

Planning for Healthy Ageing in Rural and Coastal Areas

Challenges and Solutions

27th February 2025



The research questions:

- 1. Thinking about Healthy Ageing, what are the things about your local area that help you to stay healthy?**
- 2. Thinking about Healthy Ageing, what are the things about your local area that make it harder for you to stay healthy?**
- 3. What changes would you like to see in your local area that would make it easier for people to stay healthy for longer? Have you any suggestions or examples?**



“

If it wasn't for this project, who would listen to us – we've been having these conversations for 10 years.”

How did we do it?

- **5 peer-facilitated focus groups with 45 older people (aged 55+) in rural and coastal areas of NI**
- **10 interviews with professionals working with organisations who support older people**
- **Video featuring key aspects of the feedback received and showcasing the level of interest and awareness of the issue in rural and coastal areas**



Rural and Coastal Themes

1.

**Getting
around**

2.

**Access to
health and
social care**

3.

**Activities
for healthy
ageing**

4.

**Public
spaces**

5.

**Loneliness
and isolation**



Getting Around

- Inadequate and irregular local public transport provision
- “As long as you can drive, you’re fine”
- Impact of inadequate transport
- SMARTPass
- Community transport

“

If you are well, and have a car, it doesn't matter if you're 90. But it just takes one thing to happen that means you can't drive, and that's it, you fall off a cliff edge.”



Access to Health and Social Care

- Distance
- Access to GPs
- Early appointments
- Local services and care in the home
- Multidisciplinary teams

“

I am 79 years old and an insulin-dependent diabetic. I have 2 artificial knees – total knee replacements. I can only get podiatry services at 4-month intervals. The first 2 months grand, I can manage – I can go out for a walk. The second two months, my feet are so sore I cannot walk.”



Activities for Healthy Ageing

- **What's on offer**
- **Connecting and working in partnership**
- **Benefits**
- **Challenges to accessing activities**

“

It's not complicated to have ten older people in a room twice a week and have some exercise – it has great benefits, mental and physical, gets them out of the house and connected, reducing loneliness.”



Public Spaces

- **Banks, post offices & shops**
- **Recreational spaces & places**
- **Parking & footpaths**
- **Seating, lighting and public toilets**
- **Housing**

“

In many areas, paths and roads are not well maintained or are not there at all. This can be dangerous and causes a fear of falling. This limits the possibility of going out and so people may end up depending on a garden if they have one.”



Loneliness and Isolation

- **Transport**
- **Covid**
- **Provision of care**
- **Switch to digital**
- **Targeted services & activities**
- **Joined up working**

“

*My neighbours are all in the same boat as us
– the young people are away.”*



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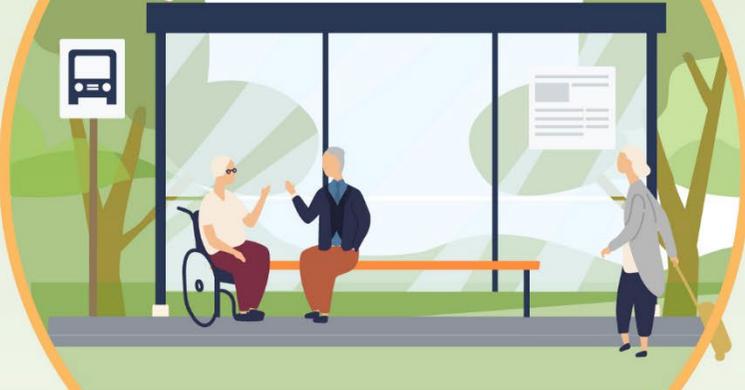
5.

**Loneliness
and isolation**



Getting Around

Bus Shelters and Seats



Community Transport



Better Information



Hail and Ride



Activities for Healthy Ageing



Healthy Town and Village Centres



Rural One Stop Shops



Great Sociable Indoor Spaces



Great Sociable Outdoor Spaces

Public Spaces

Toilet & Changing Facilities



Off Road Paths



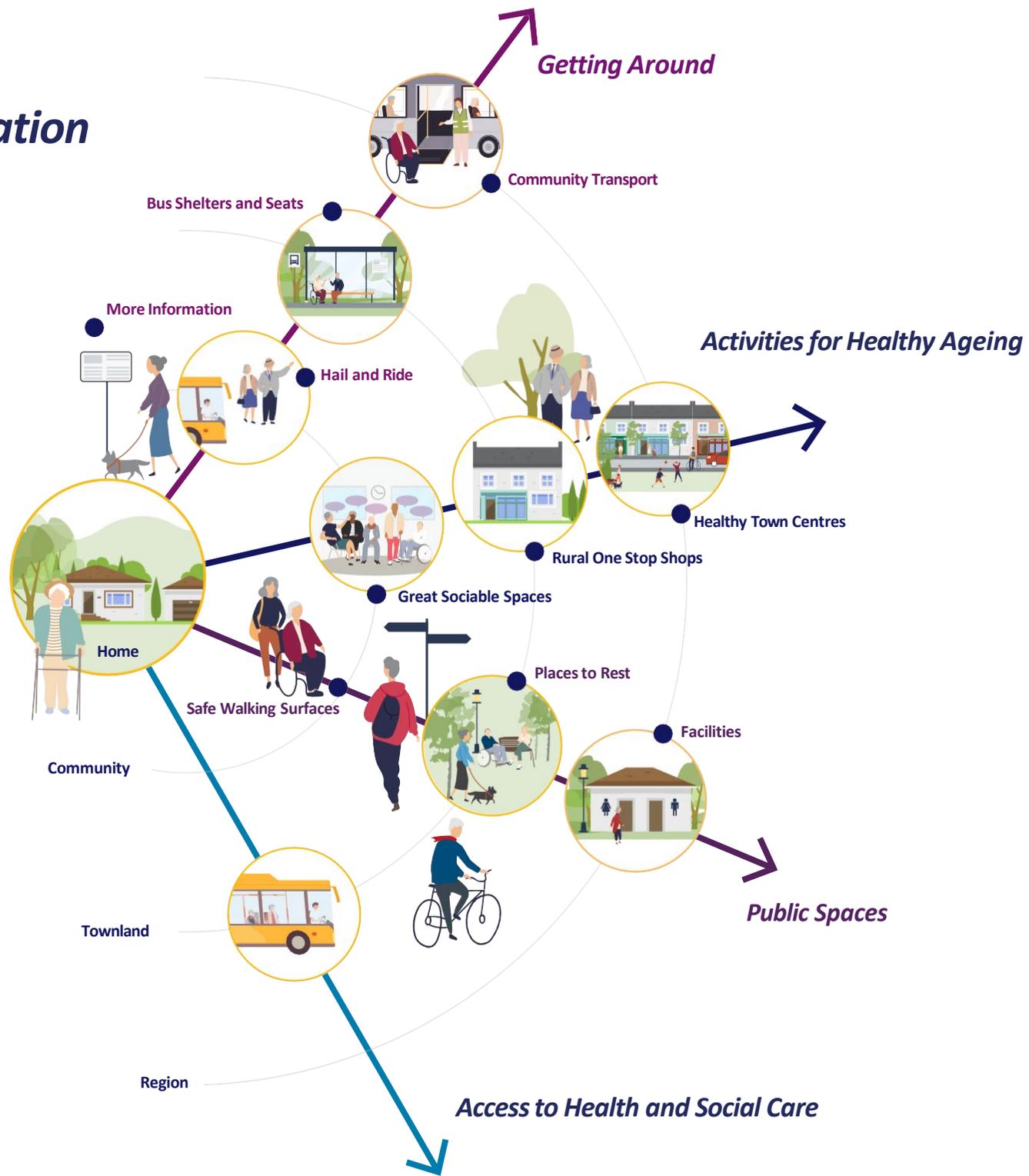
Places to Rest



Safe Walking Surfaces



Loneliness and Isolation



Conclusions and Recommendations

- **Better design of towns, villages and public spaces as age-friendly community spaces.**
- **The strategically planned provision of accessible social spaces in rural and coastal areas to support both formal and informal activities for older people.**
- **More accessible off-road footpaths and public parks in rural and coastal areas. Better public transport, including provision of services, routes and stops that make sense for older people's daily travel needs.**
- **Better resourcing for Community Transport.**
- **Better planning of acute health services, and services for chronic conditions.**
- **A new approach to access to GP services for older people who may be disproportionately struggling to secure appointments.**
- **The impact of where we live on healthy ageing to be taken account of in Community Planning processes and Age Friendly strategies.**
- **Longer-term and more consistent funding for the age sector networks and support organisations.**
- **Greater resourcing for programmes aimed at reducing isolation.**
- **A review of how care packages operate in rural and coastal areas.**

Thank you



Ballycastle Beach



thepaulhogarthcompany

Breakout Discussion

- **What stands out for you about the findings?**
- **Are there particular recommendations that you think could be progressed in the short – medium term, within our current context?**
- **If so, what are the next steps following this webinar in order to progress them?**

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