



Implementing
An Action Plan
to Promote More
Age Friendly
Transport Services

A Report by
Yvonne McGivern



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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the Equality Authority, the HSE, the National Council on Ageing and Older People, Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann, Rural Transport Programme and Veolia Transport.

¹ On 19 February 2007, the Rural Transport Initiative was re-named the Rural Transport Programme by the Department of Transport.

Foreword

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This is a report on how five organisations within the transport sector undertook to enhance the age friendly character of the services they provide to their older customers. It details the actions taken by the organisations and highlights how this work has contributed to a heightened consciousness of the needs of older people and will continue to shape the quality of the service that they provide to their older customers.

This report documents the implementation of and the learning from an ‘Action Plan to Promote More Age Friendly Transport Services’. The Action Plan was developed and implemented by Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann, Rural Transport Programme and Veolia Transport and focussed on dialogue with older people, providing age awareness training for staff and an enhanced focus on older people in their internal and external communications. It was launched as part of the ‘Say No To Ageism’ campaign of the Equality Authority, the Health Service Executive and the National Council on Ageing and Older People in 2006.

It is hoped that this report will further stimulate and inform the commitment to age friendly provision of services within all the organisations involved. The report should also serve to encourage and guide other sectors to take up the challenge to enhance the quality of the services they provide to older people. We are grateful to Yvonne McGivern who has accompanied and documented this initiative so expertly. Her work has served to draw out important learning for the future from this initiative.





Background

'Say No to Ageism' Week

'Say No to Ageism' Week, an initiative of the National Council on Ageing and Older People (NCAOP), the Health Service Executive and the Equality Authority, is now in its fourth year.

The aim of the week is to promote awareness of ageism and how ageism excludes older people from participating in and contributing to society and to support practical initiatives within organisations to develop age friendly approaches to service provision. Public awareness activities to raise awareness and to stimulate practical action to combat ageism within organisations are developed as part of the week.

'Say No to Ageism' Week 2006 included radio spots on national, commercial and local radio; an outdoor poster advertising campaign throughout the country; posters at Dart and Luas stations in Dublin, and posters on trains and buses throughout the country. An anti-ageism initiative was also launched during the week in cooperation with the National Union of Journalists.

Age Friendly Service Provision

The week also saw the launch of two practical action plans aimed at combating ageism and promoting equality for older people. One action plan was implemented by the Health Service Executive within the health services. The other action plan was implemented in transport services, the Action Plan to Promote More Age Friendly Transport Services, by Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann, Rural Transport Programme and Veolia Transport

Age friendly provisions 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;
- responds to the diversity of older people and makes adjustments to take this diversity into account;
- makes reasonable accommodation for older people with disabilities;
- contributes to promoting equality for older people and other age groups through positive action measures allowed under equality legislation; and
- communicates a commitment to age equality out into the wider community that is served by the organisation.

The action plans were designed to put into practice the principles and guidelines set out in the booklet, “*Towards Age Friendly Provision of Goods and Services*”², published for ‘Say No To Ageism’ Week 2005. These principles and guidelines offer ‘a broad menu of activities’ that service providers could adapt to their particular setting and to the service that they provide. The broad menu covers:

Develop Age Awareness: This involves supporting staff to explore their attitudes to older people and their understanding of the needs, situation and experience of older people. This can be achieved through equality and diversity training.

Treat Older Customers with Dignity and Respect: This involves valuing older people, treating them with courtesy and in a manner that acknowledges their potential and their needs and aspirations. It means respecting their independence and their experiences. Steps that can be taken to achieve this include treating older people as individuals; including older customers in decision making; and using non-ageist language in documents, in signage and in advertising.

Consult Older Customers: This involves giving older people a space to express their needs and what they want from a service, to evaluate the extent to which current provision meets their needs and preferences and to shape the design and delivery of new services. It should be a two-way process.

‘Age Proof’ Availability of Goods and Services: This involves auditing service provision to identify and address any barriers that preclude or diminish the availability of the service to older people. An audit should examine policies and practices; service delivery structures; information material used; and decision-making processes.

Ensure Goods and Services are Accessible: Physical infrastructure and financial constraints can limit or block older peoples access to services. Physical infrastructure should be assessed to identify and address obstacles to the use of and access to goods and services. Steps can be taken to ameliorate financial constraints.

Provide User-friendly Information: Accurate, relevant and accessible information on how to obtain services to support older people’s uptake of them. There are several simple but effective ways of developing user-friendly and appropriate information to meet the needs of older people. These include consultation with and involvement of older people, identifying what is needed and preparing and checking it; training staff to ensure that the full range of information is available and to support face to face dissemination of it; using images and language that reflect the diversity of age groups to which the service is aimed; disseminating information to places where older people live their lives day to day.

² Published for ‘Say No To Ageism’ Week 2005 by The Equality Authority and the National Council on Ageing and Older People.

Provide Advocacy Supports: Advocacy support refers to the provision of independent support, advice and guidance to older customers to ensure that they get the level of information they require to meet their needs and to enable them to make choices. Advocacy supports include identifying a staff member to provide advocacy support to older customers; funding older people’s organisations to play advocacy roles for individual older customers or for older people more generally; and providing information that is appropriate and adequate to support self advocacy.

Targeting of Older Customers: This involves developing, designing and delivering services specifically to meet the needs of older people.

Employ Older People: Action can be taken to support the recruitment and retention of older workers by, for example, providing flexible working arrangements; providing training; by supporting older workers to remain in the workplace and by developing a recruitment strategy to address the barriers older people face in seeking to return to work.

These principles and guidelines were developed in the context provided by the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004. Service providers must not discriminate in their service provision on the age ground. This must be the starting point for any work on age friendly service provision. The Acts prohibit discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment and victimisation in the provision of goods and services, accommodation and education. They cover nine grounds, including the ground of age. There are no upper age limits to the age ground in the Acts. The Acts require reasonable accommodation of customers with disabilities subject to a nominal cost exemption and allow positive action to promote equality of opportunity for disadvantaged persons and to cater for the special needs of persons. The Acts contain a number of significant exemptions. (*Further information is available on www.equality.ie*).

The Action Plan to Promote More Age Friendly Transport Services

The Action Plan to Promote More Age Friendly Transport Services was developed and implemented by the country’s major transport providers: Bus Éireann; Dublin Bus; Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail); Veolia Transport (operators of the Luas); and the Rural Transport Programme.

It was launched on 18 May 2006 in Dublin as part of ‘Say No To Ageism Week’. Participants at the event included transport services staff, and representatives of agencies working with and for older people in Ireland. The event included an age-awareness training workshop facilitated by Age and Opportunity, the national agency working to challenge negative attitudes to ageing and older people and to promote greater participation by older people in society.

Four key issues that underpinned the importance of a focus on age friendly service provision were highlighted at the event:

- Transport services play a crucial role in ensuring that older people retain their sense of independence
- Older people are a specific group of customers with specific requirements
- Some older people have difficulty in accessing transport-related information.
- Age friendly service provision enhances the quality of service provision for all customers

An Action Programme in the Transport Sector was launched at the event. It set out the following actions to be taken under four headings.

Dialogue with Older People

- Action: To explore the experiences and perspectives of older staff or voluntary members on age friendly employment and customer service practices.
- Action: To organise meetings with organisations of older people to explore age friendly practices.

Training

- Action: To include age awareness training in training provided to customer service staff and front line staff.
- Action: To develop materials on age friendly employment and customer service provision to include in induction packs for staff and voluntary members.
- Action: To include a training module on age equality in mainstream training for staff.
- Action: To organise events to support age awareness and skills to promote equality for older people involving key management staff.

Communication

- Action: To review and further develop information materials to ensure that they are user friendly and accessible to older people.
- Action: To use internal publications to profile age related issues and perspectives.
- Action: To explore how marketing strategies could further enhance the profile of older customers and could more effectively communicate with older people.
- Action: To review language used in signage in terms of how older people are referred to and in terms of facilitating older people in accessing services.

Customer service

- Action: To develop and communicate a policy that includes a focus on age friendly customer services in consultation with older people and their organisations.
- Action: To develop cross-organisational links on this issue within the transport sector and between transport providers and the Health Service Executive.

The 'Say No to Ageism Week' partners commissioned an independent researcher, Yvonne McGivern to document the actions taken as part of this action programme, and to extract learning from them that could be more widely applied. This report presents the findings from that monitoring and review. The rest of the report is divided into two sections:

- Learning
- Actions taken



Learning

The major achievement of the work undertaken as part of the Action Programme in the Transport Sector has been to establish and embed a new consciousness among staff within the organisations involved in relation to older people, ageing and ageism. The actions taken in all four areas of the Action Programme - dialogue with older people (including older staff); training; communication; and customer service - have contributed to this new consciousness.

Ageism is essentially a cultural phenomenon. It is evident across all areas of society in the stereotypes and false assumptions about older people that are held and given expression to. An organisation that has achieved a new consciousness among its staff about older peoples ageing and ageism has achieved a cultural shift that is good for older people, for the organisation itself and for the wider society. The key learning, from this action programme lies in the mix of leadership, commitment and actions that have demonstrated a capacity to achieve this necessary cultural shift.

The learning points that emerge from the implementation of the Action Plan to Promote More Age Friendly Transport Services are:

- The need for leadership from senior management - leadership that is informed about ageism and the importance of age friendly service provision;
- The value of dialogue with older people - with older customers about their needs and their experience of the service provider, with older employees about the experience of ageing within the company and with organisation of older people about the situation, experiences and aspirations of older people;
- The importance of drawing out the particular experience and perspective of older customers in survey and other research work;
- There is a link between age friendly employment and age friendly service provision. The presence of older employees creates a positive context for service provision to older customers;
- The impact of language and imagery in all company materials, including internal publications and the importance of using language and imagery that enhances the dignity and visibility of older people and that is free from ageism; and
- The central contribution of staff training that develops age awareness and challenges ageism and that builds the knowledge and skills to promote equality for older customers and employees. It is clear that the impact of this training is enhanced where staff can apply the learning in implementing an action plan within the organisation for age friendly service provision.

The experience of this programme demonstrates that age friendly provision of services is a long term process as well as a time limited series of discrete actions. The actions taken by the five transport organisations have laid solid foundations for an ongoing commitment to age friendly service provision. It will be important to sustain this process into the future through new actions and ongoing commitment and leadership.



Actions Taken

Iarnród Éireann

Iarnród Éireann conducted an Equality Audit in 1998 and is currently undertaking an Employment Equality Review and Action Plan funded by the Equality Authority. An Equality and Diversity Officer was employed in June 1999. Significant numbers of employees continue to work up to retirement age and consequently there are regular pre-retirement programmes, meetings and informal get-togethers of retired colleagues. In May 2007 there were 25 per cent of its 5,027 workforce who were aged 46 to 55 years of age and 14 per cent who were aged 56 to 65 years.

Title of project: Against Ageism

The aim of the Iarnród Éireann project was to raise awareness of issues relating to growing older in employment and to raise awareness of ageism as it relates to work and customer service.

Actions taken

1. Awareness building

Iarnród Éireann provided poster sites for advertising the 'Say No to Ageism' campaign. It supported the promotion of the campaign with an article on its activities in the March 2006 edition of its in-house magazine. A number of staff attended the age awareness workshop at the launch event for 'Say No to Ageism' Week.

Focus group consultations including older people have been incorporated into equality initiatives and have been used to research the views and perspectives of older colleagues and people with long service.

The impact of the awareness building actions has been seen at all levels of the organisation. It is reflected in a change to the content of several publications including Iarnród Éireann's employee Dress and Department Guide and its Customer Charter, and it is evident in its most recent equality review and training courses. An article, entitled "*Older Workers Have Much To Give*", was published in the in-house magazine.

2. Relationship building

Iarnród Éireann established a connection with Age and Opportunity with a view to building a long-term relationship with them for two reasons: to enable Iarnród Éireann to stay up to date with issues and initiatives in relation to older people; and to avail of the expertise of Age and Opportunity in areas such as age awareness training.

Iarnród Éireann also invited Age and Opportunity to deliver an age awareness workshop for the Equality and Diversity Network, a network of 24 large, mainly semi-State organisations. The event at the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) in Dublin was well attended. Age and Opportunity has since been invited to run the workshop for other Equality and Diversity Network member organisations.

3. Anti-ageism training

The Iarnród Éireann Training Centre developed a training programme called

“*Against Ageism*” in collaboration with the organisation’s equality programme and in cooperation with Age and Opportunity. It has been used within Iarnród Éireann as part of induction training for new staff and it has been incorporated into training for front line staff. In addition, a ‘ready to go’ copy of the training programme has been sent to all the members of the Equality and Diversity Network for their use.

4. Consultation with older employees

The three sister companies in CIE (Iarnród Éireann, Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus) agreed to research how people experience growing older in these companies. Iarnród Éireann ran a workshop for this purpose, led by Age and Opportunity, followed by a focus group discussion facilitated by an independent researcher. Twelve people attended. Most had already left the company on voluntary severance or retirement. The aim of the workshop and group discussion was to explore attitudes and experiences of older workers to retirement and ageing in the workplace and to give them a chance to comment on and discuss the issues they face.

A report of the findings was compiled and disseminated to relevant staff. The output from the event has been used to do the following:

- To promote positive ageing within Iarnród Éireann
- To improve awareness of the issues in relation to ageing among trainers and employees
- To inform pre-retirement training
- To improve working practices.

Dublin Bus

Dublin Bus has had an Equality and Diversity Strategy in place since 2001. Almost a quarter, 23 per cent, of Dublin Bus staff are 51 years of age and over.

Under its Equality and Diversity Strategy, Dublin Bus has a ‘Transport For All’ policy.

This policy outlines its commitment to providing a service that is accessible and relevant to all customers and accommodates the needs of specific groups of customers including older people. It was within this context - as part of the wider Equality and Diversity Strategy - that actions were developed as part of the ‘Say No to Ageism’ initiative.

Title of project: Transport for All

Actions taken

1. Awareness building

Dublin Bus offered on-bus poster sites for advertising the ‘Say No to Ageism’ campaign. It supported the promotion of the campaign with the display of posters in the workplace and a feature in its internal magazine, “*Dublin Buzz*”. Several staff members including senior managers and representatives of older and younger employees attended the seminar and age awareness workshop at the launch event.

2. Anti ageism training

Anti ageism (age awareness) training has been incorporated into all training for front line, customer-facing staff.

3. Consultation with older employees

As agreed with its sister companies in CIE (Iarnród Éireann and Bus Éireann), Dublin Bus consulted some of its older employees to find out how they experience growing older in the company. A group of older employees was invited to an age awareness workshop led by Age and Opportunity. This was followed by a focus group discussion run by an independent consultant. The issues raised have been noted for planning of future initiatives and many ideas that arose in the group discussion have been incorporated into induction and pre-retirement programmes. Recruitment statistics show an increasing number of people over the age of 50 entering the workplace.

4. Promoting positive images and positive language

The need to use more positive images of older people and more positive language when referring to older customers and older employees was disseminated throughout the organisation. As a result, more positive images of older people are used in marketing and other material. In addition, in a recent bus driver recruitment campaign, including newspaper advertisements containing profiles of bus drivers, one of whom joined the company at an older age.

The company’s proofing guidelines were updated to include information on ageism and to emphasise the need for the use of positive language in internal publications and advertisements. As a result of this, the word ‘elderly’ has been replaced with ‘older people’ in signage on all new buses, in the company’s literature relating to the Community Support Programme and in articles in the in-house magazine.

5. Consultation with older people

Dublin Bus’s Equality and Diversity Strategy aims to include customers and other stakeholders in the development and delivery of services. The strategy includes a framework for consulting with older people and with organisations representing

older people to involve them in decisions relating to customer services. Plans are on hand to establish an annual meeting with older people and organisations representing them and to set up a way of contacting them in relation to specific issues arising throughout the year. Some difficulty was experienced in deciding who to include in this wide range of groups representing older people. It is possible that a forum will be established to accommodate this.

The company conducts customer research using focus groups. The marketing department now includes older people in the samples that take part in this customer research. In one example the marketing manager brought together a customer group that included older people to discuss how it could make the information on bus stop panels more user-friendly for all customers, including older people. The company had consulted with design companies and other UK-based transport companies for alternative designs and a sample of these was presented to the user group for its input.

Bus Éireann

Bus Éireann promotes best practice in equality and diversity throughout the organisation. It carried out an equality review in 2002 and as a result appointed an Equality and Diversity officer. It employs staff of all ages; around 42 per cent are 51 years of age or older.

Title of project: Promoting Equality for Older Persons

The aim of the Bus Éireann project was to promote equality for older persons both as customers and as employees.

The objectives of the project were as follows:

- To raise awareness among Bus Éireann employees of the issues facing older people when using Bus Éireann services;
- To ensure that employees provide the most appropriate service to older customers;
- To speak directly with older customers and their representatives in order to better understand and address their needs as customers;
- To promote a positive image of older people in company documents; and
- To gain a better understanding of the experiences of employees in Bus Éireann as they approach retirement.

Actions taken

1. Awareness building

Bus Éireann offered on-bus and station poster sites for advertising the 'Say No to Ageism' initiative. It also supported the promotion of the campaign with the

display of posters in the workplace. Managers throughout the country were informed of the initiative and a presentation was made to senior management detailing the activities that Bus Éireann would undertake during the year. A number of senior managers and other Bus Éireann employees from around the country attended the 'Say No to Ageism' launch event including the age awareness workshop.

An important element of Bus Éireann's project was to raise awareness among employees of the issues facing older people when using Bus Éireann services. Bus Éireann prepared an awareness-raising document to support a focus on older people. This document is to be included in the induction pack for all new staff and will soon be distributed to all current employees. Bus Éireann worked closely with the National Council on Ageing and Older People in developing this document. This collaboration was invaluable and the links between the two organisations will be sustained.

2. Anti-ageism training

A module on equality with a focus on older people is to be included in future customer care training courses for Bus Éireann drivers. This will further raise age awareness. Drivers represent the majority of Bus Éireann staff and have daily contact with older customers.

3. Consultation with older employees

Bus Éireann along with Dublin Bus and Iarnród Éireann (sister companies in the CIE group), consulted its employees in order to better understand the issues facing older employees in the workplace. Bus Éireann's two-day pre-retirement course was re-structured to include an Age and Opportunity age awareness workshop followed by a focus group discussion moderated by an external consultant. The aim of the group discussion was to explore the experience of older employees in Bus Éireann. Around forty people attended the five workshops carried out during autumn 2006. A report of the findings has been received and the suggestions and issues raised are currently under consideration.

4. Promoting positive images and positive language

Bus Éireann is committed to ensuring that positive images of older people are used in company documents and promotional material. The front cover of the Bus Éireann Expressway and Local Bus Timetable, for example, was designed to include positive images of older people.

Signage on all Bus Éireann's new vehicles refers to 'older people' rather than 'elderly' and this change will also be made to other documents and promotional material.

5. Providing user friendly information

Bus Éireann received feedback from older customers that the timetable could be difficult to read due to the small print size. A system has been established to ensure

that large print versions of route timetables are available on request throughout the country to overcome this difficulty. The availability of this service is advertised in information bureaux, highlighted in the introduction to the main timetable and mentioned in larger print on several pages within the timetable itself.

6. Consultation with older customers and their representative organisations
Work has been done to set up a mechanism for consulting older customers. It is envisaged that this may take the form of focus group discussions. Bus Éireann has consulted Age and Opportunity to discuss how best to constitute focus groups and the matter is now being progressed.

The marketing department of Bus Éireann carry out various market research projects and older customers are included in the samples selected for that research.

Veolia Transport

Veolia Transport has been operating the Luas tram service in Dublin since June 2004. It has a policy in relation to equality and inclusion across the organisation - operations, customer service, employment, and communications with staff, customers and clients. In its staff training, *“Going for Green”*, it acknowledges the needs of older people. Around a third of its workforce are aged 45 years and over.

Title of project: Say No to Ageism

As a relatively new transport operator in Ireland, Veolia has in place, among other things, training that addresses ageism and age related issues; user consultation groups that include older people; and documents and signage that have been age-proofed by groups including the Public Transport Accessibility Committee (PTAC)³.

Actions taken

1. Awareness building

Veolia offered on-tram poster sites for advertising the ‘Say No to Ageism’ initiative. It supported the promotion of the campaign with the display of posters in the workplace. A number of employees attended the ‘Say No to Ageism’ launch event in Dublin and took part in the age awareness workshop.

2. Consultation with older people

Veolia Transport commission independent research company, Research Solutions, to conduct a customer satisfaction survey once a year. The sample for this research is chosen using quotas on gender, age and frequency of travel. The proportion of the sample that is aged 45 to 64 years of age is 41 per cent. It is planned to include those aged 65 and over in the sample for the 2008 survey.

³ PTAC was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness in July 2000 and is the main consultative forum on the issue of public transport accessibility. Its remit is to advise the Minister for Transport on the accessibility aspects of public transport investment projects and on other public transport accessibility issues.

Rural Transport Programme

The Rural Transport Programme (RTP) provides transport services in rural areas to the general public with the aim of addressing social exclusion. A large proportion of its customers are older people, as are a large proportion of the volunteers on local boards of management. An integral part of the RTP’s approach has been the use of community development principles. These encourage and facilitate the involvement of older people in the design, monitoring and management of the individual community-based projects that make up the RTP.

Title of project: Say No to Ageism

The objectives of the project were as follows:

- To enhance the role of community transport in the co-ordination and provision of services to older people
- To ensure participation and inclusion of older people in the monitoring, design and decision-making processes at local level
- To improve the accessibility and design of services with regard to the types of services provided and the provision of assistance
- To target training at frontline staff and volunteers
- To promote a positive image of older people and to use appropriate language.

Actions taken

1. Awareness building

The RTP distributed ‘Say No to Ageism’ posters to all its transport projects for display in vehicles and services. It distributed posters and action programme booklets to RTP projects for display in community centres, day care centres and other community sites. The RTP national co-ordinator, the development worker, staff and voluntary board of management members from ten projects attended the launch and took part in the age awareness training workshop at the launch.

At local level, several projects joined forces with local organisations representing older people to raise age awareness during ‘Say No to Ageism’ week. Transport services were provided to events organised as part of the ‘Say No to Ageism’ week.

All RTP promotional literature was reviewed to promote a more positive image of older people. Public display stands are to be designed to reflect a greater sense of opportunity for older people.

2. Anti ageism training

Staff and board representatives from all RTP projects undertook age awareness

training on a regional basis in May and June 2007. This training was provided by Age and Opportunity.

3. Consultation with older people

The RTP maintain dialogue with older people through the decision-making and consultative structures of projects. Older people will continue to be involved in the design and monitoring of RTP services locally and the needs of older people in relation to transport, access to essential services and social integration are monitored. Throughout 2007 a needs analysis will be completed in preparation for the new Rural Transport Programme and older people will be a key target group for this.

The RTP in collaboration with Intel Corporation has undertaken a major qualitative research project to examine the impact of transport and mobility on the lives of older people in rural areas. This detailed ethnographic study involves researchers spending a week with each of five projects chosen according to a range of criteria. Oral, visual and photographic material was collected from the projects and initial findings are due in the summer of 2007. The study has the following objectives:

- To ascertain the views of older people, communities and practitioners on the research theme, their experiences of rural transport and the outcomes of the RTP.
- To explore from a society and from the individual's perspective, the effects of increased mobility on a range of areas including:
 - Sense of self;
 - Sense of health;
 - Sense of social connectedness;
 - Gender;
 - Income; and
 - Environment.
- To explore the diversity of transport responses and models in order to gauge the value, impact and effectiveness of different systems of delivery for the target group.
- To extract learning from the experiences of the RTP to date in relation to working with and for older people.
- To identify good practice, policy lessons and recommendations.



