

IPH response to the consultation on
*Draft Annual Indicators for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the
'Active Ageing Strategy 2016 - 2021'*

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Introduction

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland

The remit of the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) is to promote cooperation for public health between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the areas of research and information, capacity building and policy advice. Our approach is to support Departments of Health and their agencies in both jurisdictions, and maximise the benefits of all-island cooperation to achieve practical benefits for people in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Overarching comments on indicators for the Active Ageing Strategy

- The outcome indicators document would benefit from being clearly aligned to the vision, purpose, aims and outcomes of the Active Ageing Strategy.
- The range of indicators and measures should be expanded to facilitate the tracking of progress against the full gambit of the aims (and the proposed new programmes) of the Active Ageing Strategy.
- A methodology section and matrix that sets out the indicators and measures, data sources and data types is required as well as details on inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- It is unclear how the indicators presently help to understand the experience of active ageing in Northern Ireland for 'Section 75 Groups', especially older people who are part of minority groups.
- Reducing inequalities should be reflected in the indicators across all the outcomes.
- In all cases, the indicators should specify 'by age, sex, social class and geographical location – rural/urban'. This will provide valuable information on the extent to which gaps are widening, narrowing or remaining the same.
- In some cases the indicators envisage providing data by broad age group e.g. 'aged 50 and older'. If five-year age bands are available these should be used instead to show the different policy interventions that may be required over the life of this strategy.
- We agree that, in general, available annual indicators should be used but where other meaningful indicators are available they should be used e.g. data on the proportion of people voting by age are more relevant to participation than the percentage on the electoral register and are available by Local, Assembly, Westminster and European elections.

- An important statistical resource will be the Northern Ireland Cohort Longitudinal Study on Ageing (NICOLA) which will provide valuable data on older people beginning in 2016.
- A valuable online resource is www.agestats.ie. This site hosted by IPH provides an overview of datasets relevant to ageing and older people.

Outcome 1: Older people live independently for as long as they can, free from poverty and in suitable, safe homes

Comment:

Indicators relating to the same broad area should be grouped together e.g. car ownership and SmartPass users could usefully be combined with the other indicators in a specific transport section.

Additions or amendments to existing indicators:

- Data should be published annually on inequalities in incomes by age group, sex, social class and geographical location (urban/rural).
- The proportion of older people experiencing food poverty and malnutrition should be explicitly reported.
- The indicator referring to internet access by age might be better placed in Outcome 2 and be supplemented by an indicator on internet usage by age, sex, social class, qualifications and location (urban/rural).
- Data on SmartPass users should be expanded to include extent of usage as well as numbers holding the passes.
- A combined transport section should be enhanced with an indicator on the proportion of older people who rate public transport in their area as 'good' or 'excellent' by age group, sex, social class and location (urban/rural).
- The suitability of housing for independent living is a central issue for older people. Therefore the housing section should be expanded to include indicators such as the number of housing adaptation grants provided; the number of sheltered housing/assisted living units available for older people by location.
- Data should be presented on the proportion of older people who own their own homes or are renting.
- A crucial factor in determining whether older people can live independently is the extent to which they are provided with social supports. It would be beneficial to include the number of social care packages awarded each year and the number of hours of social care awarded.

Outcome 2: Older people are involved in their family and community and in civic life

Additions or amendments to existing indicators:

- Data should be presented on the proportion of older people who are carers, who they provide care for and the number of hours they spend in caring roles.
- Indicators on involvement/contact with family (or friends) and on frequency and quality of contact with friends and family would be beneficial especially in the context of tackling or preventing loneliness.

- Data from the Electoral Office NI on the proportion of people voting by age group should be included.
- As indicated above the indicator referring to internet access by age might be moved to Outcome 2 and be supplemented by an indicator on internet usage by age, sex, social class and geographical location (urban/rural).
- Data on frequency of volunteering and type of volunteering by age group should be presented.

Outcome 3: Older people are healthier for longer

Comment:

Data should be provided on the number of people with each of the main chronic conditions e.g. respiratory disease, dementia, heart disease by age group, sex, social class and geographical location (urban/rural). Mental health is not covered by any of the indicators listed in the consultation document and should be specifically addressed.

Additions or amendments to existing indicators:

- An indicator should be added showing the proportion of older people with a physical disability and with a chronic disease.
- Percentage of older people who report regular pain (none, mild, moderate, severe).
- The proportion of older people reporting a fall in the previous year should be included.
- Data should be presented on health literacy amongst older people (five-year age bands).
- There should be annual data on the proportion of people reporting depression and anxiety and, more positively, reporting high life satisfaction and control over their own lives.
- Data should be added on dementia diagnosis rates and dementia care packages provided.

Outcome 4: Older workers remain in employment for as long as they wish or need to

Comment:

Unemployment by itself is not an adequate indicator of the involvement of older people in the labour market, especially among the 'older old'.

Additions or amendments to existing indicators:

- The first indicator under this heading should report on the proportion of people who are unemployed by five-year age bands (at least until 75+).

- Another indicator should be added on the proportion of people in employment by five-year age bands (at least until 75+).
- Reasons for early retirement for people aged 50+ (five-year age bands).
- Since literacy and numeracy skills are essential to employment, indicators should be added on the numbers/proportions of older people by level of skills in these dimensions.

Outcome 5 Older people participate in cultural, educational and physical activity

Comment:

There are no indicators included which relate to cultural activity and it is unclear why educational participation should be confined to Further Education Colleges.

Additions or amendments to existing indicators:

- The physical activity indicator should include information on those meeting 'low', 'medium' and 'high' levels of activity by five-year age groups to allow a tracking of movement over time.
- With respect to the cultural participation indicator, relevant areas include: participating in arts and cultural activities, religious services, sports and recreation. For example, older people in the Republic of Ireland are more than twice as likely to go to films and cultural events than those in Northern Ireland (Ward et al., 2014).
- The educational indicators should encompass wider educational activity that older people are undertaking e.g. in formal and informal settings - community projects, university.

Outcome 6: Older people's dignity and human rights are effectively safeguarded

Comment:

The vision and the above outcome of the Active Ageing Strategy make specific reference to both dignity and human rights being effectively safeguarded. However there are no specific indicators in this section to assess and measure progress against this outcome.

Additions or amendments to existing indicators:

- Number of complaints of discrimination or unfair treatment made by older people to Equality Commission, Commissioner for Older People and Human Rights Commission.
- Percentage of older people who were treated differently in employment, financial sector, health and social care sector because of their age.
- The number of cases of reported elder abuse and/ or mistreatment of older people.

Concluding Comment

There is valuable learning for the development of indicators for the Active Ageing Strategy from a recent piece of work in the Republic of Ireland. The Department of Health leads a joint national programme developing indicators to measure progress in the implementation of the National Positive Ageing Strategy in Ireland. An initial list of indicators were developed and published in mid-2015 (<https://hapai.net/>). Subsequently a Delphi process took place to refine this list to the most relevant indicators. The core set of indicators will be published in 2016.

A complementary research and data strategy focused on the Active Ageing Strategy (2015-2021) would help identify research priorities, as well as research and data gaps.

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