

# TAKING STOCK

**What will the new Dáil mean for our older adult population? Age Alliance advice for the new Programme for Government**

Is Government keeping its commitments to older people?

Update Alliance Statement

December 2024



The work of the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs is made possible thanks to funding provided by Community Foundation Ireland

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**In short, this rapidly growing population group must be centrally catered for as part of any ambitions and priorities of government now and in the future – particularly so if we are to make meaningful progress towards Ireland’s stated goal that “older people will be supported and motivated to enjoy more active, healthy and connected lives. (National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040)**

# Introduction

## As the political parties make efforts to form a government, what will this new Dáil mean for our older adult population?

The 33rd Dáil, elected at the 2020 general election and dissolved by President Michael D. Higgins on 8 November 2024 at the request of the Taoiseach Simon Harris, lasted 1,724 days. The 34th Dáil will, it is anticipated, convene for the first time either side of year end following the general election in late November 2024.

As the political parties make efforts to form a government, what will this new Dáil mean for our older adult population? Last time around, negotiations on a programme for government and the subsequent election of a Taoiseach took close to four months.

The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs (the Age Alliance), representing seven leading older persons organisations, would in particular encourage those involved in the drafting of the new Programme for Government to consider the key findings set out as part of the Age Alliance review **'Taking Stock: Is Government keeping its commitments to older people?'** launched in February 2024 <https://alone.ie/taking-stock-is-government-keeping-its-commitments-to-older-people/>

The review involved an analysis of 17 thematic areas relevant to the lives of an ageing population together with a focus in on 15 specific 'policy commitments' made in respect of older people and the application of an Alliance Grading for Government in terms of its efforts or progress in each of the 15 areas.

This hard-hitting review provided an important **snapshot in time** and spotlighted the progress (or perhaps lack of) made by Ireland in respect of a range of key pledges and policy commitments relevant to older people in Ireland.

To assist those closest to the development of the new Programme for Government the Age Alliance has reflected on 14 of the 15 policy commitments spotlighted in February 2024 and provided an **updated grading** to reflect their current status.

This shortlist, together with the Alliance observations outlined in the preceding text are set out in order to steer Government focus as part of its **programme of business** for the next Dáil term.

In short, this rapidly growing population group must be centrally catered for as part of any ambitions and priorities of government now and in the future – particularly so if we are to make **meaningful progress** towards Ireland's stated goal that "older people will be supported and motivated to enjoy more active, healthy and connected lives and to age confidently and comfortably in their community". (National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040).

Central amongst our priorities, the Age Alliance is calling for the next Government to **establish an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People**. Such an Independent Commissioner would have a broad remit that recognises the full capacity and potential of older people, covering their needs and rights across the spectrum, not just in terms of health, care, frailty, and vulnerability. The Alliance are calling for this Commissioner to be included in the new Programme for Government.

### The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs

(1) Healthy ageing, (2) Health and personal social services, (3) Carers, (4) Employment and retirement, (5) Education and lifelong learning, (6) Volunteering, (7) Cultural and social participation, (8) Transport, (9) Financial security, (10) Housing, (11) The built environment, (12) Safety and security, (13) Elder abuse, (14) Ageism, (15) Policy coordination and monitoring, (16) Mainstreaming ageing, (17) Research.

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# Situation at Present

**In the event the next Government services a full five-year term, our older adult population will have grown to more than a million**

## 1. Ireland is ageing rapidly

Our older adult population will be the fastest growing demographic of the 21st Century. In 2011, there were less than 550,000 people aged 65 or over living in Ireland, (11.4% of the population).

By 2021, this had increased to just under 800,000. In the event that this next Government serves out a full five-year term this population cohort will have grown, by 2030, to more than 1 million. The greatest increases will be in the over 80 years and over age group, where numbers are expected to increase four-fold.

## 2. Older people have needs and rights far beyond the Department of Health

While policy for older people in Ireland is currently situated within the Department of Health, the Age Alliances 'Taking Stock' review highlights the extensive range of domain areas together with the policy decisions taken by a wide range of Government departments which impact on the lived experience of older people.

Such an extensive set of 'boundary spanning' issues can only be effectively addressed through a single body operating across a range of departments. Some of the key issues include:



**This group is increasingly facing ageist stereotypes and the harmful social and health effects associated with ageism.**



**Inequalities faced by older people relating to financial security and poverty, housing, health and mental health, risk and care provision, isolation and loneliness, and care in the home.**



**Digital exclusion caused by lack of confidence and skills to access the internet or engage in digital activity.**



**Two-thirds of adults aged over 65 are not currently meeting national physical activity guidelines, that number rises to 82% over the age of 75.**

Almost **every** Government strategy and action plan, whether it is relating to health, transport, housing, the environment, or connectivity, must be considered in the context of our ageing population and the ageing demographic they will serve.

### **3. Older people must not be viewed as a single group with homogeneous experiences, challenges and issues**

In particular, policy for older people must not be considered solely through a 'care lens'. 'Yes', many of us will experience levels of frailty and vulnerability at some point as we age and 'care' is, of course, one critical element of a range of factors that enable people to age well - and thus must be invested in to ensure equity of access and quality of delivery for people as we age.

It must, however, be recognised that older age should also provide opportunities for active citizenship, for entrepreneurship and gradualised approaches to retirement, for continued contribution and participation in local community affairs, and for engaging in the kinds of activities that enhance physical and mental health. These and other issues relevant to positive ageing need to be invested in and planned for. They will not happen by chance.

Now is not the time for significant investment in further time-consuming policy development or research reports. Much, if not all, of the policy content, strategies and actions to implement positive ageing remain valid. However, strong leadership, energetic implementation and active monitoring is now called for.





**It must, however, be recognised that older age should also provide opportunities for active citizenship, gradualised approaches to retirement, for continued contribution and participation in local community affairs**




#### 4. Willingness to confront troubling statistics

While it is attractive to focus on positive news, policymakers and stakeholders require evidence in order to create, implement and adapt policies. Any Government commentary in relation to positive ageing must give sufficient emphasis to the more troubling statistics. For example:

 **Older people and loneliness:** An EU-wide survey (European Commission, 2022) on loneliness found over 20% of respondents in Ireland reported feeling lonely most or all of the time, compared to the European average of 13%, and the lowest levels found in the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Croatia and Austria (all below 10%).

 **Older people and mental health:** The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA, 2019) found 78% of older adults who have evidence of depression, and 85% who have evidence of anxiety, do not have a doctor's diagnosis. Pre-pandemic, 10% of over 50s surveyed by TILDA reported clinically significant depressive symptoms. By 2021, this figure had more than doubled. 40% of the over-70s reported their mental health was 'worse' or 'much worse' since asked to cocoon.

 **Older people and financial security:** The Latest CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC 2023) data indicated that those aged 65+ were the only cohort to see increases across all three poverty rates between 2020 and 2021 – at risk of poverty (9.8% to 11.9%); deprivation (8.1% to 8.4%); and consistent poverty (1.0% to 2.5%). The situation is worse where an older person aged 65 or older is living alone. For this cohort, the at risk of poverty rate increased from 20.5% to 21.5%, deprivation increased from 10.6% to 12.1%, and consistent poverty increased from 2.2% to 4.3%.

#### 5. There has been an implementation deficit in relation to several of Ireland's key policy commitments relevant to ageing and older people

Policies toward older people date all the way back to 1968 (Care of the Aged), 1988 (The years ahead) and the current policy being the National Positive Ageing Strategy (2013).

The Positive Ageing Strategy, in particular, contains still-relevant approaches to eliminating ageism, ensuring that ageing is taken seriously, that older people's needs and preferences inform policy and practice, that most older people can age with dignity and die well close to family and community, get the supports they need, have options in their lives and can participate fully in all that's going on. An implementation plan for this 2013 Strategy, however, was never developed. Ring fenced funding was never allocated. Annual reports on progress were never published.

Further policy commitments relevant to an ageing population, yet to be meaningfully or comprehensively advanced, have been set out as part of a range of public policy frameworks, including the previous Programme for Government; Our Shared Future, 2020, the Sláintecare Strategy and Action Plan, 2021-2023 and the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan, 2021 (which include repeated commitments to develop a national plan aimed at tackling loneliness and isolation), the Roadmap for Social Inclusion, 2020 (which includes a commitment to implement benchmarking of the pension), Project Ireland 2040, the National Planning Framework, (includes commitment to meet the needs and opportunities of an ageing population) and the joint policy statement, Housing Options for our Ageing Population, 2019 (includes a programme of 40 strategic actions to progress housing options for older people).

# Our Asks - What Would Make a Difference?



## **1. Cross-departmental strategy implementation and whole of Government working is challenging. Our next Government needs to be supported to work effectively on a cross-Departmental basis to support positive ageing.**

Successful whole-of-government work depends on clear objectives, political commitment, viable joined-up government structures, and incentives to collaborate – ingredient factors missing when it comes to the implementation of policy relevant to positive ageing.

Arrangements for monitoring progress and an assigned budget are recognised as basic enablers for any strategy; No active implementation, monitoring or reporting plan appear to be in place for the National Positive Ageing Strategy or Ireland’s broader goals framed to support an ageing population.

Across recent Governments the Ministry for Older People is a Minister of State position reporting to the Minister for Health, and is part of a dual Ministry for Older People and Mental Health – two very significant portfolios.

Comparative portfolios include the Ministry for Children, and the Ministry of State for Disability. Both Ministries exist within the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth; it should be noted that the Ministry of State for Disability is a standalone role, and the Ministry for Children is a Cabinet position. Within the Department of Health, a Principal Officer role of ‘Older Persons Service Oversight and Planning’ includes, among other areas, responsibility for “cross-sectoral collaboration on national policies for older persons”.

These current structures do not make it easy to hold a range of Government departments to account or to work across boundaries on pressing issues relevant to the needs of an ageing population.

Older people, of course, have needs and rights far beyond the Department of Health, where the portfolio is currently placed.

The Alliance is therefore calling for the introduction of a **standalone Minister of State for Older People within the Department of Health** together with **the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People**.

A standalone Minister for Older People within the Department of Health would be well placed to oversee policy relevant to the health-related needs of our older adult population while an Independent Commissioner would have a remit to promote the needs of older people across all Departments, ensuring the needs of older people are met across the variety of services and departments they interact with.

Such an independent post holder would be well placed to look at, but also beyond, national policies written specifically for older people, and consider how policies in other areas address the needs of our ageing population.

Collectively, we need to hold Government to account on the pledges that have been made in respect of positive ageing as these are the issues that can make a real difference to the lived experience of our older adult population.



## **The Alliance is therefore calling for the introduction of a standalone Minister of State for Older People within the Department of Health *together with* the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People.**

Our next Government must be supported to work on a cross-Departmental basis to improve the delivery of programmes, services and supports for older people.

**An effective Positive Ageing Strategy, in particular, requires:**

- **A top-level governmental commitment to older people. This would take the form of a Programme for Government Outcome which is actively monitored by the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy or, more preferably as proposed by the Rome Declaration 2022 of which Ireland is a signatory, establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People that can mediate the rights, needs and interests of older persons in all areas of society.**
- **The allocation of specific responsibilities to government departments with such responsibilities underpinned by clear deliverables, timelines and performance indicators; and**
- **Specified funding allocation tethered to each Strategic Outcome.**



It is for this reason that the Age Alliance is calling for the next Government to establish an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People. Such an Independent Commissioner would have a much broader remit that recognises the full capacity and potential of older people, covering their needs and rights across the spectrum, not just in terms of health, care, frailty, and vulnerability.

The Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would provide an independent voice with the ability and capacity to **engage with all Government departments**. They would support a coordinated approach towards the implementation of strategies and actions relevant to the needs and rights of older people taking a role independent of any one department.

An Independent Commissioner would support the effective mainstreaming of ageing across Government while also holding Government and public bodies to account.

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## **2. An Independent Commission for Ageing and Older People – a proven and cost-effective concept.**

The Commissioners for Older People in both Northern Ireland and Wales have established track records of achievements for older people. Similar offices have been successfully operating in **Northern Ireland** (since 2011) and **Wales** (since 2008).

Proposals for the establishment of Independent Commissioners in both **England** and **Scotland** are also well advanced.



**Age Alliance members believe that the Commissioner for Older People would be a key asset for Government, helping departments and agencies to integrate ageing issues into all relevant policy fields as well as enhancing the capacity and capabilities of public services to respond to the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by population ageing.**

Age Alliance members believe that this model would be a **key asset for Government**, helping departments and agencies to integrate ageing issues into all relevant policy fields as well as enhancing the capacity and capabilities of public services to respond to the challenges and seize the opportunities presented by population ageing.

UK examples were established with relatively modest budgets of between **stg £1.1m** and **£1.5m** annually, and it is clear that the benefits of such an office will far outweigh budget cost to the exchequer.

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### 3. There is a proven appetite for the establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People.

In a recent Red C poll commissioned by Sage Advocacy measuring public opinion on such issues, 81% of respondents wanted to see the introduction of a Commissioner for Older People.

Furthermore, the Citizens' Assembly in 2017 recorded that "100% of the Members recommended that the Government **urgently prioritise and implement existing policies** and strategies in relation to older people i.e. the National Positive Ageing Strategy".

Responses to recent Dáil Parliamentary Questions in this area have typically deferred to the work of the **Commission on Care for Older People** and in particular the role of a yet to be established cross-departmental group whose role may "include the consideration of matters such as the merits of establishing a Commissioner for Older People".

The Terms of Reference of the Commission on Care would suggest that any such consideration may take place as part of 'Module 3' of its work which is currently scheduled for commencement c. mid 2025; 12 years post launch of the 2013 Positive Ageing Strategy.

The Age Alliance believes that the time bound Commission on Care will have an important role to play in examining the care and support needs of older people.

'Care' is, of course, one critical element of a breadth of determinants that enable people to age well. It is the view of the Alliance, however, that a wide range of factors, inclusive of, but not limited solely to 'care', will impact on health and wellbeing as people age.

Twelve years following the launch of the **National Positive Ageing Strategy** the need for such an independent office is most pressing.

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# Grades Table

Across the following pages 14 of the 15 policy commitments, spotlighted in the original Taking Stock review, are featured together with an updated Age Alliance grading to reflect their current status. This short-list has been set out in order to steer Government focus for the next Dáil term.

**Above all, the Age Alliance believes the clear implementation deficit highlights the pressing need for the establishment of an independent office in the form of a Commissioner for Ageing and Older People.**

The Alliance is therefore calling on Government parties to include a commitment in the **Programme for Government** to establish an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People and to **relaunch** the National Positive Ageing Strategy together with a strong implementation plan and a ring-fenced budget. As with the original **'Taking Stock'** exercise this shortlist of policy commitments was lifted out on the basis of several core criteria:

- That the commitment directly impacts older people.
- The commitment wording is clear and measurable.
- Achievement of the commitment is not subjective; it either has or has not been delivered.
- If delivered or achieved, the commitment has significant potential to improve (1) the environment for policy implementation relevant to ageing and older people or (2) the quality of life for people as we grow older in Ireland – or indeed both simultaneously.

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The updated grades allocated represent the collective views of the seven-member Age Alliance CEO forum rather than the views of any individual.

While the news isn't all bad (i.e. two positive announcements in 2024 to deliver 4,367 acute hospital in-patient beds by 2031 and confirmation of the new site to develop a new 20-bed facility Midlands Hospice) the snapshot provided across the following pages demonstrates 'slow progress' at best as 12 of the 14 commitments are either awarded a 'reduced' or 'holding' grade when compared with February 2024. The **particularly worrying aspect** being that the baseline grades awarded in February 2024 were very often 'low' to start off with.

The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs must, once again, ask; **Is the lack of urgency itself a manifestation of institutional ageism?** What has made implementation so problematic? The establishment of an Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People would help to address this sluggish implementation and better ensure that older people in Ireland are treated with respect and on an equal basis with the rest of the population.

The Age Alliance is calling on this new Government to institute and implement a comprehensive, **whole-of-government positive ageing framework** in Ireland that looks beyond the care and medical needs of older people to protect all aspects of ageing and better ensure people in Ireland are empowered and supported to age well.

# Explanation of Grades



Excellent, making a real difference to older people's lives



Good effort, positive results for older people



Satisfactory attempt, but older people still left wanting



Barely acceptable performance, little or no positive impact on older people



Unacceptable, taking steps in the wrong direction, no positive impact on older people



Fail, taking steps that undermine older people's wellbeing



Not applicable, due to vague nature of Government commitment

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE (JANUARY 2024)	GRADE (DECEMBER 2024)
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“Develop an implementation plan so as to translate Goals and Objectives of the National Positive Ageing Strategy into action on the ground” (2013)



National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013

F

F-



### RATIONALE FOR GRADE

- No implementation plan ever developed for this 11+ year old Strategy.
- No allocation of ring-fenced funding ever provided for this 11+ year old Strategy.
- Government, most recently, has proposed that a cross-departmental group, under the auspices of the Commission on Care for Older People, will “consider whether the supports for positive ageing across the life course are fit-for-purpose” and “prepare a detailed implementation plan for the selected options to enable positive ageing”. This work is currently scheduled as part of Module 3 of the work of the Commission on Care for commencement c. mid 2025; 12 years post launch of the Positive Ageing Strategy.

“The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, chaired by the Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy” (2013)



National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013

E

F



### RATIONALE FOR GRADE

- Another year has now passed without publication of any annual update on positive ageing or annual reports on progress.
- Continued absence of evidence of oversight of implementation by the Cabinet Committee.
- Action relevant to this commitment would appear to be deferred until mid-2025, at the earliest, and the commencement of Module 3 of the work of the Commission on Care.

<p><b>GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT</b> (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)</p>	<p><b>GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT</b></p>	<p><b>GRADE (JANUARY 2024)</b></p>	<p><b>GRADE (DECEMBER 2024)</b></p>
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“Combat ageism through awareness campaigns and by encouraging the media and other opinion-making actors to give an age-balanced image of society” (2013)



National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013

(B)

(C)

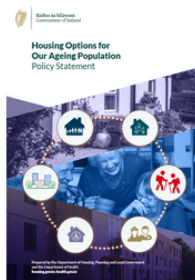


**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Launch of January 2024 IHREC\* national awareness campaign (TV, radio and online); ‘For Equality in Ageing’.
- Inequality in relation to pay and age was the most common form of discrimination (30%), according to Workplace Equality Survey 2023/4.
- Most recent Workplace Relations Commission Annual Report reported a 176% increase in the number of age-related discrimination complaints (increasing from 186 complaints to 514 complaints from the previous year).

\*The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is a statutory body which is independent of Government.

“Work closely with local authorities to review the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and the waiting lists in place for adaptations and publish this data on a yearly basis. This will identify any barriers and gaps at local and national level and help to streamline the process to ensure timely intervention”. (2019)



Housing Options for our Ageing Population 2019

(E)

(E)



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

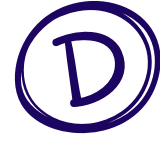
- Welcome (recent) Government announcement to increase grant limits by 30% and the income thresholds by 25% for those applying for support under the Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People. Overall funding, however, falls short of the necessary multi-annual funding to restore the Grants to 2010 levels. Since 2010, the population aged 65+ has increased by 60%.
- Review conducted, via FOI requests to each Local Authority, found that thousands of people nationwide are on waiting lists for the grants.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE (JANUARY 2024)	GRADE (DECEMBER 2024)
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“To develop a far-reaching range of housing options to provide appropriate housing choices for older people, suited to their individual needs so they can plan ahead and, in so far as possible, choose the right home for them”. (2019)



Housing Options for our Ageing Population 2019



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- The introduction of a Healthy Age Friendly Homes Coordinator, to all 31 local authority areas demonstrates promise.
- Further increase in number of older renters, many of whom do not want to be in the rental sector. CSO report that nearly half of renters over 65 are spending more than 35 per cent of their disposable income on rent.
- Further increase in the numbers of older people on the waiting list for social housing.
- No national ‘rightsizing’ strategy, nor Government-led delivery of broad scale home-sharing schemes.

“Protect the incomes of older people through the delivery of the commitment to benchmark State pension payments”. (2020)



The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Benchmarking of State pension payments has not been introduced. Ireland is now the only country in the eurozone without a system of benchmarking the state pension.
- Increase in poverty rates among older people. Current pension model implicitly relies on a principle of broad homeownership generally and assumes householders will no longer be paying a mortgage or private rent by retirement.
- Poverty among older people (a group already ‘most at risk’ of deprivation) expected to rise further as a consequence of Budget 2025 following reductions to temporary measures such as household credits and freeze, in nominal terms, of other allowances such as the living alone allowance and fuel allowance.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE (JANUARY 2024)	GRADE (DECEMBER 2024)
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**"Provide income and other supports to enable people as they age to enjoy an acceptable standard of living". (2013)**



National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Welcome for the Budget 2025 increases to the State pension, Cost of Living Payment, Fuel Allowance, the Living Alone Allowance, and the Disability Pension and Blind Pension, but regret that these are insufficient to cover inflation.
- Those aged 65+ were the only age cohort to see increases across all three poverty rates between 2020 and 2023. Deprivation among older people living alone has increased significantly over the last ten years, from 3% in 2013 to 20% in 2023.
- Budget 2025 saw cuts to the household energy credit which will disproportionately affect households on fixed incomes, such as pensions, for whom this credit represents a large proportion of income.

**"Accessible, affordable, and flexible transport systems in both rural and urban areas" (2013)**

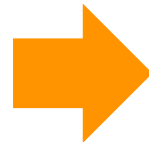
**"Provide a quality nationwide community based public transport system in rural Ireland which responds to local needs". (2022)**



National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013



Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Lack of transport connectivity, particularly in rural areas, continues to reduce the efficacy of the Free Travel Scheme.





“Introduce a statutory scheme to support people to live in their own homes, which will provide equitable access to high-quality, regulated home care”. (2020)



Programme for Government - Our Shared Future 2020



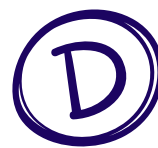
**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- The Statutory Scheme has been in development since 2016 and the past two Governments have committed to its development. Although initially targeted for implementation in 2021, the Scheme has been repeatedly delayed and there is no current timeline for its completion.
- Delays to the Scheme were criticised during pre-legislative scrutiny of home care regulations and Dáil Statements on Statutory Homecare.
- Parts of Ireland have lengthy waiting lists while other areas have low waiting lists in part due to the lack of a single assessment tool and the absence of a statutory obligation to deliver care and reduce waiting lists.
- Lack of transparency and absence of basic data such as the length of time spent on a waiting list and the quality standards of home care providers.

“To underpin a planned national health sector policy on safeguarding vulnerable or at-risk adults in the context of their interactions with the health sector.”



Government Legislative Programme



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Safeguarding Bill, first brought forward in 2017, and despite having all party support, has not progressed.
- Progress urgently needed so as to prevent and reduce adult abuse, neglect and coercive control, particularly for at risk adults such as those with disabilities, frailty, serious illness or an acquired brain injury.



“Increase the number of specialist palliative care beds countrywide over the next five years, ensuring that there will be a hospice serving every region in the country”. (2020)



Programme for Government – Our Shared Future 2020



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Confirmation that a 20-bed facility Midlands Hospice is to be developed so as to serve Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford.
- Publication of the New Adult Palliative Care Policy with an outlined implementation plan.
- Completed the research being carried out in association with Irish Hospice Foundation into the cost of bereavement and funeral poverty in Ireland.
- Equity in accessing specialist palliative care both inpatient and community remains a challenge.
- Social determinants of dying and grieving in Ireland need to be addressed.

“Develop a plan aimed at tackling loneliness and isolation, particularly among older people” (2020/2021)



Programme for Government - Our Shared Future 2020



The Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025



Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021 - 2025



Sláintecare Strategy & Action Plan 2021-2023

**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Welcome for the Budget 2025 introduction of the Universal Companion Pass.
- Research shows that Ireland has the highest rates of loneliness in the EU.
- Loneliness has also been linked to the wish to die among older adults.
- To date Government has not assigned funding or staff to develop this plan despite passing of Seanad motion earlier this year calling on Government to fulfil the Programme for Government commitment to publish an Action Plan to Combat Loneliness and Isolation, and to establish an Expert Action Group on loneliness through the Department of the Taoiseach.

GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT (VERBATIM AS PER STRATEGY/POLICY REFERENCED)	GOVERNMENT STRATEGY OR POLICY DOCUMENT	GRADE (JANUARY 2024)	GRADE (DECEMBER 2024)
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“Increase hospital bed capacity” (2021)



National Development Plan 2021-2030

D

C-



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Acute Inpatient Hospital Bed Expansion Plan (2024) aims to deliver 4,367 acute hospital in-patient beds by 2031.
- This includes 3,352 new beds, with the location of these new beds mapped across the six regional health areas.

“Remove barriers to participation and provide more opportunities for the continued involvement of people as they age in all aspects of cultural, economic and social life in their communities according to their needs, preferences and capacities” (2013)



National Positive Ageing Strategy 2013

C

C



**RATIONALE FOR GRADE**

- Evidence of growing good practices exist but ageism, digital disadvantage, funding and structural barriers continue to drive social exclusion.

# Who is the Alliance of Age Sector NGOs

The Alliance of Age Sector NGOs (the Alliance) represents the collective thinking of seven significant NGOs working in the age sector.

Separately, we provide vital services for older people, support older people to contribute to and participate in community life and advocate for better policies, services and supports for older people at national and local level.

Together, we collaborate to combat ageism and to seek action on the specific issues that make older people's lives more difficult than they need to be. We work together to support Ireland in becoming a better place in which to grow older.

The Alliance is committed to collaborative leadership and the pooling of our capacity and resources to maximise our collective impact.

Standing meetings of the Alliance are held on a bi-monthly basis. These meetings are attended by the CEO's of the seven member organisations together with the Alliance's independent Chair, Maurice O'Connell. A number of thematic working groups would also convene to progress specific actions.



Active Retirement Ireland: will reach out to all older people to stop loneliness through friendship and support.



Age & Opportunity: Our mission is to enable the best possible quality of life for us all as we age.



ALONE: Supporting older people to age at home.



The Alzheimer Society of Ireland: Our mission is to advocate, empower and champion the rights of people living with dementia and their communities to quality support and services.



Irish Hospice Foundation: Our mission is to work towards the best end-of-life and bereavement care for all.



The Irish Senior Citizens Parliament: Working to promote the voice of older people in policy development and decision-making.



Responding to the Opportunities and Challenges of Ageing in Ireland

Third Age: Responding to the opportunities and challenges of ageing in Ireland.

We have a wonderful opportunity in Ireland to embrace our improving life expectancy, to promote independent living and add healthy years to life. And we must embrace it.

We all want to age well. As a country we must strive to become an Ireland that leads the world in becoming age-attuned, age-accommodating and age-friendly. An Independent Commissioner for Ageing and Older People can play a key role in getting us to this point.

