campaign might be required to ensure that other less engaged older people might also be made aware of their housing options. (A copy of the Focus Group Session Programme is included in Appendix 3).

8.2 Rightsizing case studies

As part of the Age Friendly Ireland Rightsizing Research project, a number of older people who had undertaken to rightsize or were exploring their housing options for the future, agreed to be interviewed and to share their experiences. Eight interviews were undertaken during the course of the project. Interviewees were selected to represent social demographics, geographic locations and household occupancy, with both private ownership and social tenancy.

Learnings: People rightszie for various reasons.

- ▶ Sometimes there has been a change in circumstance such as the death of a loved one or the departure of grown up children, leaving the family home too big for just one or two people.
- ▶ Some may have retired and see it as an opportunity to relocate to sunnier climes abroad or to release equity in order to increase their pensions and live a more comfortable life or gift it to family.
- ▶ Others may need the support of a companion to enable them to stay in their home or the financial benefit of a lodger/tenant to add to their pension income. (The full write-up of case studies is included in Appendix 2).

All interviewees indicated that the following factors are deterrents for older people when undertaking the process of right-sizing:

- ▶ Stress of the process of moving, including choosing estate agent/solicitor and transferring utilities when moving
- ▶ Worries about ability, when changing location to enrol with new General Practitioner
- ▶ Stress of undertaking grant applications if getting adaptations done to the home to make it more suitable
- ▶ The financial stress of undertaking to redesign the home and fears about taking in a stranger
- ▶ Fear of moving away from family, neighbours and support network
- ▶ Fear of the unknown in the new location: is it safe? What amenities are there in the new area? Are there good transport links?

While many older people indicated that they would prefer to remain at home with additional supports, if required, some expressed an interest in right-sizing. Throughout the consultation process, older people indicated that they found it hard to find information on how to go about right-sizing. Many said they didn't know what their options were or where to start or whom to ask for support.

Case study interviewees and focus group participants suggested that a Guide to Right-sizing for older people be developed as a signpost to the supports that are available for people who wish to rightszie, with tips on how to go about it. All said there was a need for more information on right-sizing options to be made available to older people. They felt that help with transferring utilities, grant applications, de-cluttering and, in some cases, financial assistance would incentivise people to undertake the process.

8.3 Interviews with Statutory and Voluntary Organisations

During the course of the project, a number of interviews were carried out with Statutory and Voluntary Organisations that support and empower older people as they age. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, over the phone interviews were carried out with the Retirement Planning Council, Age & Opportunity, ALONE, the Irish Council for Social Housing and AVA Housing.

All agreed that the conversation about right-sizing needs to happen at the earlier age of 55-60, as this is when younger older people are constructively thinking about future life plans as they approach retirement. There were definite synergies amongst organisations to explore opportunities to develop a new 'Early Intervention Retirement Programme' to work with pre-retirees in order to look more closely at right-sizing options from both the practical, psychological and emotional perspectives. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government survey in 2019 generated a number of critical articles in the national press which seems to have caused some concern amongst older people and the organisations that support them. An early intervention programme might help alleviate the negative perceptions held by many older people who feel they are being pressurised into right-sizing in order to satisfy a housing crisis that is not of their making.

In addition, organisations that provide support to older people to live in homes suitable to their needs as they age raised issues about the need for further development of more suitable housing for older people in their local communities. They drew attention to the lack of standardised right-sizing housing policy guidelines for statutory and voluntary Housing Bodies which is also highlighted in '*Age Friendly Housing in Local Authorities*' AFI 2019. They also emphasised the need for more information and awareness about right-sizing housing options for older people and the need for more practical and emotional support for older people who undertake the process of right-sizing.

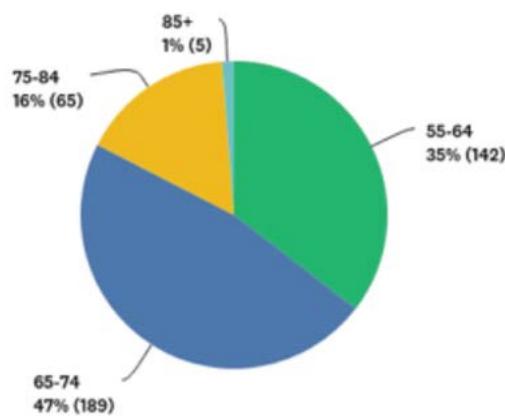
8.4 Questionnaire

Recent research indicated that 29% of people over 55 years would consider moving (HaPAI 2016). Additionally, while the ESRI 2016 Special Article '*Housing and Ireland's Older Population*' found little evidence of housing mobility among older people living alone, when they looked at couples, they found just over 30% living in houses of seven rooms or more, suggesting opportunities for those people to look at rightsizing options.

8.5 Profile of Respondents

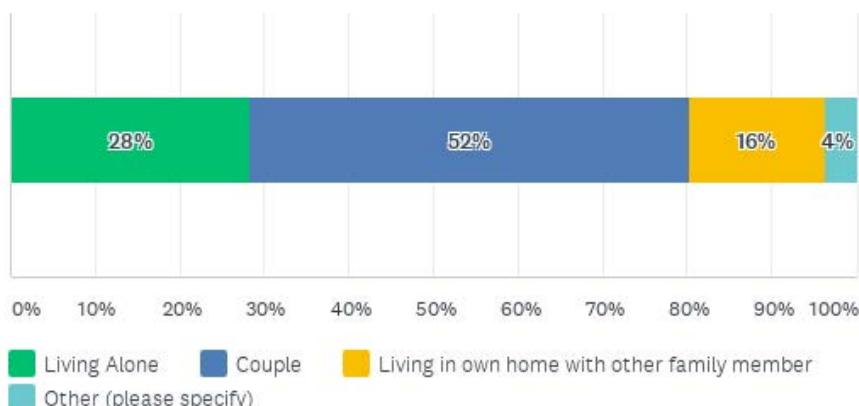
There were 532 respondents to the survey. Of these, 35% were aged 55 to 64; 48% were aged 65 to 74; 16% were aged 75 to 84 and 2% were aged 85 and over.

FIGURE 4 Age Range of Participants

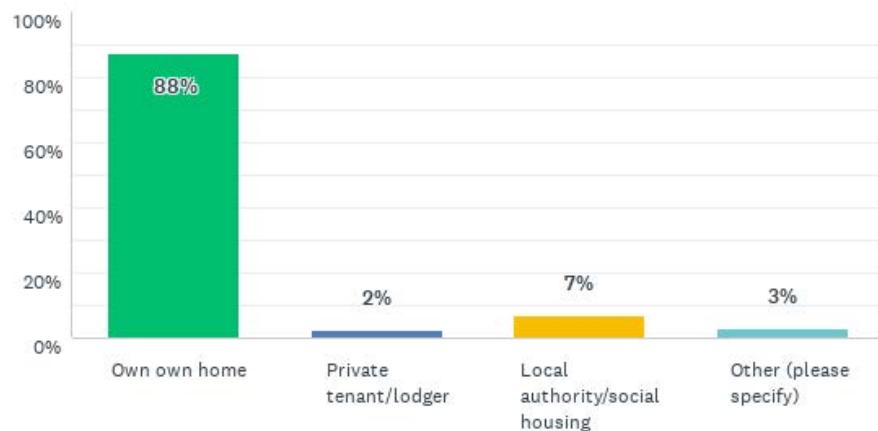


- ▶ 38% of respondents were male, 62% female
- ▶ 83% of respondents were between the ages of 55 and 74

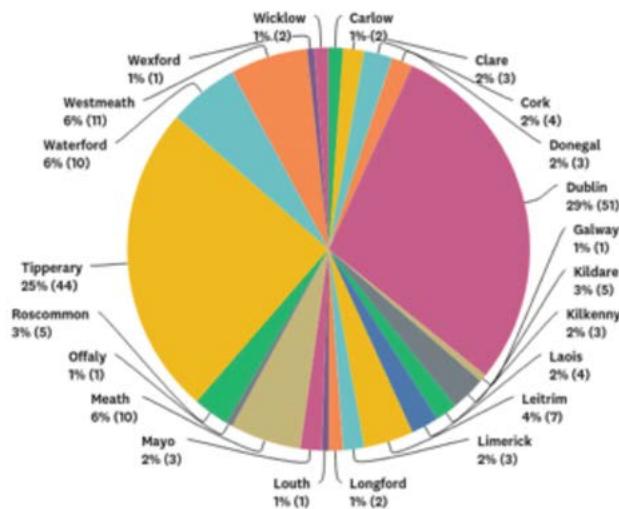
FIGURE 5 Living Arrangements



- ▶ 80% were either living alone or as part of a couple
- ▶ 90% of respondents occupy accommodation of 3 beds or more
- ▶ 88% of respondents own their own homes

FIGURE 6 Tenure of Respondents

There was a good balance of survey responses from different parts of the country, including rural and urban communities, as illustrated in the diagram below.

FIGURE 7 Geographic Spread of Respondents

8.6 Key data from the questionnaire

The following are the findings of the questionnaire which reflect the views of a total of 532 respondents.

A particularly interesting aspect of the survey is that 44% of respondents indicated a willingness to explore the possibility of right-sizing. This figure is significantly higher than previous questionnaires of larger sample sizes. A further 14% said they were unsure about willingness to move.

In contrast, the Mature Homeowners (2020) survey carried out by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service, estimated that between 15 per cent and 20 per cent of mature homeowner households would be willing to move if the option to sell their home and purchase a smaller purpose built home in the same area for a lower price were available.

8.7 Key factors influencing responses

Respondents were asked to rate factors that might make the prospect of moving more appealing, their top requirements for a new dwelling and the supports they would regard as necessary to assist with the move.

- ▶ 79% of respondents indicated a desire to remain close to friends/support network and community
- ▶ 77% said their home was too large for their current needs
- ▶ 77% need to be close to amenities
- ▶ 72% need to be close to public transport
- ▶ 72% would like to see the existence of suitable accommodation in their desired location

When asked about their priority requirements for a new home, most respondents said:

- ▶ 98% want an energy efficient home
- ▶ 95% want to live somewhere they feel safe
- ▶ 97% said the accommodation needed to be designed to suit their future needs
- ▶ 93% wanted a minimum of two bedrooms

In keeping with previous research, the findings revealed that the majority of respondents were content with their current home and felt an emotional attachment to the area and community in which they live. If, however, an older person is to consider rightsizing, these are the most important factors required in a new home.

As part of the questionnaire, respondents were also asked to identify and prioritise incentives that might encourage and assist them to consider right-sizing.

- ▶ 83% said they would like to see the availability of suitable accommodation designed specifically for the over 55s in or close to the area in which they live
- ▶ 79% would like to see an enhanced care package incorporated into the new Age Friendly housing development
- ▶ 69% would like to see a support coordination package provided to ease concerns and address the practical challenges of moving home

As a large percentage of respondents reside in a rural area a question was asked as to whether, if they wished to rightsize, they would be prepared to move into a nearby village or town. 44% of respondents indicated that they lived in a rural setting and 31% of those said they would consider such a move.

An option was presented to respondents to ascertain their attitudes towards renting out spare capacity in their homes. 20% said they would be willing to consider renting out a room, with a further 18% who said they were unsure. Furthermore, 26% of respondents indicated that they might consider a homeshare if an appropriate scheme was developed that matched up people. It is noted that there are homeshare schemes available in Ireland but this point speaks to the fact that people are not always aware of them. 6% stated that they would enjoy having other people living in their home and 12% said they would like the extra income generated from renting.

8.8 Recommendations

The main recommendations proposed are based on the feedback from the analysis of the questionnaire, on the focus group session held in Fingal and on interviews with case study participants and organisations that support older people.

8.8.1 Recommendation 1 | County Development Plan

"What they can't see, they can't imagine"

IRISH COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING

- ▶ Consideration should be given by Planning Authorities to the assigning of a specific objective in County Development Plans for Age Friendly accommodation developments

As a consequence of the responses collated to date, it is clear that the biggest barrier to older people opting to rightsizing is the absence of suitable accommodation in their desired locations. While some of the people interviewed had been on study visits to view models of suitable housing, others had no idea of what was available to them. There has been an increase in examples of models of suitable housing over the last ten years. This is evidenced in the Housing Agency's 'Thinking Ahead: Independent and Supported Housing Models for an Ageing Population'. In light of what we know about projected population increases, however, particularly of our older population, there is a clearly a need for further provision.

8.8.2 Recommendation 2 | Promote greater awareness of right-sizing options

"I'd love to explore options to redesign my home but who do I turn to and where will I get information?"

OLDER PERSON

- ▶ Consideration be given to rolling out a 'Right-sizing Awareness Campaign' in the form of Mobile Roadshows, Regional Information Sessions, Older People's Council AGMs countrywide, Right-sizing Options stand at 50 Plus Expo, etc. The local government sector via Age Friendly Ireland could take the lead in co-ordinating this campaign.
- ▶ Consideration be given to the development of a simple but comprehensive guide to right-sizing, with information on all supports available to older people who wish to undertake the process

It was found that older people were not fully aware of the options available to them. Most of the older people interviewed indicated that they were deterred from making the decision to redesign their homes because they lacked information about their options and how to go about it.

8.8.3 Recommendation 3 | Right-sizing Options Workshop

"We would welcome an opportunity to work with pre-retirees to look more closely at right-sizing options from both practical, psychological and emotional perspectives"

(RETIREMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AND AGE & OPPORTUNITY)

- ▶ Consideration be given to the national rollout of an Early Intervention Retirement Programme for 50-60 year olds, with a module on right-sizing options to be included

Older people indicated that they would prefer to hear about right-sizing options at an earlier time than when they approach retirement, as is the norm, in order to plan for it in good time. There is scope for collaboration amongst agencies, including Retirement Planning Council, Age & Opportunity, Age Action, Age Friendly Ireland etc., in this regard.

8.8.4 Recommendation 4 | Right-sizing Incentives

"I would like to consider my options but don't have a lot of spare cash to carry out renovations"

OLDER PERSON

- ▶ Consideration be given to providing a front-loaded Finance Scheme to support older people to redesign their homes in order to enable them to facilitate the adopting of a homeshare agreement

Some older people consulted as part of the research project expressed an interest in redesigning their homes in order to address their own needs and also to facilitate taking in a tenant(s) on a homeshare type arrangement. However, most indicated that, while they felt asset rich, they were cash poor and would require some financial support. It is suggested that this might be funded through a lien on the residence, similar to the existing Fair Deal Scheme arrangements.

- ▶ Consideration be given to the introduction of a financial contribution towards relocation costs.

Many of the participants balked at the expense of moving home. A financial contribution towards legal and other moving expenses might encourage them to undertake the process. Colivet Court in Limerick is an example where tenants' legal fees were paid to facilitate right-sizing.

- ▶ Consideration be given by Local Authorities to promoting greater awareness of the recently assigned Age Friendly Technical Advisors as a key point of contact for older people who wish to explore right-sizing options from a technical perspective.

Many participants, whether social tenants or private homeowners, indicated that the stress of the process of moving and/or undertaking adaptation works were factors that were a major disincentive. Having a 'Go-to' person to aid them through the process would be seen as a huge support.

In keeping with Action 5.7 of the Government's Policy Statement, 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population', the roll out of Older Person's Integrated Services Managers, together with the recent appointment of Age Friendly Technical Advisors in Local Authorities, will help to address this issue.

- ▶ Consideration be given by Local Authorities to the rolling out of Older Person's Integrated Services Managers (Support Co-ordination/Rightsizing Support) to provide older people with the assistance needed to navigate the whole moving and/or adaptation process

In situations where the private home-owner undertakes to rightsize, it has been found that the processes of moving, form filling, de-cluttering and the transferring of utilities were the biggest deterrent. A designated local authority based resource such as the Integrated Services Managers, working in the field of supporting older people, might be best suited for this role.

- ▶ Consideration be given to the streamlining or fast tracking of the processing of grant application for those who wish to undertake the redesign of their homes to take in homeshare tenant(s)

In situations where the homeowner needs to apply for a number of different grants (for example from Sustainable Energy Ireland, Housing Adaptation, Mobility Adaptation, Seniors Alert Scheme), the magnitude of the administrative process serves as a deterrent. Streamlining the application processes would make it less challenging.

8.8.5 Recommendation 5 | Right Sizing Guidelines

"Right-sizing policy is pretty ad hoc at the moment. AHBs need right-sizing guidance and direction regarding what is required"

(IRISH COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL HOUSING)

- ▶ Consideration be given to the issuing of standardised guidelines and policies on right-sizing for statutory and voluntary housing bodies

The recent work done by Age Friendly Ireland 'Age Friendly Housing in Local Authorities' Nov 2019, brought to light the inconsistency rightsizing policies in Local Authorities. This issue was also raised in an interview with the Irish Council of Social Housing. The recent appointment of Age Friendly Housing Technical Advisors in Local Authorities should help address this issue somewhat, but there is still need for clarity and consistency in this area.

8.8.6 Recommendation | Social Housing Passport Scheme

"I raised my family here in Tallaght and loved it for the last 30 years. My children had to move further out to find accommodation they could afford. I would be happy to rightsize but I would like to be nearer to my family"

SOCIAL TENANT, SOUTH DUBLIN

- ▶ Consideration be given to revisit the development of a Social Housing Passport Scheme

During the consultation process the majority of older people indicated that they relied on family, friends and neighbours as their support network. Many families, particularly those living in areas where housing is in high demand and is therefore more costly, now find themselves cut off from their family members who have had to go further afield to afford to purchase or rent a home. It is felt that a Social Housing Passport Scheme would facilitate inter-county transfers for social tenants. This is also one of the actions referenced in the recently published Programme for Government (July 2020, page 55).

8.8.7 Recommendation 7 | Post Covid-19 Research

"It would be interesting to find out the impact that Cocooning has had on older people's views about the suitability of their homes"

HOUSING AGENCY

- ▶ Consideration be given to conducting further research on the impact of Covid-19 on the views and perceptions of older people regarding their housing needs in light of their experiences during the period of cocooning.

9 Conclusion

This report has identified the perceptions and experiences of older people in relation to rightsizing, and documents the barriers which they feel would prevent older people moving to more age-appropriate housing. It draws on the personal narratives of older people who have gone through the process of rightsizing, so that we can learn what their experience has been. The report's recommendations aim to support the ethos of the 'Housing Options' policy in that older people will have more choice in housing provision, be supported to age in place and remain living at home for as long as possible.

The report has been approved by the Advisory Group established under Age Friendly Ireland for consideration by the overarching implementation group of the Housing Options for Our Ageing Population policy statement. Recommendations will be considered by the relevant organisations.

10 Appendix I Literature Review

International/National and Local

Summary of documents at International, National and Local level that underpin National and Local Government policy with regards to older people:

- ▶ Age Friendly Ireland (2016) Housing for Older People: Future Perspectives
- ▶ Ageing Well Network (2012) The New Agenda on Ageing: To Make Ireland the Best Country to Grow Old in.
- ▶ ALONE (2018) Housing Choices for Older People in Ireland: Time for Action.
- ▶ Central Statistics Office, Population and Labour Force Projections 2017-2051
- ▶ Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (2015) Universal Design Guidelines: Dementia Friendly Dwellings for People with Dementia, their Families and Carers.
- ▶ Department of Health (2013) National Positive Ageing Strategy
- ▶ Department of Health (2019) Sláintecare Action Plan
- ▶ Department of Health, The Healthy and Positive Ageing for All – Research Strategy 2015-2019
- ▶ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2016) Rebuilding Ireland, Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness
- ▶ Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and Department of Health (2019) Housing Options for Our Ageing Population: Policy Statement
- ▶ Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (2014-2016) Public Service Reform Plan, Putting People First: Programme for Effective Local Government 2015 updated 2019
- ▶ Dept of Health (2013) Healthy Ireland: A Framework for improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025
- ▶ Department of Social Protection, National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2015-2017
- ▶ Houses of the Oireachtas (2017) Committee on the Future of Healthcare: Slaintecare Report.
- ▶ Housing Agency (2018) Thinking Ahead: Independent and Supported Housing Models for an Ageing Population.
- ▶ The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (2016) 'Housing conditions of Ireland's older population Implications for physical and mental health'
- ▶ World Health Organisation's Global Age Friendly Cities: A Guide (2007)

11 Appendix II Case Studies

Case Studies – Interviews with People who have undertaken the process of right-sizing or are exploring their options

CASE STUDY 1

Eleanor, Swords, Co. Dublin (2001 to date)

Eleanor, who is in her 80's now, moved from Co. Antrim to Swords in 2001 in order to be nearer her daughter.

"My husband and I had discussed moving to Dublin if anything happened to either of us and when he died, I decided that I would do it".

Eleanor had help from her daughter and son-in-law in the process of selling and buying. She carefully considered what she wanted from her new home and took her time to find what was just right for her. She knew she needed a house with an enclosed garden as she has a dog. She moved in with her daughter after she sold up and then started her search for her new home. When it came to moving, she organised this on her own. **"I found the actual move on the day very stressful but, once I saw off the removal van, I put the dog in the car and never looked back".**

Eleanor recommends taking the time to de-clutter. She believes that you have to be ruthless in deciding what to keep, what to sell and what to donate to the charity shop. She used her local newspaper to advertise the sale of some furniture. Before moving, she contacted her new church in Swords and also checked in with the Gardaí about the safety of the new environment. She made sure she was close to public transport and shops. After arriving she joined an Active Retirement Association. **"I'm really happy. My home suits my needs, both now and into the future".**

CASE STUDY 2

Bridie, North County Dublin (1999 to date)

Meet Bridie, who is in her late 70's and a very active volunteer in her community. In 1999, after her family had flown the nest, she sold the family home in Finglas and moved to North County Dublin. **"Moving here was a wonderful experience for me. I think my children found the notion of moving from the family home more difficult than I did but, when they saw how happy I was, they were very proud of me and thought me very brave; to me it was just a new adventure".**

While She found breaking into her new community a bit difficult in the beginning, she made it her business to get to know the new area and joined local voluntary groups which helped her to get to know everyone. She made several visits to the area before moving in and contacted the local Gardaí to check safety issues. Bridie loved driving but she chose the new location because it has great transport links and is also on the coast, which means she can go for lovely walks on the beach. She now finds that she feels more at home in North County Dublin than she ever did anywhere else.

Bridie loves her home and has a comfortable life, but she worries sometimes about having enough money to cover big maintenance jobs around the house and garden in the future. She would like to explore options of adapting her home in order to share with someone else, but doesn't know how to go about it. **"Splitting the house is a dream that I have, but I don't know where to start. I have questions about borrowing money to have the work done, what would it do to the value of my house after the work is done and what the implications are for my children with regards to their inheritance after I've gone. These are all things that concern me".**

CASE STUDY 3

Peter, Dun An Óir, Kilkee, Co Clare

Until recently, Peter was living in rented accommodation with the support of the Housing Assistance Payment. In 2019, he made an application to Kilkee Housing Association. His application was supported by his GP, as he had mobility issues and needed to move to ground level accommodation.

In November 2019, he was told his application had been successful. He moved into a two bedroom bungalow, which he furnished with the help of grants available from the Department of Social Welfare. He is delighted with his new home, especially as the maintenance of the building and the garden is all looked after by the Association. ***"I couldn't be happier with my move, I love it here. There's a mixture of ages here, which I think works really well".***

All the amenities are close by and public transport is very good, so Peter can get to visit his children and grandchildren easily when he wishes. ***"If you're eligible for social housing, I would recommend that you make an application. If you need help making your application, talk to your local Citizen's Information office, they'll help you write it. Talk to everyone who can help you".***

CASE STUDY 4

Maura, South Kerry

Maura and her husband made the decision to sell the family home in Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin, in 2003, when they had both retired. They chose South Kerry because it was an area they were familiar with, having had many family summer holidays there over the years. They also chose it because it was 20-25 minutes from the airport, the hospital, the train station and the nearest large town. They had looked at other places but felt these were too remote. They chose a dormer cottage as their forever home. They have a bedroom with an en-suite downstairs, which means they won't have to climb any stairs in the future if they ever have any impaired mobility issues. ***"Don't leave it too late to make the move".***

Like Eleanor, Maura was ruthless about de-cluttering, recommending that you only bring the precious things with you and says that you see them in a new light when you do. Neither Maura nor her husband have any regrets and are firmly established in their new community. Maura took up a very active role in the area, which helped her to fit in with the locals. She reckons you have to be brave to do it.

CASE STUDY 5

Mary, Tallaght

Mary is in her 60's. She has lived in Tallaght for the last 30 years and while she has loved her time living there she now feels it is probably time to think about moving. "**We have had a happy home but my husband has some health issues, so it's a bit too big for us now, too hard to maintain"**

Mary and her husband would really like to transfer from Tallaght to Kildare, as that's where their daughter lives with her grandchild and they would really like to be closer to them. They were informed that they couldn't be guaranteed a place in Kildare unless they found someone with whom they could transfer.

She informed her local Council that she was still interested in right-sizing and was offered a place not too far from where she currently lives. Mary felt under pressure to accept the offer, despite the fact they were not able to view the new place or to consider where it was and who would be their new neighbours. She felt things were going too quickly, not allowing them enough time to properly consider the move. When things fell through on the move, she felt a sense of relief. "**Things fell through, I'm not really sure why but I think it was because we weren't allowed to have pets in the new apartment and we have our dog and would really like to bring the dog with us**".

Mary and her husband have been offered another transfer and again they haven't been allowed to view it. She doesn't know if her furniture will fit in to the new place and again feels under pressure to make a decision, but is afraid that if it is the wrong decision, she won't be able to go back. "**Trying to fit 30 years into 3 weeks is too stressful, I'm not sure it's worth the bother**".

CASE STUDY 6

Liz, East Cork

Liz and her husband David came back from America in 2000 to look after her Mum and Dad, as they were getting older. They settled in East Cork in a town close to her family. Liz is also the primary carer for her husband, who is ill and needs 24/7 care. Her home is a local authority house, so she applied to the Council for an adaptation grant for works that needed to be carried out in order to allow her to continue to look after his needs. "**Everyone is doing their job, but no one is really listening**"

While Liz has found everyone she deals with to be very civil, she is frustrated at what she sees as the short-sightedness of those who could make a difference. She feels that the Carer is invisible and that their needs, or future needs, are not given due consideration. "**The Occupational Therapist interviewed my husband, but she is not allowed to speak to me. I don't understand. Surely my needs, or future needs, are important too?**"

CASE STUDY 7

Jim and Mary, Skerries

Jim and Mary were in their 80's when Jim was diagnosed with Parkinson's. Because of this condition, they availed of the Local Authority Housing Adaptation Grant to have a stair lift installed and the bathroom adapted. As Mary also suffered from health difficulties which curtailed her ability to fully care for her husband, they were invited by the Public Health Nurse to participate in a new pilot project called OPRAH (Older People Remaining At Home). This proved very beneficial for them as it fast-tracked their availing of further assistance, such as a mobility scooter for Jim and a ramp to front of house. In addition, and crucially, Jim was provided with a home care package, which entailed a number of visits by care workers each day. Mary was also put in touch with a local befriending volunteer, who visited regularly, both at home and subsequently when in residential care. Mary felt, that this contact not only helped her forge a new friendship but also helped her to maintain a link with her local community which was hugely important to her.

The outcome of this was that, because of this comprehensive care package, Jim was able to remain at home for six years, deferring the need to have him admitted to Nursing Home care. When his condition eventually deteriorated to the point where home care was no longer an option, and Mary's own health issues had intensified, both partners applied, and were accepted, for the Fair Deal Scheme and spent their remaining days in a Nursing Home.

"My parents were delighted they were able to spend most of their declining years in their own home and manage to delay the Nursing Home option until there was no realistic alternative. They were very appreciative of the quality of life they were able to enjoy through participating in the OPRAH scheme".

SON

CASE STUDY 8

Irene, Dublin

Irene is 94 and lives on her own in north county Dublin. She has been very active all of her life, playing a key role in her local Active Retirement Association. In 2019, she started to think that she might have to consider selling her home and moving into a nursing home, as she was finding it difficult to live alone. A friend of hers introduced her to the idea of Homesharing and she decided to give it a go. Irene's friend made contact with a Homeshare agency, and so began the application process.

Irene's friend told me that a good agency will try to match the Houseowner with the Homesharer. She stressed that "**they need to be similar in personality for the relationship to work**". The agency interviews both parties and, when a match is found, they help make the introductions and draw up a Homeshare agreement. All Homesharers are Garda vetted and have to provide references as part of the application process. In most cases there is a fee for the service. In some cases, the Homesharer sometimes pays a minimal rent, especially if it is in Dublin, but in general they don't. They must be prepared to give about 10 hours companionship and do basic tasks around the house. The Homesharer is not, however, a personal carer and this must be clearly understood from the outset.

Irene was successful with her first Homesharer and the match seemed to be perfect. After 6 weeks, however, the Homesharer decided to return home. The second Homeshare wasn't as successful, so Irene has decided to opt out. Her friend still thinks that the Homeshare concept is a good one, it certainly seems to work for some people but she says "***it's really important to get the relationship right and that there is continuity. Older people don't like change.***"

CASE STUDY 9

Evelyn and John, Celbridge, Co. Kildare

Meet Evelyn and John, both in their 80's and in very good health. In 2001, when John had retired and Evelyn was coming up for retirement, they discussed the fact that they didn't feel safe in Dublin anymore and decided to sell the family home and do what they'd always dreamed about – move to the countryside and have a big garden. They left their Dublin home and moved to Carbury in Co. Kildare. They chose Carbury because they had family there. In 2019, their circumstances changed and, with both of them now in their 80's, they decided it was time to consider finding a place that suited their changing needs. Their beautiful garden had become too much for them and the distance from family was also becoming an issue.

"We wanted to be closer to family and amenities, now that we are that bit older. We were going to look for a bungalow, but after much talking we decided that we didn't want any garden maintenance so we opted for an apartment"

They found selling the house a bit stressful and would have loved it if someone had given them a list of all of the utilities that had to be transferred over to the new house. ***"It was a hard going, but my son helped us. I wouldn't like to be doing it on my own. We don't feel like we have downsized because we have as much room as we need, but I did find it hard letting go of my belongings"***



12 Appendix III Focus Group Session

Housing Opportunities for our Ageing Population Research on attitudes and perceptions to right-sizing Focus Group Session

Notes for Facilitator/Older People's Council Representatives and local Age Friendly Programme Managers:

Outlined below are the key questions regarding housing opportunities for our ageing population that we would like to hear your views on today and there is an additional category for anything you may wish to add that is of importance to you.. Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.

The Questions

We would ask you to take up to 2 hours to discuss as a group questions outlined below

- ▶ How do you feel about your current home?
- ▶ What do you like about your community?
- ▶ Would you ever consider moving?
- ▶ What is your attitude to right-sizing/downsizing?
- ▶ What obstacles prevent you from considering moving?
- ▶ What incentives would support you if you were to consider moving?
- ▶ What information is available to you if you were to consider moving?

Session arrangements

You will have a facilitator who will help you work through the questions and keep to time. There may be some cross-over in your discussion between the various questions. There will also be a person to record your views.

1. Current Home and where you live (Discussion)

- ▶ Does your home serve your current needs?
- ▶ What do you like most about your home and where you live?

The facilitator will give you a yellow post-it, can you write down in one sentence or two what your home means to you

2. Setting the Scene – 3 Scenarios (Breakout groups)

- ▶ You will breakout into 3 groups of 5 and will be given a scenario to discuss and some possible solutions. You can also add any suggestions you might have to help resolve the situation.

3. Would you consider moving? If NO what are the obstacles preventing you from moving

- ▶ You will be given some examples of obstacles please make sure to tick as many or all that are relevant to you and how you feel. You can also add any of your own suggestions

4. Would you consider moving? If YES what are the factors influencing you to move?

- ▶ You will be given some examples of factors that might influence you to consider moving please make sure to tick as many or all that are relevant to you and how you feel. You can also add any of your own suggestions

5. What would you require from your new home?

- ▶ You will be given some examples of design features to consider please make sure to tick as many or all that are relevant to you. You can also add any of your own suggestions

6. What would make the prospect of moving more attractive to you?

- ▶ You will be given some examples of incentives to consider, please make sure to tick as many or all that are relevant to you. Leave out the ones that are not relevant and add any of your own suggestions

7. What would make the process of moving easier for you if you decided to move?

- ▶ You will be given some examples of incentives to consider, please make sure to tick as many or all that are relevant to you. Leave out the ones that are not relevant and add any of your own suggestions

8. If you have already taken the plunge and have made the move to more suitable accommodation/or have had your home adapted to suit your needs. How did you find the experience? (Discuss use flip chart paper and prompts)

- ▶ Why did you decide to move?
- ▶ Use one word to describe your experience of right-sizing or adapting your home?
- ▶ How did you set about the task?
- ▶ Did you know where to look for help/support/grants etc
- ▶ What did you look for in your new home?
- ▶ Did you get everything you wanted from the move and or adaptations?
- ▶ Is there anything you learnt from the experience that you would pass on to others?

9. Do you want to know more about the supports that are available if considering a move?**10. Additional Questions & Comments**

13 Appendix IV Age Friendly Ireland Housing Advisory Group

1. Dr Emer Coveney, National Programme Manager, Age Friendly Ireland
2. Jack Keyes, Principal Advisor on Housing, Age Friendly Ireland
3. Roslyn Molloy, The Housing Agency
4. Barry Lynch, Director of Services, Meath County Council
5. Elaine Leech, Senior Executive Officer, South Dublin County Council
6. Rosaleen Smartt, Westmeath Older People's Council
7. Bridie O'Reilly, Fingal Older People's Council
8. Eithne Mallin, Consultant

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