

Fingal - an Age Friendly County

On 9th September 2011, Fingal became the first County in the Dublin Region to go Age Friendly. The event was held in the Europa Academy, better known as the location for the filming of "The Apprentice" and was hosted by RTE's Miriam O'Callaghan.

Representatives from Active Retirement/Senior Citizen's and Over 55 Groups along with Representatives from Statutory and State Funded Agencies and Organisations gathered to discuss issues of concern to older people and to explore new ways of dealing with these concerns.

Speakers on the day included:

- o Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Gerry Maguire
- o Minister for Health, James Reilly TD
- o Cathaoirleach of Fingal Development Board, Cllr Tom Kelleher
- o Fingal County Manager, David O'Connor
- o HSE, Asst National Director of Services for Older People, Noel Mulvihill
- o Louth County Manager, Conn Murray

All of the speakers remarked on the fact that the initiative was a new opportunity both for Statutory and State-Funded Agencies, Community & Voluntary Organisations and Older People themselves to plan differently by consulting with older people and by delivering on services for Older People in the county in a collaborative way.

Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Gerry McGuire opened the day's proceedings by welcoming everyone to the event. He gave participants a flavour of some of the work carried out by Fingal County Council's Public Libraries Division, Parks Division and Community, Sports and Arts Divisions, all of which will support any future developments under the Age Friendly County Initiative.

Minister for Health, James Reilly reminded participants that Ireland was going to have substantially greater numbers of older people in the future and that we needed to challenge the assumption that this might be a negative prospect.

"Playing our cards right means having age friendly policies and programmes in place so people enjoy the possible quality of life as they grow older..... Older people should be able to live healthily and independently. They should be active participants in their own communities." Said Minister Reilly

Conn Murray County Manager, Louth County Council, (1st County in Ireland to embrace the Age Friendly County Initiative) reinforced the words of the Minister reminding everyone of how important it is that older people be leaders in revitalising and strengthening the well-being of their communities. He told participants that older people should both feel and *be* involved and influential and be valued for their life experience and should feel safe and secure in their homes and in their communities.

Noel Mulvihill, HSE, Asst National Director of Services to Older People welcomed the collaboration of all statutory, voluntary and private agencies coming together with a shared vision to make Age Friendly happen in Fingal. He reiterated Conn Murray's earlier message saying that "It is only through consulting that we really know what older people want. But that this should not just be about older people, but for all of Fingal to ask."

Following the Speeches participants were allocated Working Groups. The Working Groups were assigned themes to discuss. Themes as defined by the World Health Organisation were as follows:

- Transportation, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
- Housing & Community
- Communication & Information
- Civic Participation & Employment
- Community Support & Health Services
- Crime Prevention and Safety & Security
- Respect, Social Inclusion and Social Participation

The Groups were facilitated by a Chair/Rapporteur and Note-taker and all issues raised in groups were captured and the key issues were fed back to participants at the Feedback Session

Fingal County Manager, David O'Connor wrapped up the day's event. He thanked everyone for their commitment to the initiative. He assured participants that all of the issues, concerns and ideas raised as part of the day's event would be considered and acted upon where possible. He promised them that Fingal County Council in collaboration with State and State funded Agencies and Community & Voluntary Organisations were committed to delivering on an Age Friendly Strategy for Fingal.

If you missed the Fingal Age friendly Launch and are over 55 years of age and would like to have your say on what Fingal is currently like for older people and how you would like it to look in the future, we would like to hear from you by completing our Fingal Age Friendly County on-line questionnaire.

Visit www.fingalcoco.ie and complete the questionnaire on-line.

ENDS 29/09/2011