Removing barriers

Improving Customer services

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WHY AGE FRIENDLY?

Age Friendly is an approach is looking at things differently and making the small and big changes to design, practice and policy that makes it easier for everyone to be apart of their community.

AN AGING SOCIETY

- Currently in Ireland there are **600,000** people aged 65 and over accounting to **12%** of the population.

- This is set to rise to **1.4 million by 2041**, accounting for **22%** of the population

CONSULTATION & RESEARCH

AGE FRIENDLY CONSULTATION

- **Consultation identified issues for older people**

  - Access to services and information

  - Understanding services and application forms

  - Embarrassment about literacy, aging and need assistance.

RESEARCH IN TO CUSTOMER SERVICES

Research focused on three specific questions

- Knowledge of the services provided by Monaghan county council.

- Experience of accessing/using the services of Monaghan county council.

- Suggestions for improved service delivery in Monaghan county council.

"Just because you know what you're talking about doesn't mean I do"

A PROFILE OF MONAGHAN

- Over 70% of the population of Monaghan live in a rural community.

- 39% of people with a disability in Monaghan are over 65.

- In 2016, 20% of the population of Monaghan had no formal education.

- 1 in 4 people have significant difficulties with reading and writing.

- 16% of the population were born outside Monaghan.

- 60% of people over 65 in Monaghan have no access to a computer/laptop.

KEY FINDINGS

- Little awareness of the different needs some people have when trying to access services.
- People with literacy difficulties typically do not readily volunteer information about their literacy problems.
- Ageing brings with it mobility and sensory changes which subsequently impacts on the ability to access services and information easily.

- Confusion with regard to services provided by other statutory agencies.
- Reliance on elected representatives and community organisations to access services on behalf of older people.
- Some services were easier to access than others, not consistent.
- Language used is complex, difficult to understand.
- How to get a service is often unclear.

KEY FINDINGS

- Customer service depends on personality rather than policy.

- People with any challenges tend not to ask for help or assistance, but if offered they will accept it.

- Many customers left council looking for help from elsewhere to fill out forms etc.

- No offer of confidential space to discuss private matters.

- No seating area for older customers to wait.

- Poor signage to indicate where departments/services are located.

- Inaccessible buildings.

- No contact person named for a service if you ring in.

SUGGESTIONS FROM SERVICE USERS

- Service providers need to look at an application form or information through the eyes of those who will be using it then the difficulties may become clear.

- Awareness raising on the needs of some service users (particularly older people, people with disabilities, people who don't speak English).

- If support was offered it would be accepted.

- At least one office/room that is fully accessible that could be used by staff and customers if needed

- Customers should be informed of the option of using this accessible location should as sometimes people are too embarrassed to ask for help.

- Confidential space for people to discuss private matters with council staff.

- Alternatives to online services, not everyone has access to the internet or the skills to use online services.

- Range of ways to access services should be available not just one way.

- A service should have a contact name and number so people know who to look for.

- The same approach to customer service should be across the organisation.

AGE FRIENDLY GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION

- Looking at service delivery from an age friendly perspective doesn't just support older people, but everyone in the community.

- This booklet looks at the ways in which public services communicate about their services.

- The booklet identifies the barriers that arise in each of these communication methods

- The booklet identifies an age friendly approach to each communication method and how to over come the barriers.
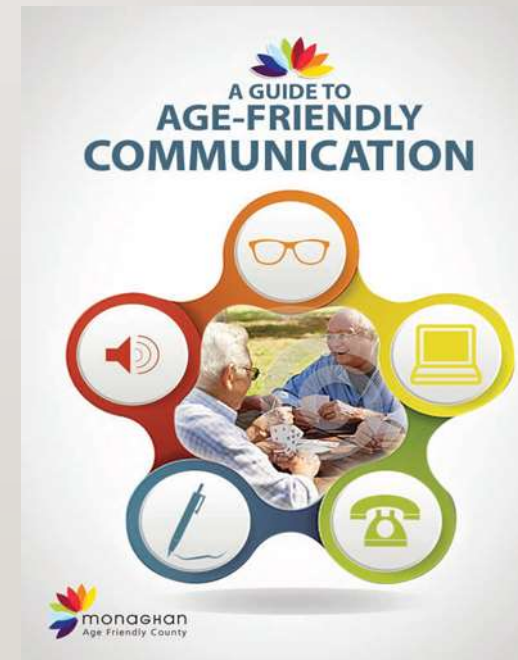
WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Information

is what we share

Communication

is how we share it

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Effective *communication* therefore is about making sure what we share is common in everyone's understanding

AN AGE FRIENDLY GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION

- Sensory Changes
    - 2 million have sight loss that effects their daily life.
    - 70% over 70 have some form of hearing loss
- Physical Changes
    - 45% of people with Disability are over 65
    - Reduced mobility, declining dexterity
- Changes in Cognitive Function
    - Memory loss is a come part of the aging process
- Emotional Changes
    - The changes in ability causes a lot of stress and upset to older people

An Age Friendly guide to Communication
Inclusive customer service policy

- The Age Friendly approach highlights the key areas for consideration when we plan the delivery of services.
  - *Physical mobility*
  - *Literacy skills*
  - *Sensory impairments*
  - *Language barriers*
  - *Privacy*
  - *Personal support*
  - *Cognitive function*
  - *Cultural norms*

All services and information should be easily accessed by the following customers

- Customers with limited use of their hands or fingers.

- Customers with impairment of eyes/ears/speech.

- Customers with limited physical mobility.

- Customers with intellectual disabilities, memory loss or dementia.

All services and information should be easily accessed by the following customers

- Customers with limited literacy skills.

- Customers with limited or no English language skills

- Customers with limited or no IT Skills.

- Customers from different cultural backgrounds.

AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION TRAINING

- Customer focused training workshop

- Each participant is given a profile of a customer that uses the services of the LA.

- The workshop looks at customer services in the local authority and the barriers that may present for the profile characters.

- Participants focus on their own organisation and how the experience their character profile would have accessing the services of their organisation.

- Participants then identify the changes that can be made within their own work practices and their organisation.

NATIONAL IMPACT

- The age friendly communication booklet has been shared with each Age Friendly county programme in the country.

- The booklet has been adapted and reprinted in a number of other local authority areas.

- Monaghan Age Friendly programme delivered Age Friendly communication training in every Age Friendly county in the country

- This initiative is an effective community development model of improving customer service delivery.

- It looks at the potential service user and considers the challenges that may exist for some members of the community when trying to access services and information of local government.

SHARING THE LEARNING

- Age Friendly Communication guide and training module templates are available from Age Friendly Ireland.

- The training module has been incorporated into the FETAC Level 5 Health and Social care course in Dublin City & County Education & training boards.