

An Action Programme In the Leisure and Fitness Sector to enhance age friendly service provision



Say No to Ageism Week is an initiative of

Introduction

“Say No to Ageism Week” is an initiative of the Equality Authority, the Health Service Executive and the National Council on Ageing and Older People. The aim of the week is to promote new awareness and understanding of ageism and of how ageism excludes older people from participating in and contributing to society. Public awareness activities to raise awareness and to stimulate practical action to combat ageism within organisations are being developed as part of the week.

Practical action to combat ageism and promote equality for older people as customers is another key part of the week. The Leisure and Fitness sector has agreed to champion this part of the week and to provide a leadership by developing and implementing an action programme on these issues during 2008.

ILAM¹ and its member organisations have developed this action program and are committed to its implementation.

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Combating Ageism

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Ageism

Biological ageing is a continuous process that affects us all. However attitudes and practices within society create associations between chronological age and what is and is not expected of a person at that age. This becomes a process of social ageing.

Ageism involves a combination of institutional practices, individual attitudes and relationships. It impacts on young people and older people.

Barriers

Many older people encounter barriers in accessing goods and services. Many of these barriers can be resolved by simple, practical and reasonable measures. Some common barriers include:

- Attitudinal barriers due to a lack of understanding regarding ageing and older people.
- Communication barriers due to a lack of accessible and user friendly information material.
- Physical barriers where older people have a disability.
- Service barriers where the specific needs of older people are not taken into account in the design and delivery of services.

1. ILAM – leading leisure in Ireland (The Industry Body for Sports, Fitness, Aquatic Facilities, Spas & Wellness)

Rationale for Action

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Providers of goods and services can contribute to combating ageism and promoting equality for older people. Action by providers of goods and services in this regard is good for older people and good for business. The benefits include:

- An enhanced quality of life for older people.
- Responding to the growing share of the market place occupied by older people.
- Compliance with the Equal Status Acts which prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, accommodation and education on nine grounds including the ground of age.

Age Friendly Provision of Goods and Services

Age friendly provision of goods and services is provision that:

- Does not discriminate against older people and others on the grounds of age.
- Takes account of the specific needs, experience and situation of older people and other age groups in the design and delivery of goods and services.
- Makes reasonable accommodation for older people with disabilities.
- Contributes to promoting equality for older people and other age groups including, through positive action measures, allowed under equality legislation.
- Communicates a commitment to age equality out into the wider community that is served by the organisation.

ACTION PROGRAMME

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AIM

A programme to increase the participation by older people in leisure and fitness activities in an environment of respect and dignity that is responsive to their particular needs.

Organisation Level Actions

(A) Communication

This will involve a focus on how organisations communicate effectively with older people alongside a focus on the messages communicated about older people.

- Organise meetings with local organisations of older people to explore age friendly service provisions and to identify needs specific to older people and how best to meet those needs.
- Review marketing strategies to further enhance the profile of older customers and to ensure effective communication with older people.
- Develop initiatives to target older people in the dissemination of information materials that are accessible and user friendly.

(B) Training

Training initiatives will assist a positive age awareness among staff, will support skills development for key staff in supporting participation by older people and will enhance the implementation of this action programme.

- Include a training module on age equality in staff training.
- Organise events for management and staff to support age awareness and skills to promote equality for older people.
- Develop materials on age friendly service provision to support staff in their work.

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(C) Service Design

This will involve the removal of barriers to access for older people to leisure and fitness facilities alongside specific initiatives to meet needs that are particular to older people.

- Develop an equal status policy that would include standards for service provision for older people.
- Provide activities designed to meet specific needs identified by older people.
- Develop flexible membership arrangements to enhance access by older people.
- Audit service provision to identify and remove any barriers to participation by older people.

National Level Actions

ILAM, the Equality Authority, the National Council on Ageing and Older People and the HSE will organise a number of initiatives at National level to support this action programme.

- A national event to launch this action programme and to support age awareness and skills for age friendly service provision among ILAM members.
- A report to detail and review activities developed by ILAM members during the year and to promote and support good practice in age friendly service provision by ILAM members.
- Distribution of 'Say No to Ageism' posters for use by ILAM members in their facilities.
- Distribution of "Towards Age Friendly Service Provision" publication to ILAM members.
- A process involving key institutions to support coordination and coherence in the promotion of participation by older people in leisure and fitness activities.

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