



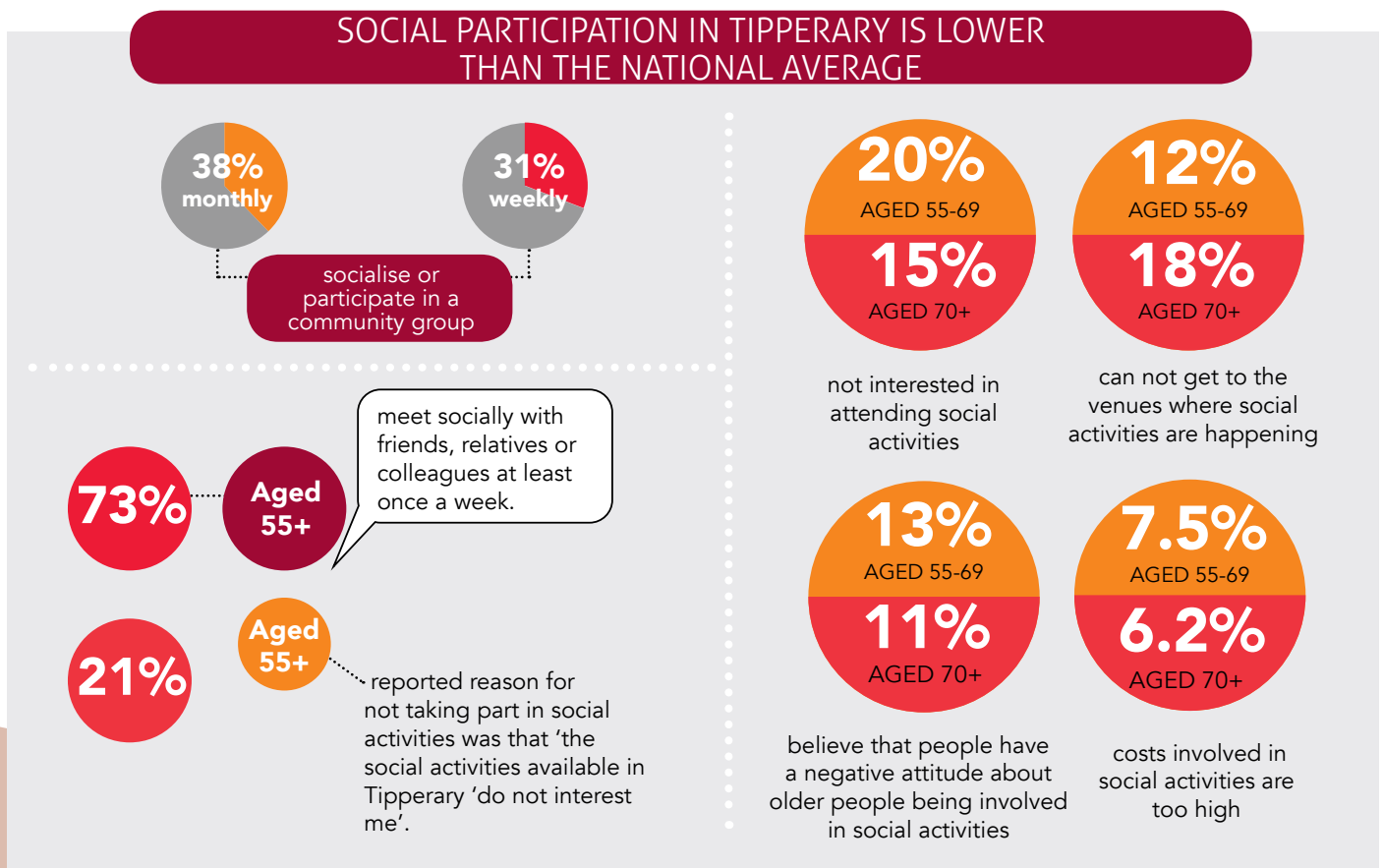
Theme 5: Social Participation

Goal: to address the barriers to participation for older people and increase opportunities for them to participate in a range of activities which will contribute to improved health and wellbeing.

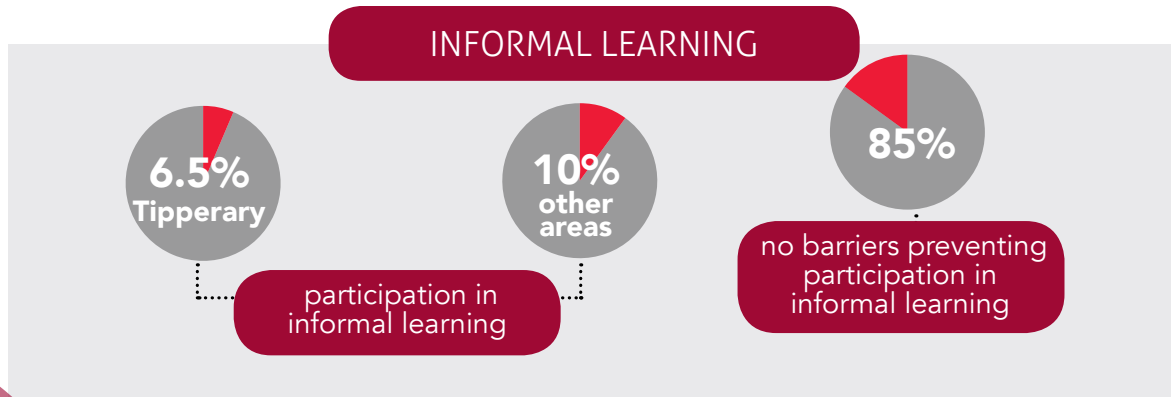
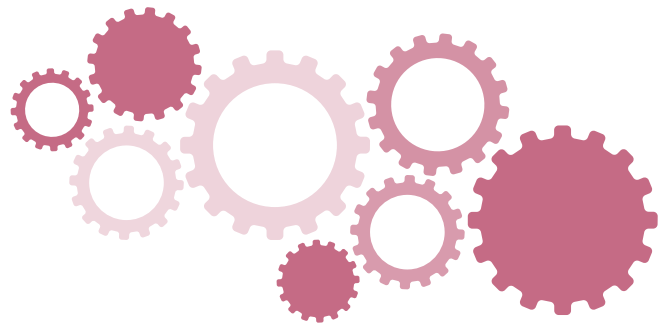
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT:

Social connection, feeling part of a network of family, friends and community, is one of the main determinants of health and wellbeing. An Age Friendly Ireland publication in 2015 reported that the health risks of poor social integration are comparable with those of smoking, high blood pressure and obesity.¹⁵ Loneliness and social isolation increase the risk of depression and mental health difficulties and contributes to cognitive decline as evidenced by the Taskforce on Loneliness detailed above.

The Age UK's 2017 'Index of Wellbeing in Later Life' found that creative and cultural participation has the greatest positive effect on wellbeing in later life, compared to a range of other indicators. Encouraging and keeping people engaged in activities is not only important for general health and wellbeing but also for greater community connectivity. But there are many barriers that discourage people from participation and these need to be identified and addressed.



¹⁵ 'A Guide to Sharing Ambitions and Opportunities – What Age Friendly Cities and Counties Can Achieve', Age Friendly Ireland (2015).



KEY ISSUES FROM CONSULTATION:

- Transport and access (see Theme 2 above) is central to people being involved and included.
- Affordability and cost is an issue for many older people – activities and events (e.g. aqua aerobics) could be scheduled at off peak time at off peak tariffs for older people.
- Getting older men involved in clubs such as active retirement or indeed any club can be challenging.
- Widows and widowers can be very isolated, particularly once their partner dies and if they have been in a caring role, there is a real vacuum of time and energy that opens up.
- People can be shy joining or trying new things with confidence eroding as they get older and become more isolated and more 'out of practice'.
- Everything now seems to be automated which is a real deterrent for older people.

ACTION 5.1 COMPILE AN INFORMATION DATABASE ON FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Develop a database (building on the County Community Facilities Audit) with the following information (a) what community facilities in the county are suitable for use by older people (b) what older persons groups are in the county, where do they operate and see whether they are registered with the PPN (c) find out what social activities older people would be interested in getting involved with or participating in, given that one in every 5 people in the HAPAI survey say that the current social activities do not interest them. Once this exercise is complete, it should be clear where there are gaps in facilities, in areas and in activities. This should lead to the development of a programme to support and encourage new or enhanced community hall facilities, or a 'social connection space' in each community (as recommended by the Healthy Tipperary Strategy) where new groups could be established and what additional range of activities need to be developed to support positive ageing.

Lead Partner:	LCDC Support Staff - TCC
Support Partners:	PPN, Community/ Voluntary/ Sporting Groups, Older Persons Alliance, Older Persons Council, Local Development Companies, Resource Centres
Link to Plans:	LECP; Healthy Tipperary Strategy

ACTION 5.2 A COMMUNITY ACTIVATION PROGRAMME TO ENCOURAGE GREATER PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The Healthy Tipperary Strategy outlines the importance of physical and social activity for older people in contributing to their health and wellbeing. It recommended developing, supporting and facilitating local community events involving physical activity (walking, running, cycling, swimming), fun days (sports days, community bbq's, family fun days, Tea Room dances) and the arts (local festivals, concerts) to improve the wellbeing and connectivity of local communities.

Older people are one of the target groups of the Tipperary Sports Partnership and it runs a range of programmes suitable for this age group. Tipperary Arts Office offer opportunities for older people to access and enjoy the arts through a multidisciplinary arts programme, special project commissions and residencies in the lead up to and throughout the annual Bealtaine Festival held annually during the month of May. The Heritage Office runs events and talks that assists in developing awareness about local heritage and how it can be protected and appreciated.

It is not possible, given the size of the County and the level of resources afforded to the Sports Partnerships, Arts Office, Heritage Office and other services, to undertake a county wide community activation approach. It is recommended therefore, that a number of geographic areas be identified where the cultural, sport, arts and community service providers would target their energy and resources for 3 years building up community connections, community activities and community capacity in these areas with a particular focus on involving and encouraging older peoples participation. The criteria for selecting the geographic areas could be informed by a range of data (e.g. data in this report, the Community Facilities Audit) and be focused on areas where there are high concentrations of older people; areas where there is a low level of community activity; where there is significant levels of disadvantage; and areas where there are Day Care Centres. The issue of affordability and co-ordination of public and rural transport services to facilitate access by older people (see Theme 2) will be incorporated into the planning for this activation programme.

Lead Partner:	Tipperary LCDC Health and Wellbeing Alliance
Support Partners:	Tipperary Sports Partnership, Tipperary Arts Office, Tipperary Heritage Office, HSE Health and Wellbeing, LCDC Support Staff - TCC PPN, Community and Voluntary Organisations, Local Link Tipperary, Local Development Companies, Resource Centres
Link to Plans:	Healthy Tipperary Strategy; Tipperary Arts Strategy; Tipperary Sports Partnership Strategy

ACTION 5.3 APPOINT AGE FRIENDLY AMBASSADORS

One of the biggest obstacles around older people participating in activities (social, physical or otherwise) is lack of confidence which is only exacerbated by joining something for the first time or walking into places alone. The more some-one withdraws from everyday connections, the more isolated they become and the more confidence is lost. Support and encouragement are important first steps for many people. Each club, society, organisation will be encouraged to appoint an Ambassador whose role it is to act as a link between the individual and the club/ activity in the initial stages to ensure the passage to participation is eased be it through something simple like walking in with someone, having a 'go-to' person for questions etc. (modelled on the Cultural Companies Programme run by Age and Opportunity) This Ambassador Programme could be incentivised through a County recognition award initiative and/ or other supports provided by the Council (see Theme 7).

Lead Partner:	LCDC Support Staff - TCC
Support Partners:	PPN, Good Morning Service, Sporting Groups, Sports Partnership, Arts Office, Resource Centres, HSE – Health and Wellbeing
Link to Plans:	New action.
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased participation of older person in community activities • Older people will be accessing social activities which they have identified as being of interest to them • Feelings of loneliness and isolation are reduced