



## Chairman's Welcome



Welcome to the winter edition of our newsletter. The past few months have been very worrying for our members as concerns increase about the upcoming Budget, particularly in relation to possible changes to the State Pension. The Network will do everything in its power to ensure that this does not happen.

Submissions have been made to Wicklow TDs and Health Minister James Reilly in relation to the effects of the cuts to the Home Care packages and the Home Help service. We stressed that older people wish to stay in their own homes rather than enter institutional care. All agencies working with older people emphasise the economic benefits of this for the Exchequer and for meeting the needs of the people concerned.

The Network has also submitted a petition with over 1,200 signatures on behalf of older people in County Wicklow to Minister James Reilly urging him to maintain the excellent services provided at St. Colman's Residential Care Centre, Rathdrum. The committee has undertaken training under the guidance of Brian Harvey, a social policy consultant, on how to draw up and present our Budget submission for this year. His expertise and skills have been of great benefit to us.

The Network has also been actively involved in supporting other groups and organisations that are putting pressure on Bus Éireann to restore

the Nutley Lane stop on the Rosslare-Dublin route. Some measure of success has been achieved with the reinstatement of three stops on the route. The original service has been vital for people attending appointments in St. Vincent's Hospital.

On a more positive note, we are delighted that recent initiatives undertaken by the Network are progressing well. Eight ambassadors have successfully completed the pilot stage of the Network Ambassadors project. They have produced an excellent report on the impact of the household charge on older peoples' lives. Facilitators for the Ageing with Confidence programme have been trained and are now ready to impart their newly acquired skills to interested people all over the county. The Elder Abuse workshops held in Arklow and the Glenview Hotel were well attended by representatives of organisations involved with and providing services to older people. The key messages were the need for awareness of what constitutes elder abuse and information on steps that can be taken to deal with suspected cases of abuse and bad treatment. Sincere thanks to the Equality Authority, Age Action and Co. Wicklow Partnership for their support for the workshops.

The Network would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members a very happy Christmas. We look forward to working on your behalf during 2013.

Pat Brennan,  
Chairman





## Blister Packs Make Taking Tablets Easy

Taking medication every day can be complicated. If you have three, four, five tablets to take each day, it can be so easy to forget which ones to take – or indeed, if you have taken them at all.

That's why it might be a good idea to talk to your GP and chemist about a new concept – sealed blister packs where each day's tablets are contained in separate compartments. A lot of older people will be familiar with plastic containers which you or a family member can buy where you open the lid for each day. Then you put each day's medicine into the day's container, close the lid ... and wait! Whilst these are very handy, they can also be confusing as you may not be completely sure if you opened the lid and took a tablet earlier in the day, for example. And, you need to be very sure that you put the right medicine into the right day's compartment.

Now, most pharmacies will offer a tablet blister packing service – essentially, the pharmacy does all the work in terms of organising your daily medicine. All you have to do is press the tablets out of the blister and take them.

“The blister packs are a disposable weekly cassette which sorts your medicines into separate compartments, into days of the week and times of day,”



said Niamh Stacey, pharmacist at Hickey's Pharmacy, Arklow. “These could be very helpful to you, in particular if you take many tablets, if you have difficulty in taking your tablets (eg. cannot halve your tablets), if you sometimes forget to take your medication or if you sometimes get confused when taking your medication.”

Ask your pharmacist if there is any charge for this service. At the moment, there is no charge if you have a medical card and pharmacies may offer the service free of charge anyway.

The big advantage is that you are more likely to take your medicines as directed by your GP and less likely to forget your medicines.

## The AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Network was held in the Brockagh Centre, Laragh on the 11th of May. The 170 people who attended were given a run down on all the activities undertaken by the Network during the previous year.

Sincere thanks for all their work were extended to Marie Molloy and Maureen Phibbs who were leaving the committee and a warm welcome was extended to new members Pdraigin Hughes and Joan Delaney-McMahon.

A novel aspect of this year's AGM was the holding of a tea dance in the afternoon with music is being provided by the acclaimed 'Wicklow Man'. This proved to be a great success and was enjoyed by all and will probably become a regular feature of future AGM's.



*Wicklow  
Hospice  
Foundation*  
www.wicklowhospice.ie  
Charity ID: CHY 18985

## Support the Hospice Foundation

Wicklow Hospice Foundation has been fundraising for the last three years to build a 12-bed hospice in County Wicklow for the people of Wicklow. It has a target of €3 million and, to date, has raised €2.1 million. A site for the hospice has been donated by the Columban Sisters at Magheramore near Brittas Bay.

An operating partner will run the Hospice after it is built, at which point the Foundation will step back and the professional health care management team will run the hospice. The Foundation is also committed to improving the community based palliative care nursing service so that it is a seven-day service.

When the Hospice is built, it is hoped that it will serve as a hub for improved community palliative care nursing. Ideally, there will be a day-care centre where patients can be brought in for the day to have their medical and other needs met in a therapeutic environment. It is also envisaged that complementary therapies will be available to our patients at the day-care centre.

In-patient beds will provide for patients who are not able to have their care managed in their homes. The aim is to provide comfort and dignity at the end of life for the people of Wicklow who need such care.

While it is official Department of Health policy that such a hospice be provided in Wicklow, no hospice has come into being in Ireland without input from the voluntary sector. Wicklow Hospice Foundation fills that role and is deeply appreciative of the support of the people and community groups of Wicklow. Throughout the county, there is a shared of a top-class palliative care service for our friends and relatives as they face life-limiting illness.

## Quiz a Winner!

The Network hosted a very successful table quiz in the Glendalough Hotel in June.

Our first quiz was won by the "Llamedos" team representing the Citizen's Information Centre in Bray. They went away with the perpetual trophy, which was sponsored by Pat Casey, proprietor of the hotel.

Sincere thanks to all the groups, organisations and individuals who supported the quiz. Details of next year's quiz will be available at a later date.



# Garda Older People Strategy



*An Garda Síochána has a fine tradition of supporting older people in our communities.*

In 2010, An Garda Síochána drew up an Older People Strategy – essentially, this simply recognised and formalised the work that Gardaí already do in communities. For years, An Garda Síochána has worked hand-in-hand with older people in relation to crime prevention and detection as well as staying in touch with people who experienced crime first hand, or indeed social calls and a cup of tea just to see how things were.

The Older People Strategy outlines how An Garda Síochána intends to ensure that the policing needs of older people in Wicklow are met to the highest standards possible.

In Wicklow, the Gardaí are endeavouring to better communicate to older people – through local radio and newspapers – issues that directly affect them. Recognising the wisdom and experience of older people, the Gardaí are actively encouraging older people to get involved in crime prevention initiatives such as Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch. For example, the Chairperson of the Bray Neighbourhood Watch is

a retiree and the treasurer is in her 70s.

New technology – such as text message alerts, is also being used to better communicate our message to older people. And Gardaí are trying to increase patrols, particularly foot patrols, where large proportions of older people live. A series of crime prevention leaflets with reference to Older People have been developed and are freely available at your local Garda station or from the Garda website under the Crime Prevention tab.

The strategy is a result of consultations with interested groups and is a response to key requirements to develop and maintain effective communication links between Gardaí and older people, to develop a proactive and timely response by An Garda Síochána for Older People, to increase trust and confidence by lessening the fear of crime amongst Older People, and to determine and respond to the needs and expectations of older people on an ongoing basis.

If you'd like to review the Older People Strategy, you can read it or download it from [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie) under the Community Relations tab.

## Community Gardaí

For further information on the above or to find out the contact names and details of the community Garda in your area contact:

Sergeant John Fitzpatrick at Bray, Garda Station. Phone (01) 666 5300  
email: [john.m.fitzpatrick@garda.ie](mailto:john.m.fitzpatrick@garda.ie)



## The Household Charge

*The household charge and its impact on older people were raised at the AGM in May. We heard you – and researched the topic.*

The household charge is an issue of concern to many older people. The Co Wicklow Network for Older People's social policy committee recently gathered information on the reality for older people of paying the household charge, with the assistance of the Network's new Ambassador programme.

Three discussion groups were held in South Wicklow. The key findings were:

- ▶ Accessing information on the household charge and the payment process was difficult.
- ▶ The present payment methods are unsuitable for many older people.
- ▶ The charge of €100 represents the top end of what people on a fixed income like the State Old Age Pension can afford.
- ▶ Any increases or additional taxes would make it unaffordable for many older people to remain living in their own homes, especially those living alone or dependent and paying for homecare, leaving them no option but to go into long term care.
- ▶ To pay the household charge and other charges being introduced, older people must cut back on other expenditure, including private health insurance, their car visits to emigrated family members.
- ▶ Without transport, older people living in rural areas can easily become isolated; contact with children is important in sustaining relationships and relieving loneliness for older people.

The Co Wicklow Network for Older People would like to thank the ambassadors and the people who took part in the focus groups. This is the first research conducted by the Ambassadors, whose role is to gather information about issues that impact on older people's quality of life. The quality of the research report was of such a high standard that it formed the main content for the Network's pre-budget submission 2012. Full copy of report is available on the website [www.olderinwicklow.ie](http://www.olderinwicklow.ie).

## Make Home Work

At a meeting on July 21, 2012, Co Wicklow Network for Older People adopted Older & Bolder's Make Home Work Charter. This is aimed at giving people the right to age well at home.

Older & Bolder's 12-month Make Home Work campaign highlights the obstacles faced by people – older people, people with chronic illnesses, people with disabilities – who want to live well at home and who need support to do so.

It seeks to build on older peoples' insights and improve our system of community care.

The Network would love to see more groups in Co Wicklow adopt the Older & Bolder charter.



For further information, contact the Network (details on front of newsletter) or log on to [www.olderandbolder.ie](http://www.olderandbolder.ie)



## Ageing with Confidence



*Co Wicklow Network for Older People is now an Ageing with Confidence provider, available to promote positive mental and physical health courses around the county.*

Fifteen CWNOP facilitators have been trained to deliver the Ageing with Confidence course to groups and individuals. This is a great opportunity for groups to encourage a holistic approach to health promotion.

The Ageing with Confidence programme provides education for health, develops life skills, promotes positive mental health and builds self-confidence. It is based on an ethos of empowerment and mutual self-help among older people and promotes physical and mental health and social interaction. Developed by Age & Opportunity, the Network's participation in training was funded by County Wicklow Partnership through the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in Rural Areas.

### What You Will Learn

During the course, people will be facilitated to explore their own ageing, to challenge the myths and stereotyping that lead to ageism; and they will be given information on physical, psychological and social aspects of growing older.

The course consists of eight weekly 2.5-hour sessions. Each session is delivered by two CWNOP facilitators trained by Age & Opportunity. It consists of information on aspects of ageing such as Self-Confidence and Ageism, the Components of Self and Physical Ageing, Psychological Aspects of Normal Ageing, Self-Knowledge and Stresses in Later Life, the Emotional Self, Improving Self-Confidence, Isolation, Loneliness and Sexuality in Later Life, Review and Evaluation.

### Benefits

If you work with older people, the Ageing with Confidence programme is a great way to attract people you are not already reaching. It engages people, informs them and, most importantly, it gives people the encouragement to act on what they learn. Ageing with Confidence opens the door to future involvement.

### Call Us!

The Network and the trained facilitators look forward to delivering courses to people all over Co. Wicklow. If you or your group are interested in having CWNOP facilitators deliver the course in your area, contact CWNOP development worker, Anne Kavanagh for further information (address on back of newsletter). You can read more about the Ageing with Confidence course at **[www.ageandopportunity.ie](http://www.ageandopportunity.ie)**

# Elder Abuse Awareness Workshops



*Two successful workshops helped to highlight that elder abuse in any form is simply unacceptable.*

*Dr. Emer Begley, Age Action's Senior Policy Officer reports.*

Elder Abuse occurs much more often than we would like to imagine and affects thousands of older people each year. It's important to state that the term 'abuse' does not just refer to physical abuse – it also covers unwanted emotional or financial pressures placed on older people.



In late October, Co Wicklow's Older Person's Network and Age Action ran two Elder Abuse awareness workshops. Funded by the Equality Authority, the workshops set out to raise awareness around Elder Abuse and to build links locally to help prevent abuse from taking place.

Nearly 100 people attended both workshops, with people from active retirement groups, friendship groups, Care and Repair, Arklow Town Council, Wicklow Co. Council, Muintir na Tire, day centres, care providers, HSE, and church representatives.

Sarah Mahon, a HSE Dedicated Officer for the Protection of Older People, spoke about the HSE social work-led service. Each local health office has a case worker who takes referrals of elder abuse and supports those who have experienced abuse. "The solutions are very often about early intervention and knowing to seek help at an early stage," said Sarah.

Feedback from the workshops was very positive. Attendees felt that everyone can do more to spread the word that elder abuse is unacceptable. Following recent child abuse scandals and the knowledge that many knew and did nothing, they commented on the need to bring elder abuse in its various forms out into the open. It is important that people who are experiencing abuse know they are not alone and help is available.

Comments and suggestions, such as forward legal planning and support for family carers and the development of robust standards and regulation for paid home care, will feed into a report on the workshops being compiled by Age Action.

If you are concerned about elder abuse and would like to talk to a case worker about your situation or would like to talk to them on behalf of someone you know, please contact the HSE in confidence on 1850 24 1850. For further information on other support services, contact Age Action's information telephone line, (01) 475 6989 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Many thanks to all who attended the workshops.

# Reaching Out



*The Network recently shared its experiences with two other groups from Wexford and Roscommon.*

County Wicklow Network for Older People was called upon recently to share lessons learned with similar groups from Co. Wexford and Roscommon.

CWNOP member Mai Quaid chaired the meeting with County Wexford Age Equality Network. It focused on the National Positive Ageing Strategy, developing Wexford and Wicklow as age-friendly counties, ageing with confidence, and the Wicklow Older Persons' Ambassador programme as well as lobbying and advocacy on behalf of older people.

## Strong Voices

Thanks to support from Age & Opportunity under the Get Vocal programme, both Networks in Wicklow and Wexford have developed over the last few years to become strong lobbying and advocacy voices for older people in their respective counties. The meeting allowed for the sharing of information, experiences and a discussion of the challenges coming up, such as Budget 2013 and reduced funding. Both

Networks felt that they benefited from the meeting and that it was important that we work together on national issues as well as working on our own to deal with local issues.

## Tackling Issues

County Wicklow Network for Older People also had the pleasure of hosting Roscommon Network for Older People on November 1, 2012 in the Glenview Hotel. The Roscommon Network is at an early stage of development and CWNOP was happy to share the learning and experience built up over the last number of years. Roscommon Network also shared its experiences and approaches to tackling issues.

## Working Together

One of the issues that became clear from both meetings is the importance of working together to provide a strong voice for older people. The issues facing older people in the different counties are very similar – it is only by working together that we can prevent an erosion of services which older people depend upon.

**Membership** Thanks to all those groups and individuals who have registered for membership of the Network and for your subscriptions. For further information on membership contact:

Anne Kavanagh, Co. Wicklow Network for Older People

email: [akavanagh@wicklowpartnership.ie](mailto:akavanagh@wicklowpartnership.ie) Phone: 0402 - 20955 Mobile: 087 1500 234

