

Theme 7: Communication and Information

Goal: to ensure that older people can access timely, practice information about what is happening in their communities

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT:

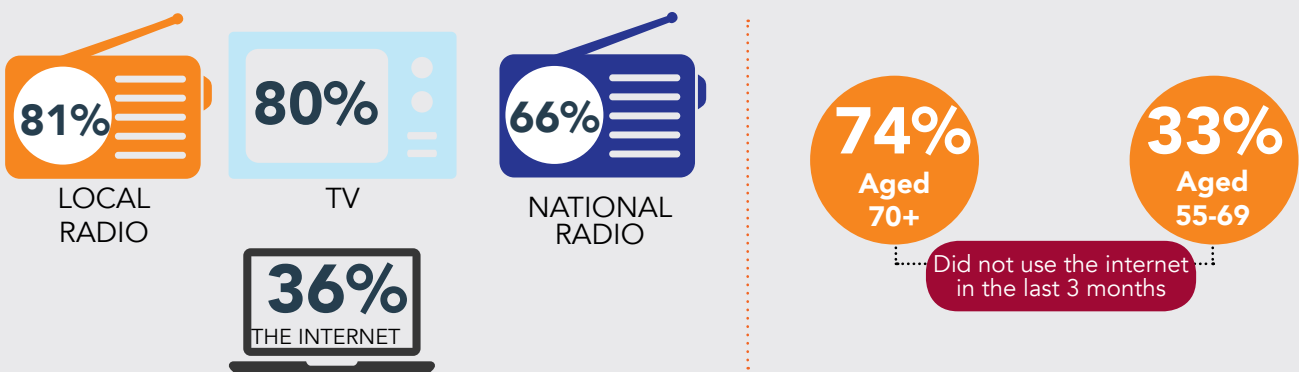
Communication and information is all about people being able to access and understand what they need to know, when they need to know it. Disseminating information is always a challenge for organisations and service providers as they have to be conscious of what medium to use, how it is phrased, who is the target audience. For information dissemination to be truly effective, the end user has to be looking for it or attuned to it and actively seeking it. This makes the issue of communication and information an ongoing challenge yet one that needs to be constantly addressed and highlighted as it is so important.

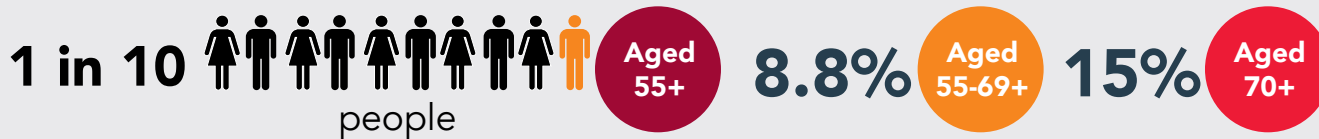
Lack of awareness of what is on offer, or how to access it, can prevent older people from accessing useful services or resources. A reliable flow of clear information about services, community news, activities and opportunities keeps older people active and involved and is critical for those who have few formal or informal networks to call on.

The additional challenge for older people is the move to online platforms or automated customer service by many of service providers. We know from the socio-economic profile in Section 2 above that a quarter of the people had no broadband in 2016 with some areas particularly isolated in this regard including Toomevara, Ballyporeen, The Commons, Tipperary Town and Littleton. Even in those areas that have access to good quality broadband, the capacity of older people to engage effectively with this communication method may be limited as is evidenced in the HaPAI survey below. The Digital Strategy identified the lack of digital skills among older people as one of the key weaknesses in County Tipperary.

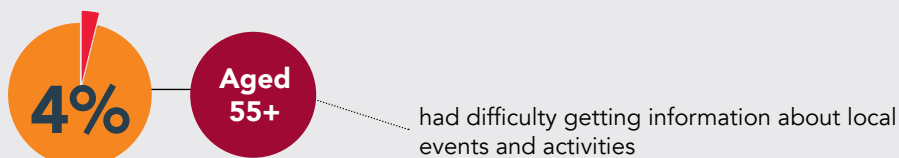
SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The main information sources for people over the age of 55 in Tipperary





have difficult accessing information about health or social care



KEY ISSUES FROM CONSULTATIONS:

- Older people get most of their information word-of-mouth. Other places that are importance sources of information are: local radio; neighbours; Citizens Information; parish newsletters; on-line; local papers; health centres; coffee mornings.
- Many older people feel a sense of exclusion because of the quick changing pace of the digital age. Everything seems to be automated now from phones to banks and there seems to be a real impatience on the side of service providers when older people cannot engage with it. No one likes to feel stupid yet that is how many older people are made to feel.
- The focus is now switching to people taking more personal responsibility for their own health but this needs to be supported by service providers through education and information supports that are accessible and widely available e.g. around healthy eating, mental health, physical activity.
- More promotion, information needed on benefits, volunteerism, retirement, health services, supports ... there needs to be one place where people know to go that they can get their hands on all this information and it needs to be proactively targeted at older people through the mediums (listed above) that they engage with.

ACTION 7.1 DEVELOP A CENTRAL INFORMATION HUB

Develop a Central Information Hub that would be updated weekly featuring promotion and information on Tipperary and Community events (similar to Limerick.ie site and building on the work done in whatsonintipp.ie).with links to other relevant sites and updated information on entitlements and grants This could dovetail nicely with one of the actions in the Digital Strategy where it recommends that very village and county would have website and an online presence. It is recognised that the development of a Central Information Hub is a challenging project because of the importance of the design platform, the buy in that is needed from local organisations and groups, the ongoing effort involved in keeping people posting and linking current information to the platform. However, the importance of accessible and timely information is something that not only arises as an issue for older people but arises as an issue in all the other local county strategies that are in place. Just because it is challenging does not mean it should not tried. There is a model (Limerick.ie) already in existence that can be learned from and built on.

It is recommended therefore, that a timebound Task Group be established (6 months timeframe) to explore the development of a hub of this nature. It would look at models elsewhere and draw in local expertise (e.g. LIT in Tipperary; Digital Officer; Libraries; ETB; Tipperary Data Hub) and work with local service providers/ communities who will be populating or linking to the site to work up a plan outline for getting this project off the ground.

While the Hub would primarily be social media driven given the ease of updating and informing people via this platform, there would also need to cognisance taken of older people and how/ where they access their information. The local radio is a central information source according to the HAPAI survey above and backed up by consultations and greater links with this medium should be developed to see how they can engage more meaningfully on topics that interest their older audience e.g. a weekly programme on health issues for older people. Other common forms of information sharing and access to information need to be explored further with steps put in place to actively make these links be it through be made to the local radio/print media, churches, community centres on a regular basis to avoid excluding them.

Lead Partner:	LCDC Support Staff (TCC) & Tipperary Data Hub
Support Partners:	Tipperary County Council (Library; Arts Section; Festivals Section), Tipperary LCDC Health and Wellbeing Alliance, LIT, ETB, Libraries, Older Persons Council, PPN, Local Media (Tipperary FM; local newspapers), Local Community Organisations, Tipperary Sports Partnership
Link to Plans:	Healthy Tipperary; Tipperary Digital Strategy.

ACTION 7.2 DEVELOP DIGITAL COMPETENCIES AMONG OLDER PEOPLE

While many older people are uncomfortable and fearful of the digital age, there is no going back. The challenge is to upskill, educate, de-mystify and support older people in coming to terms with the new reality. The Tipperary Digital Strategy sets out a number of actions which aim to address this issue (a) undertake a marketing programme to target old people onto digital training courses (b) explore the potential for young people to provide information training/ mentoring for older people on digital technologies (c) identify groups of citizens who may need specific training in digital technologies and to provide this where it is required (d) explore ways in which the County Library Service could further its level of digital interaction with citizens and also what role it might play in providing training in digital technologies to those who require it (e) work with communities and stakeholders to progress the provision of digital community hubs in the County. These hubs to be used for digital training and provide citizens who little or no digital skills with the confidence, motivation and skills to use and benefit from digital technologies.

Lead Partner:	Tipperary ETB
Support Partners:	Local Development Companies, Local Enterprise Office, Tipperary Library Service, PPN, Youth Work Ireland/ Youth Service Providers, Broadband Programme Management Group - TCC
Link to Plans:	Tipperary Digital Strategy

ACTION 7.3 CHAMPION AGE FRIENDLY COUNTY THROUGH RECOGNISED AWARDS

Put in a place a yearly awards programme, run through the Council, which could be linked in with the National Age Friendly Achievement and Recognition Awards run by Age Friendly Ireland or at least modelled on this approach. This award scheme could be at each municipal district level and then an overall county level. This award ceremony would have a number of benefits (a) it would keep a continuous annual focus on the age friendly agenda (b) it would incentivise businesses, services and communities to engage in age friendly practices and initiatives (c) it would publicly recognise the valuable and often thankless work that people and communities do on the ground (d) it would publicise the good practice and successful Age Friendly projects that are taking place across the County. The awards could be given across the 8 themes of the Age friendly Strategy (as is done with the National Awards) or it could be organised differently with awards for (a) people (b) businesses (c) projects.

Lead Partner:	Tipperary LCDC Health and Wellbeing Alliance
Support Partners:	LCDC Staff, Older Persons Council, Age Friendly Ireland
Link to Plans:	New action
Expected Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people can easily access information about events and issues and services in the local community • Increased engagement by older people in events • Reduced risk of isolation and loneliness • Greater awareness of the Age Friendly agenda